

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Bromsgrove in Worcestershire

Report to The Electoral Commission

July 2002

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

WHAT IS THE BOUNDARY COMMITTEE FOR ENGLAND?

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

Members of the Committee are:

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

Archie Gall (Director)

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

This report sets out our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Bromsgrove.

SUMMARY

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

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

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

- **in 10 of the 19 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10% from the average for the district and five wards vary by more than 20%;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10% from the average in 11 wards and by more than 20% in seven wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 74-75) 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 17 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of four, and four wards should retain their existing boundaries.**

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% from the district average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in no wards expected to vary by more than 9% 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;**
- **an increase in the number of councillors for Stoke Prior Parish Council.**

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

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

Table 1: Final Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Alvechurch	3	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Alvechurch and Beoley	Map 2
2	Beacon	1	part of Beacon ward	Map 2 and Large Map
3	Catshill	2	part of Catshill & North Marlbrook parish (the proposed Catshill Village parish ward)	Map 2 and Large Map
4	Charford	2	part of Charford ward; part of Stoney Hill ward	Map 2 and Large Map
5	Drakes Cross & Walkers Heath	2	part of Wythall parish (the proposed Drakes Cross & Walkers Heath parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A2
6	Furlongs	2	the parish of Clent; part of Belbroughton parish (the Belbroughton parish ward)	Map 2
7	Hagley	2	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parish of Hagley	Map 2
8	Hillside	2	the parishes of Barnt Green and Cofton Hackett; part of Lickey & Blackwell parish (the proposed Lickey Monument parish ward)	Map 2 and Large Map
9	Hollywood & Majors Green	2	part of Wythall parish (the Hollywood & Majors Green parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A2
10	Linthurst	1	part of Lickey & Blackwell parish (the proposed Linthurst and Shepley parish wards); part of Norton ward	Map 2 and Large Map
11	Marlbrook	2	part of Catshill & North Marlbrook parish (the proposed Marlbrook parish ward); part of Catshill & North Marlbrook parish (the proposed Barley Mow parish ward); part of Lickey & Blackwell parish (the proposed Lickey Grange parish ward); part of Lickey End parish (the proposed South Marlbrook parish ward)	Map 2 and Large Map
12	Norton	2	part of Lickey End parish (the proposed Lickey End parish ward); part of Norton ward; part of Sidemoor ward	Map 2 and Large Map
13	St Johns	2	part of Norton ward; part of Sidemoor ward; part of Stoney Hill ward; part of Whitford ward	Map 2 and Large Map
14	Sidemoor	2	part of Sidemoor ward	Map 2 and Large Map
15	Slideslow	2	part of Norton ward; part of Stoney Hill ward	Map 2 and Large Map
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
18	Tardebigge	1	the parishes of Bentley Pauncefoot, Finstall and Tutnall & Copley; part of Stoney Hill ward	Map 2 and Large Map
19	Uffdown	1	the parishes of Frankley, Hunnington and Romsley	Map 2 and Large Map
20	Waseley	2	part of Beacon ward; part of Uffdown & Waseley ward	Map 2 and Large Map

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
21	Whitford	2	part of Whitford ward	Map 2 and Large Map
22	Woodvale	1	the parishes of Bournheath and Dodford with Grafton; part of Belbroughton parish (the Fairfield parish ward)	Map 2 and Large Map
23	Wythall South	1	part of Wythall parish (the proposed Wythall South parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A2

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

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

Table 2: Final 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	Beacon	1	1,736	1,736	-2	1,686	1,686	-5
3	Catshill	2	3,271	1,636	-7	3,352	1,676	-5
4	Charford	2	3,860	1,930	9	3,738	1,869	5
5	Drakes Cross & Walkers Heath	2	3,690	1,845	4	3,587	1,794	1
6	Furlongs	2	3,328	1,664	-6	3,264	1,632	-8
7	Hagley	2	3,426	1,713	-3	3,594	1,797	1
8	Hillside	2	3,772	1,886	7	3,614	1,807	2
9	Hollywood & Majors Green	2	3,694	1,847	5	3,597	1,799	1
10	Linthurst	1	1,856	1,856	5	1,847	1,847	4
11	Marlbrook	2	3,443	1,722	-3	3,282	1,641	-7
12	Norton	2	3,320	1,660	-6	3,656	1,828	3
13	St Johns	2	3,658	1,829	4	3,706	1,853	4
14	Sidemoor	2	3,892	1,946	10	3,743	1,872	6
15	Slideslow	2	2,543	1,272	-28	3,656	1,828	3
16	Stoke Heath	1	1,899	1,899	8	1,868	1,868	5
17	Stoke Prior	1	1,700	1,700	-4	1,622	1,622	-9
18	Tardebigge	1	1,813	1,813	3	1,762	1,762	-1
19	Uffdown	1	1,899	1,899	8	1,848	1,848	4
20	Waseley	2	3,463	1,732	-2	3,347	1,674	-6
21	Whitford	2	3,899	1,950	10	3,770	1,885	6
22	Woodvale	1	1,733	1,733	-2	1,701	1,701	-4
23	Wythall South	1	1,932	1,932	9	1,870	1,870	5
	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 final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Bromsgrove. The six districts in Worcestershire have now been reviewed as part of the programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England started by the LGCE in 1996. We have inherited that programme, which we currently expect to complete in 2004.

2 Bromsgrove's last review was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which reported to the Secretary of State in March 1977 (Report no.179). We expect to begin reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements towards the end of the year.

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

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

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

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

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

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

8 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 31 July 2002, when the LGCE wrote to Bromsgrove District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. It also notified Worcestershire County Council, West Mercia Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Worcestershire Local Councils Association, parish and town 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. It 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 22 October 2002. At Stage Two it considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared its draft recommendations.

9 Stage Three began on 26 March 2002 with the publication of the LGCE's report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Bromsgrove in Worcestershire* and ended on 20 May 2002. During this period comments were sought from the public and any other interested parties on the preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four the draft recommendations were reconsidered in the light of the Stage Three consultation and we now publish the final recommendations.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

10 The 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.

11 The electorate of the borough 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 northeast 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.

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

13 At present, each councillor represents an average of 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 and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 10 of the 19 wards varies by more than 10% from the district average and in five wards by more than 20%. The worst imbalance is in Barnt Green ward where each of the two councillors represents 34% more electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Bromsgrove

Table 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	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	4,394	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	-	-	69,998	-	-
	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 and Waseley ward were relatively over-represented by 27%, while electors in Barnt Green ward were significantly under-represented by 34%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

14 During Stage One the LGCE received four representations, including a district-wide scheme from Bromsgrove District Council, and representations from the Liberal Democrats, Alvechurch Parish Council and Alvechurch Village Society. In the light of these representations and evidence available to it, the LGCE reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in its report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Bromsgrove in Worcestershire*.

15 The LGCE's draft recommendations were based on the District Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality, and provided a pattern of single- and two-member wards. However, it moved away from the District Council's scheme in a number of areas, affecting nine wards, using options generated by Council officers during the early stages of the review process, together with some of its own proposals. It proposed that:

- Bromsgrove District Council should be served by 39 councillors, 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;
- there should be new warding arrangements for the parishes of Catshill & North Marlbrook, Lickey & Blackwell, Lickey End, Stoke Prior and Wythall.

Draft Recommendation

Bromsgrove District Council should comprise 39 councillors, serving 23 wards. The whole council should continue to be elected every four years.

16 The LGCE's proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in only two of the 23 wards varying by more than 10% from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with one ward varying by more than 10% from the average in 2006.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

17 During the consultation on its draft recommendations report, the LGCE received 26 representations. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Bromsgrove District Council.

Bromsgrove District Council

18 The District Council expressed broad support for the draft recommendations. It proposed an amendment in the Stoke Heath and Stoke Prior area to better reflect the statutory criteria. It proposed five other amendments affecting five wards and new ward names in the majority of the proposed wards. The District Council proposed revised warding arrangements for Lickey & Blackwell parish and several amendments to parish ward names.

Worcestershire County Council

19 The County Council proposed two amendments to better reflect community interests and identities.

Bromsgrove Conservative Association

20 Bromsgrove Conservative Association, hereafter referred to as the Conservatives, expressed broad support for the draft recommendations, in particular the proposed three-member Alvechurch ward. The Conservatives proposed an amendment in the south of the district, which was broadly similar to the District Council's proposed amendment, to better reflect community interests and identities. They also proposed an amendment in the south-east of the district to better reflect community interests and identities.

MPs and MEPs

21 Julie Kirkbride MP and Philip Bradbourn MEP each expressed broad support for the draft recommendations, in particular the proposed Alvechurch and Tardebigge wards.

Parish Councils

22 The draft recommendations were broadly supported by Alvechurch, Clent and Stoke Prior parish councils. Barnt Green and Cofton Hackett parish councils each put forward new ward names for the proposed Barnt Green, Cofton Hackett and North Lickey ward.

Other Representations

23 A further 16 representations were received in response to the LGCE's draft recommendations from local councillors and local residents. One joint representation, from four Labour councillors in the Rubery area and two local councillors proposed alternative warding arrangements in their respective areas. Nine local residents each proposed new ward names for the proposed Barnt Green, Cofton Hackett and North Lickey ward, two local residents each opposed the draft recommendations in the Stoke Heath and Stoke Prior area and two local residents proposed amendments to the boundary of Hagley parish.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

26 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.

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

Electorate Forecasts

28 Since 1975 there has been a 4% increase in the electorate of Bromsgrove district. At Stage One the District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of 68,861 to 69,998 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. Having accepted that this is an inexact science and, having considered the forecast electorates, the LGCE stated in its draft recommendations report that it was satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

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

Council Size

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

31 In its draft recommendations report the LGCE adopted the District Council's proposal for a council size of 39-members as it considered that the achievement of the statutory criteria would best be met by retaining the existing council size.

32 The LGCE received no comments regarding council size during Stage Three, and we remain satisfied that the statutory criteria would best be met by a council size of 39. We have therefore decided to confirm the draft recommendation for a council size of 39 as final.

Electoral Arrangements

33 At Stage One, the LGCE received one district-wide scheme from the council. The LGCE considered that the Council's proposals provided for an improved level of electoral equality for the district as a whole, taking into account community identities and interests. The LGCE noted that the District Council had consulted locally on its Stage One proposals, evidence of which was included in its submission. In the light of these considerations the LGCE proposed basing its draft recommendations on the District Council's scheme. However, to provide for an improved reflection of the statutory criteria, the LGCE moved away from the District Council's proposals in 10 areas. In particular, the LGCE retained the existing three-member Alvechurch ward on the grounds of community identity and it proposed an amendment in the south of the district to better reflect the statutory criteria. It made a further eight minor amendments, three in the north of the district and five in the town, to better reflect the statutory criteria. The LGCE also noted that, in its Stage One submission, the District Council did not propose any ward names, instead choosing to number the wards 1–24. This proved problematic when referring to the proposed wards in the draft report and, therefore, for consultation purposes only, the LGCE put forward ward names for each of the proposed wards and invited alternative suggestions at Stage Three.

34 The LGCE noted that the District Council proposed a number of parish boundary amendments affecting no or few electors, to reflect ground detail. Where the Council proposed amendments to parish boundaries which would result in insufficient electors to sustain a viable parish ward, the LGCE retained the existing boundary. 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 review.

35 At Stage Three, the LGCE's draft recommendations received a degree of local support and we propose that they should be substantially confirmed, subject to several minor amendments. In the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three we have decided to move away from the draft recommendations in three areas to better reflect the statutory criteria and propose amendments to 11 of the 23 proposed ward names. 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;

36 Details of our final 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

37 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 Bournheath and Dodford with Grafton parishes and Fairfield parish ward of Belbroughton parish. Furlongs, Hagley, Uffdown & Waseley and Woodvale wards currently contain 6%, 3%, 27% and 1% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (8% fewer, 2% more, 29% fewer and 3% fewer by 2006).

38 At Stage One, the District Council proposed four wards based largely on the existing wards in this area. The Council proposed no change to the existing Hagley ward and proposed retaining the current two-member Furlongs ward with a boundary modification to the south-eastern boundary to better reflect firm ground detail. It proposed a revised single-member Uffdown & Waseley ward containing the parishes of Frankley, Hunnington and Romsley, and transferred the unparished part in the south of the existing ward to a new two-member Rubery North ward (discussed in more detail below). The District Council proposed two minor modifications to the existing Woodvale ward in the north-east of the ward, which cannot be dealt with under this review, as previously stated in paragraph 33, and in the north-west of the ward to better reflect firm ground detail.

39 In its draft recommendations report the LGCE noted the apparent support of the parish councils in the area for the District Council's proposals during its own consultation exercise. The LGCE also noted that the District Council's proposals were based on existing wards and provided good electoral equality. The LGCE therefore decided to adopt the District Council's scheme in its entirety in this area subject to its comments regarding ward names. For consultation purposes only, it proposed retaining the existing ward names. Under the LGCE's 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 the parishes of Bournheath and Dodford with Grafton and Fairfield parish ward of Belbroughton parish. Furlongs, Hagley, Uffdown & Waseley and Woodvale wards would contain 6% fewer, 3% fewer, 8% more and 2% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (8% fewer, 1% more, 4% more and 4% fewer by 2006).

40 At Stage Three, the LGCE received four representations in relation to this area. The District Council proposed renaming the proposed Uffdown & Waseley ward as Uffdown ward. Clent Parish Council expressed broad support for the proposed Furlongs ward. Two local residents expressed support for an amendment to the boundary between the parishes of Clent and Hagley.

41 We have carefully considered the representations received and we note a degree of local support for the draft proposals. We have decided to confirm as final the draft recommendations in this area, subject to a minor amendment. We have decided to rename Uffdown & Waseley ward as Uffdown ward as proposed by the District Council. We consider this to be a better reflection of the community interests and identities in the ward than the name proposed in the draft recommendations report. While we note the comments of two local residents regarding the external boundaries of the parishes of Clent and Hagley, as previously stated in paragraph 33, such amendments cannot be dealt with under this review. Under our final recommendations Furlongs, Hagley, Uffdown and Woodvale wards would contain 6% fewer, 3% fewer, 8% more and 2% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (8% fewer, 1% more, 4% more and 4% fewer by 2006). Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2.

Drakes Cross, Majors Green and South Wythall wards

42 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% more, 5% fewer and 4% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (7% more, 8% fewer and equal to the average by 2006).

43 At Stage One, the LGCE received one representation in relation to this area. The District Council proposed two two-member wards based on the existing Drakes Cross and Majors Green wards and a single-member ward based on the current South Wythall ward. The District Council proposed transferring some 2,000 electors from the existing Drakes Cross ward to the revised two-member ward based on the existing Majors Green ward and a minor amendment to the current South Wythall ward to better reflect ground detail. In its submission, the District Council 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 exercise.

44 In its draft recommendations report the LGCE noted the District Council's comments relating to the local support its proposals received. It also noted that the District Council's proposals were based on existing wards and provided for good electoral equality. The LGCE therefore decided to adopt the District Council's scheme in its entirety in this area subject to its comments regarding ward names. For the purpose of the consultation the LGCE decided to put forward the existing ward names in this area and invited alternative suggestions at Stage Three. Under the LGCE's 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% more, 5% more and 9% more electors per councillor than the district average (1% more, 1% more and 6% more by 2006).

45 At Stage Three, one submission was received in response to the draft recommendations in the Wythall area. The District Council proposed renaming Drakes Cross, Majors Green and South Wythall wards as Drakes Cross & Walkers Heath, Hollywood & Majors Green and Wythall South ward respectively and stated that the new ward names had been proposed by Wythall Parish Council.

46 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received and in the absence of local opposition to the LGCE's draft proposals we have decided to confirm them as final, subject to amending the ward names. We note the District Council's proposed ward names and also note that the District Council stated that the new ward names had been put forward by the parish council in the area. In the light of this consideration we propose renaming Drakes Cross, Majors Green and South Wythall wards as Drakes Cross & Walkers Heath, Hollywood & Majors Green and Wythall South ward respectively. Under our final recommendations Drakes Cross & Walkers Heath, Hollywood & Majors Green and Wythall South wards would contain 4% more, 5% more and 9% more electors per councillor than the district average (1% more, 1% more and 5% more by 2006). Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and Map A2.

Alvechurch and Tardebigge wards

47 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% fewer

electors per councillor than the district average (8% 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% fewer electors per councillor than the district average (22% fewer by 2006).

48 At Stage One, the LGCE received three submissions in relation to this area. The District Council proposed dividing the existing Alvechurch ward into two new wards, a single-member ward containing Beoley parish, all parts of Alvechurch parish to the west of the A441 and the Bordesley area and a two-member ward containing the remainder of Alvechurch parish. In proposing this division of Alvechurch parish, the District Council divided the village of Hopwood between its two proposed wards. The District Council proposed a minor amendment to the existing single-member Tardebigge ward, involving the transfer of the Wagon Works Estate from the unparished Stoney Hill ward to its proposed Tardebigge ward. The LGCE received a further two submissions in relation to this area at Stage One. Alvechurch Parish Council and Alvechurch Village Society each opposed the District Council's proposals to divide the village of Hopwood between two district wards. Alvechurch Parish Council proposed alternative warding arrangements in this area which retained the village of Hopwood in one ward. The Parish Council proposed a two-member Alvechurch West ward containing the north-west part of Alvechurch parish and the District Council's proposed South Wythall ward and a two-member Alvechurch East ward containing the remainder of Alvechurch parish and Beoley parish.

49 In its draft recommendations report the LGCE noted that the District Council's proposals in the Tardebigge area provided for an improved level of electoral equality and were generally based on the existing ward. The LGCE therefore adopted the District Council's proposed ward as part of its draft recommendations, subject to its comments regarding ward names. For consultation purposes only, the LGCE retained the existing Tardebigge ward name and invited alternative suggestions at Stage Three. In relation to the Alvechurch area, the LGCE noted that although the District Council's proposed single- and two-member wards provided for reasonable levels of electoral equality, it did not consider that dividing the community of Hopwood between two district wards provided the best reflection of the statutory criteria. The LGCE also noted the level of local opposition to the District Council's proposals in this area. The LGCE noted Alvechurch Parish Council's alternative proposals. It also noted the absence of local support for such a warding arrangement. It was not persuaded by the evidence and argumentation that including South Wythall ward in the parish council's proposed Alvechurch East ward would not result in a loss of community identity. While the LGCE was unable to adopt Alvechurch Parish Council's alternative warding arrangements, it did find merit in the Parish Council's proposal to retain Hopwood village in one ward. Furthermore, having visited the area, the LGCE considered that Hopwood should be retained in one district ward and proposed retaining the current three-member Alvechurch ward on its existing boundaries. The LGCE considered that this would provide a better reflection of the statutory criteria than both the District Council and Alvechurch Parish Council's proposals.

50 Under the LGCE's draft recommendations Alvechurch ward would be represented by three councillors and would contain the parishes of Alvechurch and Beoley. Tardebigge ward would be represented by one councillor and would comprise the unparished Wagon Works Estate from the existing Stoney Hill ward, the parishes of Bentley Pauncefoot, Finstall and Tutnall & Cobley. Alvechurch and Tardebigge wards would contain 5% fewer and 3% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (8% fewer and 1% fewer by 2006).

51 At Stage Three, five submissions were received in relation to this area. The District Council expressed broad support for the draft recommendations and proposed retaining the existing Alvechurch and Tardebigge ward names. The Conservatives expressed broad support for the proposed Alvechurch ward and put forward one amendment to the proposed Tardebigge ward. They proposed transferring some 30 properties to the south-east of Finstall Road and the St Godwalds Road area from the proposed Stoney Hill ward to Tardebigge ward. The Conservatives stated that the electors in these properties are 'isolated' from the north-west side

of the road. They also stated that 'local representatives assert that the people in these houses have more affinity with Finstall than with the Rigby Lane and Chaucer Road area'. Alvechurch Parish Council expressed broad support for the proposal to retain the current three-member Alvechurch ward on existing boundaries. The Parish Council also supported the proposed Alvechurch ward name. Julie Kirkbride MP and Philip Bradbourn MEP each expressed broad support for the LGCE's draft Alvechurch and Tardebigge wards.

52 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period and note the level of local support for the LGCE's draft recommendations. We have decided to adopt the LGCE's draft recommendations in their entirety in this area as we consider that they provide the best reflection of the statutory criteria. While we note the Conservatives' alternative proposal in the Tardebigge ward we have not been persuaded by the evidence and argumentation received that the Conservatives' proposals offer a better reflection of the statutory criteria than the draft recommendations. We also note the level of local support for the proposed Tardebigge ward, and consequently have chosen not to adopt the Conservatives' proposals as part of our final recommendations. In the light of these considerations we have decided to confirm as final, the draft recommendations for Alvechurch and Tardebigge wards. Under our final recommendations Alvechurch and Tardebigge wards would contain 5% fewer and 3% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (8% fewer and 1% fewer by 2006). Our final recommendations 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. 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% more, 9% fewer, 2% fewer and 19% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (29% more, 12% fewer, 3% fewer and 21% fewer by 2006).

54 At Stage One, the LGCE received one submission in relation to this area. The District Council 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 and single-member ward based on the Barnt Green and Cofton Hackett wards respectively. For consultation purposes only, the LGCE named these wards as Rubery South, Rubery North, Catshill, Marlbrook, Barnt Green, Cofton Hackett & North Lickey and Blackwell, Burcot & South Lickey respectively. As previously discussed, the District Council proposed a new Rubery North ward containing the unparished part of the existing Uffdown & Waseley ward. The Council also transferred part of the existing Beacon ward to the proposed two-member Rubery North ward. The remainder of the current Beacon ward would form the new single-member Rubery South ward.

55 The District Council proposed extensive parish warding in the remainder of this area. It proposed combining the parishes of Barnt Green and Cofton Hackett and part of Lickey & Blackwell parish broadly to the north of the Alvechurch Highway and to the east of Twatling Road to form the proposed two-member Barnt Green, Cofton Hackett and North Lickey ward. The Council proposed that the southern part of Lickey & Blackwell parish and the unparished Burcot area from the existing Norton ward, form the proposed single-member Blackwell, Burcot and South Lickey ward. The District Council proposed combining the remainder of Lickey & Blackwell parish, an area broadly to the east of Mearse Lane, part of Lickey End parish to the north of the M42 Motorway and the eastern and southern parts of the existing Catshill ward to form the proposed two-member Marlbrook ward. Finally, the District Council proposed the remainder of the existing Catshill ward form a revised two-member Catshill ward.

56 The LGCE carefully considered the representations received in relation to this area at Stage One. It noted that the District Council's proposals provided for an improved level of electoral equality. It also noted the absence of opposition to the District Council's proposals in this area. The LGCE therefore decided to adopt the District Council's proposals as part of its draft recommendations, subject to its comments regarding ward names and three minor amendments to better reflect the statutory criteria. The LGCE invited alternative ward name suggestions at Stage Three. Under its draft recommendations Barnt Green, Cofton Hackett & North Lickey, Blackwell, Burcot & South Lickey, Catshill, Marlbrook, Rubery North and Rubery South wards would contain 7% more, 5% more, 7% fewer, 3% fewer, 2% fewer and 2% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (2% more, 4% more, 5% fewer, 7% fewer, 6% fewer and 5% fewer by 2006).

57 At Stage Three 14 representations were received in relation to this area. The District Council expressed broad support for the draft recommendations in this area and proposed renaming Barnt Green, Cofton Hackett & North Lickey, Blackwell, Burcot & South Lickey, Rubery North and Rubery South wards as Lickey Hillside, Linthurst, Waseley and Beacon wards respectively. The District Council stated that the proposed Lickey Hillside, Linthurst and Waseley ward names reflect 'prominent local features'. Barnt Green and Cofton Hackett parish councils proposed renaming Barnt Green, Cofton Hackett & North Lickey ward as Lickey Hills and Cofton Green wards respectively. Nine local residents proposed renaming Barnt Green, Cofton Hackett & North Lickey ward as Hillside ward, one local resident proposed renaming Barnt Green, Cofton Hackett & North Lickey ward as either Barnt Green or Hillside ward. One local resident opposed the inclusion of Lickey North in the proposed ward name.

58 A further two submissions were received in relation to this area at Stage Three. The joint submission from the four Labour councillors in the Uffdown & Waseley and Beacon areas expressed a preference to combine the proposed Rubery North and Rubery South wards into a three-member Rubery ward. The councillors stated that Rubery is a 'close knit community and the high street (New Road) is at the centre of the community'. Councillor Newnes (Catshill ward) opposed the draft recommendations for the existing Catshill ward. He put forward a reconfiguration of wards in the western area of the district and based his proposals on electoral variances up to 25%, arguing that 'the 10% variation limit is too tight [and]...a variation of up to 25% would be more realistic'. Councillor Newnes opposed the proposal to divide the existing Catshill ward between two district wards.

59 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three and note the degree of local support for the LGCE's draft recommendations. We have decided to substantially confirm the draft recommendations in this area subject to amending four of the six proposed ward names. We note the alternative ward name of Hillside, as proposed by nine local residents. We have therefore decided to rename Barnt Green, Cofton Hackett & North Lickey ward as Hillside ward. We have also decided to rename Blackwell, Burcot & South Lickey, Rubery North and Rubery South wards as Linthurst, Waseley and Beacon wards respectively as we consider that these names adequately reflect local community interests and identities.

60 We note the comments contained in the joint submission from the four Labour councillors in the Rubery area. We also note the absence of local support for their alternative proposal and consequently have not adopted their proposals as part of our final recommendations in this area. We note Councillor Newnes' comments regarding the proposed Catshill ward. We note that his proposals are based on electoral variances of up to 25%, and we also note the absence of local support for his alternative proposals. In the light of these considerations we do not consider that Councillor Newnes' alternative proposals offer a better reflection of the statutory criteria than the draft recommendations and have therefore decided not to adopt them as part of our final recommendations. We confirm the LGCE's draft recommendations as final, subject to the ward name amendments detailed above. Under our final recommendations Beacon, Catshill, Hillside, Linthurst, Marlbrook and Waseley wards would currently contain 2% fewer, 7%

fewer, 7% more, 5% more, 3% fewer and 2% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (5% fewer, 5% fewer, 2% more, 4% more, 7% fewer and 6% fewer by 2006). Our final recommendations 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

61 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% more, 11% more, 13% fewer, 28% more, 24% more and 14% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (21% more, 43% more, 17% fewer, 23% more, 20% more and 17% fewer by 2006).

62 At Stage One, the District Council proposed a reconfiguration of 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, and for the purpose of the consultation the LGCE named them Stoke Heath and Stoke Prior wards respectively. The District Council also proposed a further six two-member wards covering the town of Bromsgrove and the parish of Lickey End. For the purpose of the consultation the LGCE named these wards Charford, Lickey End & Lowes Hill, Sidemoor, Stoney Hill, Whitford and Town Centre wards. The District Council proposed dividing the existing Stoke Prior ward with the modern housing, broadly to the north of Redditch Road, forming the proposed Stoke Heath ward and the remainder forming a revised Stoke Prior ward. Stoke Heath ward would also contain part of the existing Charford ward. 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.

63 In the Stoney Hill area the District Council proposed transferring an area to the east of the A38 from the existing Stoney Hill ward into a new two-member Town Centre ward. The revised Stoney Hill ward would also include part of the existing Norton ward broadly to the south of the A448 and, as previously discussed, the Wagon Work Estate would form part of a revised Tardebigge ward. The District Council put forward two amendments to the existing Sidemoor ward. It proposed transferring an area to the north of the Princess of Wales Hospital from the existing Sidemoor ward to a new Lickey End and Lowes Hill ward and an area to the south of the school playing fields from Sidemoor ward to the proposed Town Centre ward. The District Council proposed one amendment to the existing Whitford ward, transferring an area in the west of the ward to the proposed Town Centre ward. It proposed a new Lickey End & Lowes Hill ward comprising an area of Lickey End parish south of the M42 Motorway and an unparished area to the east of Lickey End parish each currently in Norton ward. Finally, the Council proposed a New Town Centre ward containing part of the existing Norton, Sidemoor, Stoney Hill and Whitford wards as previously discussed.

64 The LGCE carefully considered the representation received in relation to this area at Stage One. It noted that the District Council's proposals provided for an improved level of electoral equality. It also noted the absence of opposition to the District Council's proposals in this area. It therefore decided to adopt the District Council's proposals as part of its draft recommendations in the centre and south of the district, subject to its previous comments regarding ward names and the creation of non-viable parish wards. It also proposed several other amendments to further improve electoral equality and better reflect the statutory criteria. It proposed two amendments to the proposed Stoke Heath ward to provide for a better boundary, and an amendment to the proposed Stoney Hill ward involving 81 electors in and around the Dragon

Fields area, to better reflect community identity. The LGCE proposed three minor modifications to the District Council's proposed Sidemoor ward in order to better reflect community identity and ground detail. Finally, the LGCE proposed an amendment to the proposed Town Centre ward to better reflect community interests and identities which involved transferring 58 electors from Town Centre ward to the proposed Lickey End & Lowes Hill ward.

65 Under the LGCE's draft recommendations Stoke Heath and Stoke Prior wards would each be represented by a single councillor. Stoke Heath would contain the Stoke Heath 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% more and 1% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3% more and 6% 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% more, 4% fewer, 10% more, 28% fewer, 2% more and 10% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (6% more, 5% more, 6% more, 3% more, 3% more and 6% more by 2006).

66 At Stage Three, a minor textual inconsistency was noted in Table 2 of the draft recommendations report. The proposed Stoke Heath and Stoke Prior wards were forecast to contain 3% more and 6% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2006 respectively. We noted that the actual level of electoral variance for the proposed Stoke Heath and Stoke Prior wards should be 9% per cent more and 12% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively by 2006.

67 At Stage Three, six representations were received in relation to this area. The District Council expressed broad support for the draft recommendations in this area but proposed four minor modifications. It noted that more accurate figures for the LGCE's proposed Stoke Heath and Stoke Prior wards showed higher levels of electoral inequality than were initially envisaged and proposed an amendment to rectify the imbalance and to improve community identity. The District Council reiterated its Stage One proposal for the boundary between the Stoke Heath and Stoke Prior wards to run to the rear of properties on Redditch Road and Worcester Road. The District Council's proposal was broadly supported by the Conservatives and Councillor Tidmarsh (Stoke Prior ward). Two local residents broadly opposed the LGCE's draft recommendation to include the properties on Redditch and Worcester roads in the proposed Stoke Heath ward on the grounds of community identity.

68 The District Council broadly opposed the LGCE's draft recommendation to transfer 81 electors in an around the Dragoon Fields area from the proposed Stoney Hill ward to the proposed Charford ward, stating that it did not consider that the LGCE's proposal provided the best reflection of community identity. Worcestershire County Council proposed an amendment in this area which was broadly similar to the District Council's proposal. The District Council also opposed the LGCE's proposal to transfer 58 electors from Town Centre ward to Lickey End & Lowes Hill ward and expressed a preference for its Stage One proposal in this area, stating that it did not consider that the LGCE's proposal provided the best reflection of community identity in this area. It therefore proposed transferring the 58 electors from the LGCE's proposed Lickey End & Lowes Hill ward to the proposed Town Centre ward. The District Council proposed a minor modification to the southern boundary of the proposed Sidemoor ward, affecting no electors, resulting in the transfer of Strand House from Sidemoor ward to the proposed Town Centre ward. The Council argued that Strand House is a 'prominent distinctive listed building, which truly belongs in the town centre'.

69 The District Council also proposed amendments to three of the eight wards in this area. It proposed renaming Lickey End & Lowes Hill, Stoney Hill and Town Centre wards as Norton, Slideslow and St Johns wards respectively. It argued that the Norton ward name would be "more meaningful" to local residents than the LGCE's Lickey End & Lowes Hill ward name. It

also argued that its proposed Slideslow and St John ward names offer a better reflection of community interests and identities than the LGCE's Stoney Hill and Town Centre ward names.

70 We have carefully considered all the representations received in relation to this area. We have decided to substantially confirm the draft recommendations in this area as final, subject to three boundary amendments and amendments to three of the proposed ward names. We note the District Council, the Conservatives and Councillor Tidmarsh's (Stoke Prior ward) comments regarding the high level of electoral inequality and lack of community identity in the proposed Stoke Heath and Stoke Prior wards. We also note the comments of two local residents regarding community identity in this area. We have therefore decided to amend the LGCE's proposed boundary in favour of the District Council's proposal, which has a degree of local support. We propose that the boundary between the Stoke Heath and Stoke Prior wards should run broadly to the rear of properties on the Redditch and Worcester roads. We consider that the District Council's proposed boundary provides a better reflection of the statutory criteria than the boundary proposed in the draft recommendations, which followed Redditch Road and Worcester Road.

71 We have also decided to amend the LGCE's draft proposal to transfer 58 electors from Town Centre ward to the proposed Lickey End & Lowes Hill ward. We note the District Council's comments in relation to community identity in this area and we consider that, on balance, the District Council's proposal to transfer 58 electors from the LGCE's proposed Lickey End & Lowes Hill ward to the proposed Town Centre ward provides the best reflection of the statutory criteria than the draft recommendations in this area. We also note the District Council's comments in relation to Strand House. We have decided to adopt its proposal to transfer Strand House from the proposed Sidemoor ward to Town Centre ward as we consider this to offer a better reflection of the statutory criteria than the draft recommendations. We note the District Council's comments regarding ward names and we have decided to adopt its ward names in this area as we consider that they offer a better reflection of community interests and identities than the ward names proposed in the draft recommendations report. We therefore propose renaming Lickey End & Lowes Hill, Stoney Hill and Town Centre wards as Norton, Slideslow and St Johns wards respectively.

72 We note the District Council and Worcestershire County Council's comments in relation to the 81 electors in and around the Dragoon Fields area of the proposed Charford ward. However, we have not been persuaded by the evidence and argumentation received to amend the draft recommendations in this area. We remain of the opinion that the LGCE's proposals in this area continue to provide an adequate reflection of the statutory criteria. We therefore confirm as final the draft recommendations in this area, subject to the above amendments. Under our final recommendations Norton, Sidemoor, Slideslow, St Johns, Stoke Heath, Stoke Prior, Whitford and Woodvale wards would currently contain 6% fewer, 10% more, 28% fewer, 4% more, 8% more, 4% fewer, 10% more and 2% fewer electors per councillor than the district average (3% more, 6% more, 3% more, 4% more, 5% more, 9% fewer, 6% more and 4% fewer by 2006). Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

Electoral Cycle

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

Conclusions

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

- in the south of the district we propose an amendment to better reflect the statutory criteria;
- in Bromsgrove town we propose two minor modifications to better reflect community interests and identities;
- in the centre of the district we propose renaming Blackwell, Burcot & South Lickey, Lickey End & Lowes Hill, Stoney Hill and Town Centre as Linthurst, Norton, Slideslow and St Johns wards respectively to better reflect community interests and identities;
- in the east of the district we propose renaming Drakes Cross, Majors Green and South Wythall wards as Drakes Cross & Walkers Heath, Hollywood & Majors Green and Wythall South wards respectively to better reflect community interests and identities;
- in the north of the district we propose renaming Barnt Green, Cofton Hackett & North Lickey, Rubery North, Rubery South and Uffdown & Waseley wards as Hillside, Waseley, Beacon and Uffdown wards respectively to better reflect community interests and identities.

75 We conclude that, in Bromsgrove:

- a council of 39 members should be retained;
- there should be 23 wards, four more than at present;
- the boundaries of 15 of the existing wards should be modified.

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

Table 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	39	39	39	39
Number of wards	19	23	19	23
Average number of electors per councillor	1,766	1,766	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

77 As Table 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from 10 to one. By 2006 no wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 9%. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the statutory criteria.

Final 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 and in Appendix A including the large map inside the back cover.

Parish Council Electoral Arrangements

78 When reviewing parish electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable 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 should also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. In the LGCE's draft recommendations report it proposed consequential changes to the warding arrangements for the parishes of Catshill & North Marlbrook, Lickey & Blackwell, Lickey End, Stoke Prior and Wythall to reflect the proposed district wards.

79 The parish of Catshill & North Marlbrook is currently served by 13 councillors and is not warded. In the light of the LGCE's draft recommendations for district wards in this area it proposed to create three parish wards, Catshill & North Marlbrook East, Catshill & North Marlbrook South and Catshill & North Marlbrook West, to reflect district ward boundaries. The LGCE proposed 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.

80 In response to the LGCE's consultation report, the LGCE received one representation. The District Council expressed broad support for the warding arrangements in Catshill & North Marlbrook parish but stated that the proposed ward names were "cumbersome" and put forward new ward names. It proposed renaming Catshill & North Marlbrook East, Catshill & North Marlbrook South and Catshill & North Marlbrook West parish wards as Marlbrook, Barley Mow and Catshill Village parish wards respectively.

81 Having considered all the evidence received, and in light of the confirmation of the proposed district wards in the area, we confirm the draft recommendation for warding Catshill & North Marlbrook parish as final, subject to three ward name amendments. We have decided to adopt the District Council's proposed ward names in this area. We propose renaming Catshill & North Marlbrook East, Catshill & North Marlbrook South and Catshill & North Marlbrook West parish wards as Marlbrook, Barley Mow and Catshill Village parish wards respectively. We therefore propose that Catshill & North Marlbrook Parish Council be served by 13 councillors as at present, representing three wards. We propose that Barley Mow ward be served by three councillors; Catshill Village ward by eight councillors and Marlbrook ward by two councillors. We confirm the draft recommendation for warding Catshill & North Marlbrook parish as final, subject to the three ward name amendments detailed above.

Final Recommendation

Catshill & North Marlbrook Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Barley Mow (returning three councillors), Catshill Village (eight) and Marlbrook (two). 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.

82 The parish of Lickey & Blackwell is currently served by 11 councillors and is not warded. In the light of its draft recommendations for district wards in this area, the LGCE proposed to create three parish wards, Lickey & Blackwell North, Lickey & Blackwell South and Lickey & Blackwell West, to reflect the proposed district ward boundaries. The LGCE noted 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. It also noted 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, the LGCE proposed 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.

83 In response to the LGCE's consultation report, one representation was received. The District Council reiterated its Stage One proposal for four parish wards in the Lickey & Blackwell parish. The District Council also proposed renaming Lickey & Blackwell North and Lickey & Blackwell West parish wards as Lickey Monument and Lickey Grange parish wards respectively. The District Council argued that its proposed parish ward names reflected prominent local features. In relation to the LGCE's proposed Lickey & Blackwell South parish ward the District Council proposed it be further divided into two parish wards. It proposed that the area to the north of the M42 Motorway be named Shepley parish ward and the area to the south of the M42 Motorway, Linthurst parish ward. The District Council stated that the proposed Linthurst and Shepley parish ward names reflected local community interests and identities.

84 Having considered all the evidence received, and in light of the confirmation of the proposed district wards in the area, we confirm the draft recommendation for warding Lickey & Blackwell parish as final, subject to the following amendments. In the light of the evidence and argumentation received we have decided to revise the LGCE's proposed Lickey & Blackwell South parish ward. We propose to ward the parish of Lickey & Blackwell further, using the M42 Motorway as the boundary between the two wards, as proposed by the District Council. We have decided to rename the proposed Lickey & Blackwell North and Lickey & Blackwell West parish wards as Lickey Monument and Lickey Grange parish wards respectively as proposed by the District Council. We have also decided to adopt the District Council's proposed Linthurst and Shepley parish ward names in the areas to the south and north of the M42 Motorway respectively. We therefore propose that Lickey & Blackwell Parish Council be served by 11 councillors, as at present, representing four parish wards. We propose that Lickey Monument ward be served by three councillors; Linthurst ward be served four councillors; and Lickey Grange and Shepley wards each to be served by two councillors. We confirm the draft recommendation for warding Lickey & Blackwell parish as final, subject to the revised warding arrangements and ward name amendments detailed above.

Final Recommendation

Lickey & Blackwell Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Lickey Monument (returning three councillors), Linthurst (four), Lickey Grange (two) and Shepley (two). The boundaries between the four parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

85 The parish of Lickey End is currently represented by 10 councillors and is not warded. In the light of the LGCE's draft recommendations for district wards in this area, the LGCE proposed to create two parish wards, Lickey End North and Lickey End South, to reflect the proposed district ward boundaries. It proposed that Lickey End North should be represented by four councillors and Lickey End South should be represented by six councillors.

86 In response to the LGCE's consultation report, one representation was received. The District Council expressed broad support for the draft recommendations for the warding arrangements in Lickey End parish and proposed renaming the Lickey End North and Lickey End South parish wards as South Marlbrook and Lickey End respectively.

87 Having considered all the evidence received, and in light of the confirmation of the proposed district wards in the area, we confirm the draft recommendation for warding Lickey End parish as final, subject to amending the proposed ward names. We have decided to rename the proposed Lickey End North and Lickey End South parish wards as South Marlbrook and Lickey End wards respectively, as proposed by the District Council. We consider that the District Council's proposed ward names offer a better reflection of community interests and identities than the ward names proposed in the draft recommendations report. We therefore propose that Lickey End parish be represented by 10 councillors, as at present, serving two parish wards. We propose that Lickey End ward be served by six councillors and South Marlbrook ward be served by four councillors. We confirm the draft recommendation for warding Lickey End parish as final, subject to the ward name amendments detailed above.

Final Recommendation

Lickey End Parish Council should comprise 10 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Lickey End (returning six councillors) and South Marlbrook (four). 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.

88 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 its draft recommendations for district wards in this area, the LGCE proposed two parish wards, Stoke Heath and Stoke Prior, to reflect the proposed district ward boundaries. It proposed that Stoke Heath ward should be represented by two councillors and Stoke Prior ward should be represented by seven councillors.

89 In response to the LGCE's consultation report, the District Council proposed the creation of three parish wards. It proposed that Stoke Heath ward be served by two councillors; Stoke Prior ward be served by three councillors; and Stoke Works ward be served by four councillors. Stoke Prior Parish Council expressed broad support for the draft recommendations for the warding of Stoke Prior parish. The Parish Council expressed specific support for the LGCE's draft recommendation for Stoke Prior parish to contain two wards, which included the Stoke Prior ward to be served by seven councillors. The Parish Council stated its opposition to the District Council's proposals to divide the parish into three wards. It also proposed an increase of one in the number of councillors from nine to 10, and argued that in view of the size of the proposed Stoke Heath ward, the local residents would be better served by three councillors instead of the proposed two.

90 Having considered all the evidence received, and in light of the confirmation of the proposed district wards in the area, we confirm the draft recommendation for warding Stoke Prior parish as final, subject to one amendment. We propose an increase of one in council size from nine to 10 and that the additional councillor serve the proposed Stoke Heath ward, as proposed by Stoke Prior Parish Council. We therefore propose that Stoke Prior parish be served by 10

councillors representing two wards. We propose that Stoke Heath ward be served by three councillors and Stoke Prior ward be served by seven councillors. We confirm the draft recommendation for warding Stoke Prior parish as final, subject to the amendment detailed above.

Final Recommendation
Stoke Prior Parish Council should comprise 10 parish councillors, an increase of one, representing two wards: Stoke Heath (returning three 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.

91 The parish of Wythall is currently served by 15 councillors and is not warded. In the light of the LGCE’s draft recommendations for district wards in this area, it proposed three parish wards. The proposed Drakes Cross, Hollywood, and South wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries. The LGCE proposed that Drakes Cross and Hollywood wards each be represented by six councillors and South ward be represented by three councillors.

92 In response to the LGCE’s consultation report, the District Council expressed broad support for the draft recommendation for warding Wythall parish and put forward revised parish ward names. It proposed renaming Drakes Cross, Hollywood and South wards as Drakes Cross & Walkers Heath, Hollywood & Majors Green and Wythall South parish wards respectively.

93 Having considered all the evidence received, and in light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm the draft recommendation for warding Wythall parish as final, subject to three ward name amendments. We propose renaming Drakes Cross, Hollywood and South wards as Drakes Cross & Walkers Heath, Hollywood & Majors Green and Wythall South parish wards respectively, as proposed by the District Council. We therefore propose that Wythall parish be served by 15 councillors, as at present, serving three wards. We propose that Drakes Cross & Walkers Heath and Hollywood & Majors Green wards each be served by six councillors and Wythall South ward be served by three councillors. We confirm the draft recommendation for warding Wythall parish as final, subject to the ward name amendments detailed above.

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

Map 2: Final Recommendations for Bromsgrove

6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

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

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

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

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

APPENDIX A

Final 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 proposed warding arrangements for Bromsgrove.

Map A1: Final Recommendations for Bromsgrove: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed warding of Wythall Parish