

Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Worcestershire County Council

February 2004

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Contents

	page
What is The Boundary Committee for England?	5
Summary	7
1 Introduction	15
2 Current electoral arrangements	19
3 Submissions received	23
4 Analysis and draft recommendations	25
5 What happens next?	47
Appendices	
A Draft recommendations for Worcestershire: Detailed mapping	49
B Code of practice on written consultation	51

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 the 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 CBE
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 the number of councillors elected to the council, division boundaries and division names.

Summary

We began a review of Worcestershire County Council electoral arrangements on 11 March 2003.

- **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 Worcestershire:

- **In 29 of the 57 divisions, each of which is currently represented by a single councillor, the number of electors per councillor varies by more than 10% from the average for the county and in 14 divisions by more than 20%;**
- **By 2007 this situation is expected to worsen with the number of electors from the average forecast to vary by more than 10% from the average in 34 divisions and by more than 20% in 13 divisions.**

Our main proposals for Worcestershire County Council's future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and Paragraphs 166–167) are that:

- **Worcestershire should have 57 councillors, the same as at present, representing 52 divisions;**
- **as the divisions are based on district wards which have themselves been changed as a result of recent district reviews, the boundaries of all divisions will be subject to change.**

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

- **In 39 of the proposed 52 divisions the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average;**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue with the number of electors per councillor in 45 divisions expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average by 2007.**

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

- **We will consult on these proposals for eight weeks from 24 February 2004. We take this consultation very seriously. We may decide to move away from our draft recommendations in 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 will then be responsible for implementing change to the 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 will come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to us at the address below by 26 April 2004.

**The Team Leader
Worcestershire County Council Review
Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

Table 1: Draft recommendations: Summary

Division name (by district council area)		Constituent district wards
Bromsgrove		
1	Alvechurch	Alvechurch ward; Wythall South ward
2	Beacon	Beacon ward; Hillside ward; Waseley ward
3	Bromsgrove Central	Norton ward: St Johns ward
4	Bromsgrove East	Linthurst ward; Slideslow ward; Tardebigge ward
5	Bromsgrove South	Charford ward; Stoke Heath ward; Stoke Prior ward
6	Bromsgrove West	Sidemoor ward; Whitford ward
7	Clent Hills	Furlongs ward; Hagley ward; Uffdown ward
8	Woodvale	Catshill ward; Marlbrook ward; Woodvale ward
9	Wythall	Drakes Cross & Walkers Heath ward; Hollywood & Majors Green ward
Malvern Hills		
10	Croome	Kempsey ward; Ripple ward; part of Upton & Hanley (the parish of Upton upon Severn)
11	Hallow	Baldwin ward; Broadheath ward; Hallow ward; Martley ward
12	Malvern Chase	Chase ward; Wells ward
13	Malvern Langland	Pickersleigh ward; Priory ward
14	Malvern Link	Alfrick & Leigh ward; Link ward
15	Malvern Trinity	Dyson Perrins ward; West ward
16	Powick	Longdon ward; Morton ward Powick ward; part of Upton & Hanley ward (the parish of Hanley Castle)
17	Tenbury	Lindridge ward; Teme Valley ward; Tenbury ward; Woodbury ward
Redditch		
18	Arrow Valley East	Church Hill ward; Matchborough ward; Winyates ward
19	Arrow Valley West	Abbey ward; Greenlands ward; Lodge Park ward
20	Redditch North	Batchley ward; Central ward; West ward
21	Redditch South	Astwood Bank & Feckenham ward; Crabbs Cross ward; Headless Cross & Oakenshaw ward.
Worcester City		
22	Bedwardine	Bedwardine ward; part of St John ward
23	Claines	Part of Arboretum ward; Claines ward
24	Gorse Hill and Warndon	Gorse Hill ward; Warndon ward
25	Nunnery	Part of Cathedral ward; Nunnery ward; part of Rainbow Hill ward
26	Rainbow Hill	Part of Cathedral ward; part of Rainbow Hill ward
27	St Clement	Part of Cathedral ward; part of St Clement ward
28	St John	Part of St Clement ward; part of St John ward

29	St Peter	Battenhall ward; St Peter's Parish ward
30	St Stephen	Part of Arboretum ward; St Stephen ward
31	Warndon Parish	Warndon Parish North ward; Warndon Parish South ward
Wychavon		
32	Bowbrook	Part of Bowbrook ward (the parishes of Hadzor; Himbleton; Huddington; Tibberton and Oddingley); part of Lovett & North Claines ward (the parishes of Hindlip; Martin Hussingtree; North Claines and Salwarpe); part of Droitwich South East ward
33	Bredon	Bredon ward; Eckington ward; part of Elmley Castle & Somerville ward (the parishes of Elmley Castle; Great Comberton; Little Comberton Netherton); part of Fladbury ward (the parishes of Brickhampton and Wick) and South Bredon Hill ward
34	Broadway	Broadway & Wickhamford ward; part of Fladbury ward (the parishes of Charlton; Crophorne and Fladbury); part of Elmley Castle & Somerville ward (the parishes of Aston Somerville; Hinton on the Green and Sedgeberrow)
35	Droitwich East	Droitwich East ward; part of Droitwich South East ward; part of Droitwich South West ward
36	Droitwich West	Droitwich Central ward; part of Droitwich South West ward; Droitwich West ward
37	Evesham North West	Great Hampton ward; Little Hampton ward; part of Evesham North ward (the proposed parish ward of Evesham Avon of Evesham parish)
38	Evesham South	Bengeworth ward; Evesham South ward
39	Harvington	Part of Inkberrow ward (the parishes of Abberton; Abbots Morton; Church Lench; Cook hill; Inkberrow and Rous Lench); Harvington & Norton ward; part of Evesham North ward (the proposed parish of Evesham Twyford of Evesham parish)
40	Littletons	Badsey ward; Bretforton and Offenham ward; Honeybourne & Pebworth ward; The Littletons ward
41	Ombersley	Dodderhill ward; Hartlebury ward; part of Inkberrow ward (the parishes of Hanbury and Stock & Bradley); part of Lovett & North Claines ward (the parishes of Elmbridge; Elmley Lovett; Hampton Lovett and Westwood) Ombersley ward
42	Pershore	Pershore ward; Pinvin ward
43	Upton Snodsbury	Part of Bowbrook ward (the parish of Crowle) Drakes Broughton ward; Upton Snodsbury ward; Norton & Whittington ward
Wyre Forest		
44	Bewdley	Bewdley & Arley ward; Rock ward
45	Chaddesley	Part of Aggborough & Spennells ward; Blakedown & Chaddesley ward
46	Cookley, Wolverley and Wribbenhall	Cookley ward; Wolverley ward; Wribbenhall ward
47	Hurcott	Part of Broadwaters ward; part of Greenhill ward
48	St Barnabas	Francheward ward; part of Habberley & Blakebrook ward
49	St Chads	Offmore & Comberton ward; part of Greenhill ward
50	St Marys	Part of Aggborough & Spennells ward; part of Broadwaters ward; part of Greenhill ward; Oldington & Foley Park ward; part of Sutton Park ward
51	Stourport-on-Severn	Areley Kings ward; Lickhill ward; Mitton ward
52	Sutton Park	Part of Habberley & Blakebrook ward; part of Sutton Park ward

Notes

- 1. The constituent district wards are those resulting from the electoral reviews of the Worcestershire County Council districts which were completed in 2002. Where whole district wards do not form the building blocks, constituent parishes and parish wards are listed.*
- 2. The large map inserted at the back of the report illustrates the proposed divisions outlined above and the maps in Appendix A illustrate some of the proposed boundaries in more detail.*

Table 2 Draft recommendations for Worcestershire County Council

District name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (2002)	Variance from average %	Electorate (2007)	Variance from average %
Bromsgrove					
1 Alvechurch	1	6,933	-7	6,873	-11
2 Beacon	1	8,982	20	8,874	15
3 Bromsgrove Central	1	7,255	-3	7,659	-1
4 Bromsgrove East	1	7,011	-6	8,092	5
5 Bromsgrove South	1	7,361	-2	7,879	2
6 Bromsgrove West	1	7,792	4	7,533	-2
7 Clent Hills	1	8,586	15	8,592	11
8 Woodvale	1	8,462	13	8,378	9
9 Wythall	1	7,473	0	7,291	-5
Malvern Hills					
10 Croome	1	6,783	-9	6,966	-10
11 Hallow	1	6,683	-11	6,933	-10
12 Malvern Chase	1	7,618	2	7,631	-1
13 Malvern Langland	1	7,658	2	7,806	1
14 Malvern Link	1	7,559	1	7,804	1
15 Malvern Trinity	1	5,812	-22	6,769	-12
16 Powick	1	7,732	3	7,976	3
17 Tenbury	1	7,886	5	8,167	6
Redditch					
18 Arrow Valley East	2	17,344	16	16,952	10
19 Arrow Valley West	2	13,784	8	13,954	-10
20 Redditch North	2	13,553	-9	15,659	1
21 Redditch South	2	15,381	3	15,584	1
Worcester City					
22 Bedwardine	1	6,675	-11	6,919	-10
23 Claines	1	7,325	-2	7,485	-3
24 Gorse Hill & Warndon	1	8,101	8	8,299	8
25 Nunnery	1	6,522	-13	6,931	-10
26 Rainbow Hill	1	6,831	-9	6,843	-11
27 St Clement	1	6,727	-10	6,725	-13
28 St John	1	6,442	-14	7,190	-7
29 St Peter	1	8,415	12	8,746	13
30 St Stephen	1	7,725	3	7,879	2
31 Warndon Parish	1	7,800	4	8,075	5
Wychavon					
32 Bowbrook	1	7,229	-3	7,282	-6
33 Bredon	1	7,639	2	7,774	1
34 Broadway	1	6,575	-12	6,942	-10
35 Droitwich East	1	7,895	5	8,420	9
36 Droitwich West	1	7,825	5	7,922	3
37 Evesham North West	1	8,434	13	8,458	10
38 Evesham South	1	7,629	2	8,151	6
39 Harvington	1	6,853	-8	7,594	-2
40 Littletons	1	8,342	11	8,532	11
41 Ombersley	1	7,617	2	8,249	7

42	Pershore	1	8,208	10	8,470	10
43	Upton Snodsbury	1	7,092	-5	7,269	-6
Wyre Forest						
44	Bewdley	1	7,221	-4	7,254	-6
45	Chaddesley	1	7,605	2	7,648	-1
46	Cookley, Wolverley & Wribbenhall	1	7,291	-3	7,327	-5
47	Hurcott	1	7,771	4	7,874	2
48	St Barnabas	1	7,828	5	7,932	3
49	St Chads	1	7,596	1	7,640	-1
50	St Marys	1	7,156	-4	7,406	-4
51	Stourport-on-Severn	2	15,447	3	15,724	2
52	Sutton Park	1	7,246	-3	7,368	-4
Totals		57	428,580	-	441,409	-
Averages		-	7,519	-	7,744	-

Source: Electorate figures are provided by Worcestershire County Council.

There are a number of discrepancies between the figures for the existing divisions, locally submissions and our proposals. We sought further clarification for these from Worcestershire County Council. We found that subsequent to the implementation of new warding arrangements in Redditch, Worcester City and Wyre Forest both 2002 and 2007 figures are different. It should be noted that these anomalies are not sufficiently large to have a major impact on the levels of electoral equality that our draft recommendations achieve.

Note: The electorate columns denote the number of electors represented by each councillor. The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the county. 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 county of Worcestershire, on which we are now consulting. Our review of the county is part of the programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. This programme started in 1996 and is expected to finish in 2004.

2 In carrying out these county reviews, we must have 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;
 - reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
 - secure effective and convenient local government; and
 - achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

The general duty set out in section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 and the statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality (Commission for Racial Equality, May 2002), i.e. to have due regard to:

eliminate unlawful racial discrimination;
promote equality of opportunity; and
promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

3 Details of the legislation under which we work are set out in The Electoral Commission's *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Periodic Electoral Reports* (published by the EC in July 2002). This *Guidance* sets out our approach to the reviews.

4 Our task is to make recommendations on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of electoral divisions. In each two-tier county, our approach is first to complete the PERs of all the constituent districts and, when the Orders for the resulting changes in those areas have been made, then to commence a PER of the county council's electoral arrangements. Orders were made for the new electoral arrangements in the districts in Worcestershire in December 2002 and we are now embarking on our county review in this area.

5 Prior to the commencement of Part IV of the Local Government Act 2000, each county council division could only return one member. This restraint has now been removed by section 89 of the 2000 Act, and we may now recommend the creation of multi-member county divisions. In areas where we are unable to identify single-member divisions that are coterminous with ward boundaries and provide acceptable levels of electoral equality we will consider recommending multi-member divisions if they provide a better balance between these two factors. However, we do not expect to recommend large numbers of multi-member divisions other than, perhaps, in the more urban areas of a county.

6 Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 sets out the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements*. These statutory rules state that each division should be wholly contained within a single district and that division boundaries should not split unwarded parishes or parish wards.

7 In the *Guidance*, The Electoral Commission states that we wish wherever possible to build on schemes that 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 division configurations are most likely to secure effective and convenient local government in their areas, while also reflecting the identities and interests of local communities.

8 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, as far as possible, equal representation across the local authority as a whole. Schemes that 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.

9 Similarly, we will seek to ensure that each district area within the county is allocated the correct number of county councillors with respect to the district's proportion of the county's electorate.

10 The Rules provide that, in considering county council electoral arrangements, we should have regard to the boundaries of district wards. We attach considerable importance to achieving coterminosity between the boundaries of divisions and wards. The term 'coterminosity' is used throughout the report and refers to situations where the boundaries of county electoral divisions and district wards are the same, that is to say where county divisions comprise either one or more whole district wards. Where wards or groups of wards are not coterminous with county divisions, this can cause confusion for the electorate at local elections, lead to increased election costs and, in our view, may not be conducive to effective and convenient local government.

11 We recognise, however, that it is unlikely to be possible to achieve absolute coterminosity throughout a county area while also providing for the optimum level of electoral equality. In this respect, county reviews are different to those of districts. We will seek to achieve the best available balance between electoral equality and coterminosity, taking into account the statutory criteria. While the proportion of electoral divisions that will be coterminous with the boundaries of district wards is likely to vary between counties, we would normally expect coterminosity to be achieved in a significant majority of divisions. The average level of coterminosity secured under our final recommendations for the first 11 counties that we have reviewed (excluding the Isle of Wight) is 70%. We would normally expect to recommend levels of coterminosity of around 60 to 80%.

12 Where coterminosity is not possible in parished areas, and a district ward is to be split between electoral divisions, we would normally expect this to be achieved without dividing (or further dividing) a parish between divisions. There are likely to be exceptions to this, however, particularly where larger parishes are involved.

13 We are not prescriptive on council size. However, we believe that any proposals relating to council size, whether these are for an increase, a reduction or no change, should be supported by evidence and argumentation. Given the stage now reached in the introduction of new political management structures under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, it is important that whatever council size interested parties may propose to us they can demonstrate that their proposals have been fully thought through, and have been developed in the context of a review of internal political management and the role of councillors in the new structure. 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.

14 A further area of difference between county and district reviews is that we must recognise that it will not be possible to avoid the creation of some county divisions which contain diverse communities, for example, combining rural and urban areas. We have generally sought to avoid this in district reviews, in order to reflect the identities and interests of local communities. Some existing county council electoral divisions comprise a number of distinct communities, which is inevitable given the larger number of electors represented by each councillor, and we would expect that similar situations would continue under our

recommendations in seeking the best balance between electoral equality, coterminosity and the statutory criteria.

15 As a part of this review we may also make recommendations for change to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils in the county. However, we made some recommendations for new parish electoral arrangements as part of our district reviews. We therefore only expect to put forward such recommendations during county reviews on an exceptional basis. In any event, we are *not* able to review administrative boundaries *between* local authorities or parishes, or consider the establishment of new parish areas as part of this review.

The review of Worcestershire County Council

16 We completed the reviews of the six district council areas in Worcestershire in July 2002 and orders for the new electoral arrangements have since been made. This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Worcestershire County Council. The last such review was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission, which reported to the Secretary of State in February 1983 (Report No. 440) in respect of Hereford & Worcester.

17 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 Electoral Commission

18 Stage One began on 11 March 2003, when we wrote to Worcestershire County Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified the six district councils in the county, West Mercia Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Worcestershire Local Councils Association, parish and town councils in the district, Members of Parliament with constituencies in the county, Members of the European Parliament for the Hereford & Worcester Region and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Worcestershire County Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of submissions (the end of Stage One) was 7 July 2003.

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

20 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 24 February 2004 and will end on 26 April 2004, 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.**

21 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. The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If The Electoral Commission accepts the

recommendations, with or without modification, it will make an Order and decide when any changes come into effect.

Equal opportunities

In preparing this report the Committee has had regard to the general duty under section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 to promote racial equality and to the approach set out in BCFE (03) 35, *Race Relations Legislation*, which the Committee considered and agreed at its meeting on 9 April 2003.

2 Current electoral arrangements

22 Worcestershire is situated in the West Midlands region of England, stretching from the picturesque Malvern Hills to the outskirts of Birmingham, and covers an area of 173,529 hectares. The local economy is based on a thriving manufacturing sector. The River Severn is a central feature of the county, traditionally acting as a means of access between its major settlements. This function has now been overtaken by the major motorways such as the M5 that provide access to the other parts of the county. The three main towns of Kidderminster, Bromsgrove and Redditch are all situated in the north of the county. Due to demographic changes over the last two decades, approximately 64% of the current population live within urban areas of the county.

23 Worcestershire's electorate is currently 427,137 (2002 figures) and is projected to increase to 439,183 by 2007, an increase of 3%. The Council presently has 57 members, with one member elected from each division.

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

25 At present, each councillor represents an average of 7,494 electors, which the County Council forecasts will increase to 7,715 by the year 2007 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic change and migration over the last two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 29 of the 57 divisions varies by more than 10% from the district average, 14 divisions by more than 20% and eight divisions by more than 30%. The worst imbalance is in St Martin division where the councillor represents 93% more electors than the county average.

26 As detailed previously, in considering the County Council's electoral arrangements, we must have regard to the boundaries of district wards. Following the completion of the reviews of district warding arrangements in Worcestershire, we are therefore faced with a new starting point for considering electoral divisions. Our proposals for county divisions will be based on the new district wards as opposed to those which existed prior to the recent reviews. In view of the effect of these new district wards, and changes in the electorate over the past 20 years which have resulted in electoral imbalances across the county, changes to most, if not all, of the existing county electoral divisions are inevitable.

Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements

Division name (by district council area)		Number of councillors	Electorate 2002	Variance from average %	Electorate 2007	Variance from average %
Bromsgrove						
1	Alvechurch	1	6,898	-8	6,872	-11
2	Barnt Green	1	7,507	0	7,580	-2
3	Bromsgrove North	1	8,264	10	8,214	6
4	Bromsgrove South	1	9,950	33	11,149	45
5	Bromsgrove West	1	8,933	19	9,009	17
6	Hagley & Furlongs	1	6,711	-10	6,770	-12
7	Rubery	1	5,161	-31	5,212	-32
8	Uffdown	1	1,866	-75	1,896	-75
9	Woodvale	1	6,967	-7	6,958	-10
10	Wythall	1	7,480	0	7,511	-3
Malvern Hills						
11	Croome	1	6,956	-7	7,139	-7
12	Hallow	1	7,668	2	7,919	3
13	Malvern Chase	1	7,508	0	7,555	-2
14	Malvern Langland	1	6,778	-10	6,851	-11
15	Malvern Link	1	8,824	18	8,988	16
16	Malvern Trinity	1	7,283	-3	8,096	5
17	Powick	1	7,559	1	7,713	0
18	Tenbury	1	5,576	-26	5,603	-27
Redditch						
19	Batchley	1	7,005	-7	8,219	7
20	Church Hill	1	7,251	-3	7,953	3
21	Crabbs Cross	1	9,606	28	9,885	28
22	Lodge Park	1	6,705	-11	6,874	-11
23	Matchborough	1	9,221	23	8,843	15
24	Redditch Central	1	6,176	-18	6,382	-17
25	Redditch West	1	7,558	1	7,692	0
26	Winyates	1	6,540	-13	6,301	-18
Worcester City						
27	Bedwardine	1	5,392	-28	5,644	-27
28	Claines	1	8,731	17	9,053	17
29	Nunnery	1	8,293	11	8,602	11
30	St. Barnabas	1	6,570	-12	6,681	-13
31	St. Clement	1	6,455	-14	6,539	-15
32	St. John	1	5,032	-33	5,342	-31
33	St. Martin	1	14,469	93	14,952	94
34	St. Peter	1	10,338	38	11,092	44
35	St. Stephen	1	7,282	-3	7,457	-3
Wychavon						
36	Bowbrook	1	8,736	17	9,451	22
37	Bredon	1	7,059	-6	7,185	-7
38	Broadway	1	7,156	-5	7,542	-2
39	Droitwich Rural	1	6,744	-10	6,926	-10
40	Droitwich South	1	11,280	51	12,041	56
41	Droitwich Town	1	7,167	-4	7,055	-9
42	Evesham Hampton	1	11,391	52	11,668	51
43	Evesham Town	1	8,035	7	8,944	16
44	Inkberrow	1	7,609	2	7,593	-2

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate 2002	Variance from average %	Electorate 2007	Variance from average %
45 Pershore Town	1	7,788	4	8,169	6
46 The Littletons	1	8,342	11	8,489	10
Wyre Forest					
47 Brinton Park	1	6,602	-12	6,337	-18
48 Chaddesley	1	7,242	-3	6,991	-9
49 Cookley, Wolverley & Wribbenhill	1	7,873	5	7,924	3
50 Habberley & Blakebrook	1	6,898	-8	6,575	-15
51 Hoobrook	1	5,768	-23	6,834	-11
52 Hurcott	1	6,941	-7	6,829	-11
53 Mitton	1	8,573	14	8,616	12
54 Puxton	1	6,230	-17	6,465	-16
55 Severn	1	6,985	-7	7,105	-8
56 St Chads	1	5,516	-26	5,840	-24
57 Rock & Bewdley	1	6,689	-11	6,656	-14
Totals	57	427,137	-	439,781	-
Averages	-	7,494	-	7,715	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Worcestershire County Council.

Note: Each division is represented by a single councillor, and the electorate columns denote the number of electors represented by each councillor. The 'variance from average' column shows how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors represented by each councillor varies from the average for the county. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2002, electors in Uffdown division in Bromsgrove were relatively over-represented by 75%, while electors in St. Martin division in Worcester City were relatively under-represented by 93%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 Submissions received

27 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 Worcestershire County Council.

28 During this initial stage of the review, officers from The Boundary Committee visited the area and met officers and members of the County Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 17 submissions during Stage One, including a county-wide scheme from the County Council, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the County Council.

Worcestershire County Council

29 The County Council proposed maintaining a council of 57 members, the same as at present, serving a uniform single-member pattern of 57 divisions with two options for Worcester City. Under the County Council's proposals five divisions would initially have electoral variances above 10% and none above 20%. This level of electoral equality is forecast to improve with none of the division having a variance above 10% by 2007. The County Council's proposals would provide for a level of 18% or 16% coterminosity between district ward and county division boundaries.

Political groups

30 The West Worcestershire Constituency Liberal Democrats (the Liberal Democrats) proposed alternative arrangements for the district of Wychavon. The Liberal Democrats proposed a pattern 12 single-member divisions under which one division would have a variance above 10%. The Liberal Democrats' proposals would provide for a level of 25% coterminosity across the district.

31 Worcester Conservative Association proposed a modified division pattern for Worcester City based on 2006 electorate data. These proposals would provide for a level of 40% coterminosity across the city.

District and borough councils

32 Worcester City Council proposed an amended version of the County Council OptionA for Worcester district based on 2001 and 2006 data. It proposed a pattern of ten divisions with two of these divisions having electoral variances above 10% by 2006. It also proposed minor amendments to the County Council's Option B.

33 Redditch Borough Council commented on the County Council's proposals for Redditch borough.

Parish and town councils

34 We received responses from nine parish and town councils. Bishampton and Throckmorton Parish Council proposed that Pinvin ward not be divided between different divisions. Chaddesley Corbett Parish Council stated it was satisfied with the present arrangements. Charlton Parish Council objected to the County Council's proposal to include the parish with part of the urban area of Evesham. Drakes Broughton & Wadborough with Pirton Parish Council stated that it wanted to share county council representation with part of Pershore town. Droitwich Spa Town Council stated that it wanted the integrity of the district wards within the town to be maintained as far as possible. Eldersfield Parish Council stated that it supported no change to the existing arrangements for Powick division. Martley

Parish Council proposed an alternative division arrangement for Malvern Hills district based on projections for 2006. It proposed a pattern of eight divisions, none of which would have an electoral variance above 10% by 2006. Stourport-on-Severn Town Council stated that it supported the County Council's proposals for the town's county divisions. Norton-Juxta-Kempsey Parish Council commented on the whole review process and proposed that the review be deferred.

Other submissions

35 We received a further two submissions from county councillors. Councillor Cairns, member for St Peter division, Worcester, proposed alternative arrangements for a division encompassing the Battenhall and St Peters areas. Councillor Drinkwater, member for St Stephen division, Worcester City, proposed an alternative division pattern for Worcester City similar to the County Council's Option A with amendments proposed for the area to the west of the City and some amendments to the east of the river.

36 Walter Delin, Chief Executive and Returning Officer for Wyre Forest District Council and Howard Martin, Leader the Council, jointly opposed the County Council's proposals for their district. They further proposed alternative arrangements for the Kidderminster area of Wyre Forest.

4 Analysis and draft recommendations

37 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Worcestershire County Council and welcome comments from all those interested relating to the proposed division boundaries, number of councillors and division names. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

38 As with our reviews of districts, our primary aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Worcestershire is 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, and 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 division of the county’.

39 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, and to the boundaries of district wards.

40 We have discussed in Chapter One the additional parameters that apply to reviews of county council electoral arrangements and the need to have regard to the boundaries of district wards in order to achieve coterminosity. In addition, our approach is to ensure that, having reached conclusions on the appropriate number of councillors to be elected to the county council, each district council area is allocated the number of county councillors to which it is entitled.

41 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme that results in exactly the same number of electors per councillor in every division of a county.

42 We accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for an authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable, especially when also seeking to achieve coterminosity in order to facilitate convenient and effective local government, so 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. Accordingly, 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 the boundaries of district wards and community identity. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate must also be taken into account and we would aim to recommend a scheme that provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

43 The recommendations do not affect county, district or parish external boundaries, local taxes, or result in changes to postcodes. Nor is there any evidence that these recommendations will have an adverse effect on house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. Our proposals do not take account of parliamentary boundaries, and we are not therefore able to take into account any representations that are based on these issues.

Electorate forecasts

44 Since 1975 there has been a 29% increase in the electorate of Worcestershire. The County Council submitted electorate data for the years 2001 (2006) based on the six district

reviews in Worcestershire completed in July 2002. Due to the non-availability of 2002 electorate data in the districts of Redditch, Worcester City and Wyre Forest it stated that it used the 2001 electorate and 2006 projections for the purposes of its public consultation and the developments of its proposals. However, in submitting its proposals, the County Council also provided a breakdown of its division proposals based on the 2002 and 2007 data from the new district wards. The County Council projected an increase in the electorate of 3% from 427,137 to 439,781 over the five-year period from 2002 to 2007. It expects most of the growth to be in Worcester City, although a significant amount is also expected in the more rural Malvern Hills district. 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. Advice from the County Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

45 We know that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having considered the County Council's figures, accept that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time. We would welcome further evidence on electorate forecasts during Stage Three.

Council size

46 As explained earlier, we now require justification for any council size proposed, whether it is an increase, decrease or retention of the existing council size.

47 Worcestershire County Council was formed after the local government reorganisation in 1998, with 57 members assuming full powers in April of that year. The re-organisation resulted in the dissolution of the former Hereford & Worcester County Council. Worcestershire County Council presently has 57 members. The County Council proposed a retention of 57 members. It stated that, concurrently with the periodic electoral review, it had also undertaken a revision of its political structures assisted by an evaluation carried out by Professor Steven Leach.

48 The County Council stated that it had approved the adoption of these new political structures, and that these came into effect on 1 October 2003. Issues relating to councillors' workload and time commitments were also the subject of a survey of approximately half of the county councillors. The County Council stated that 87% of those members who responded to this survey considered the present council size to be most appropriate. In relation to overview and scrutiny panels in Worcestershire, Professor Leach stated that there is unlikely to be a significant reduction in overall member activity. He noted that there would be a further commitment of members' time in respect to the introduction of a new Health Scrutiny Committee. In considering this issue, the County Council stated that it 'concluded that there is no evidence gathered from Councillors themselves or from independent observations that there should be either a reduction or increase in the size of the council'. The County Council stated that as 'both as a consequence of a lack of compelling evidence at that time, including the Council's consultation exercise, and subsequently in relation to the review of the Council's political structures no argument has emerged which would suggest a specific variation to the currently proposed size of 57'.

49 The County Council therefore proposed that the retention of a council size of 57 members represented the appropriate size required to achieve effective and convenient local government. The County Council stated that its new political structure would include a cabinet of 10 members. This would include the leader, four cabinet members with specific portfolios and five other cabinet members without portfolio selected on a cross-party basis. In addition to 10 members, the County Council stated that four assistants to cabinet members would provide advisory support.

50 It further stated that the other 43 members would participate on seven Overview and Scrutiny Panels and/or on the four Non Executive panels. It stated that there were 74 places

for members on the Overview and Scrutiny Panels, with most panels having 11 members. This would include a Scrutiny Steering Group, panels for the areas of Education, Social Services, Environment, Resources, Health and one for Specific Issues. The County Council stated that appointments to all these panels would generally adhere to the principle of proportionality, but that allowance would be made to enable members with a particular interest or commitment to a particular scrutiny process. It also stated that there were 25 places for members on the Non Executive Panels. These would include a Planning and Regulatory Committee, a Standards and Ethics Committee, Appellate Panel and Appointments Panel. The County Council stated that the number of members on the individual appellate panels would vary according to their purpose.

51 The County Council also stated that it would continue to develop the four district area forums that provide information and community involvement via public meetings in the development of improved services. It further stated that it should be represented by one local member on each District Local Strategic Partnership to develop effective information flows acting as a conduit for the County Council.

52 The County Council stated that, in addition to members' constituency roles, nearly all members represent the Council on other bodies, such as the Combined Fire Authority, the West Mercia Police Authority, Joint Employee Committees, national, regional and local bodies, partnership arrangements and school governing bodies.

53 Walter Delin Chief Executive and Returning Officer for Wyre Forest District Council, and Howard Martin, Leader the Council, jointly supported the retention of 57 members as the appropriate council size for Worcestershire. They also accepted the reduction in the number of seats for Wyre Forest from 11 to 10 electoral divisions.

54 The City of Worcester Council proposed 57 members as the appropriate number of councillors for Worcestershire, with ten members being allocated for the City of Worcester.

55 Worcester Conservative Association proposed a council size of 57 members with ten members being allocated for the City of Worcester.

56 We received no further proposals for any alternative council size and all the further district-wide submissions put forward proposals consistent with the County Council's proposed allocations under 57 members. 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 statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 57 members.

Electoral arrangements

57 We have carefully considered all the representations received, including the county-wide scheme from the County Council. It should be noted that, when proposing new division patterns, we aim to provide the best balance between achieving a good level of electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests and securing effective and convenient local government. As stated above, the County Council proposed a retention of 57 members with a pattern of 57 single-member divisions across the county. The County Council's proposals would improve electoral equality, compared to the existing arrangements, with the number of divisions where the number of electors would vary by more than 10 per cent from the county average reduced from 29 to three under its Option B for Worcester City and five under Option A.

58 We noted the considerable difficulty the County Council faced in establishing base electorate data for 2002/2007 prior to the end of Stage One. While providing electorate data based on the new district wards for 2002/2007 within its submission, the County Council initially produced its county-wide scheme based on 2001/2006 electorate data. Following the

implementation of new district ward arrangements in Redditch, Worcester City and Wyre Forest in December 2003 it subsequently clarified its scheme to reflect its proposed division patterns in the light of electorate data for 2002/2007. Redditch, Worcester City and Wyre Forest district council also provided shadow electorate registers specifically for the purpose of this review.

59 We accept that this situation may have led to difficulty in the modelling of all the proposals at Stage One which used the 2001/2006 electorate data as the basis of their proposals. However, in assessing proposals for new division patterns we must use 2002/2007 electorate data, as the basis of our draft proposals, we therefore only adopted proposals where we have been able to convert proposals using the correct electorate data for this review.

60 We acknowledge the difficulties faced in seeking to address the electoral inequality in Worcestershire and recognise that the County Council's attempts to improve electoral equality across the county resulted in better levels of electoral equality. However, we noted that its proposals would result in 18% or 16% coterminosity across the county depending on the option used in Worcester City. As stated earlier in this report and in our *Guidance*, we seek to achieve the best available balance between electoral equality and coterminosity, taking into account the statutory criteria. However, we would normally expect coterminosity to be achieved in a significant majority of divisions with a level of attainment of around 60% to 80%.

61 In considering proposed county council electoral arrangements, we attach much importance to achieving coterminosity between the boundaries of county divisions and district wards. Where wards or groups of wards are not coterminous with county divisions, it may not be conducive to effective liaison and co-operative working between the two tiers of local government in addressing matters of common concern. We recognise that it will not always be possible to achieve coterminosity, but we expect to receive significant evidence and argumentation in support of proposals for non-coterminous wards.

62 The County Council submitted further representations detailing its concern in respect of our recommendations in other county reviews and the proposed use of two-member divisions. The County Council stated that it was 'aware that its own scheme did not contain a high degree of coterminosity'. It also stated that its approach was to achieve electoral equality as the main consideration. It further stated that two-member divisions are unlikely to be accepted. However, this submission was received after the end of Stage One and therefore could not be considered as part of the County Council's submission were we to consider using them.

63 In formulating our draft proposals for Worcestershire, we do not take into account other reviews outside the county; rather the approach we take in the reviews of counties is consistent with our *Guidance*. We must therefore have regard to the levels of coterminosity in developing our draft recommendations. With regard to the use of multi-member divisions, as stated above, we now retain the ability to propose these and consider that their use may be appropriate in more urban areas.

64 Within the districts of Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch, Wychavon and Wyre Forest, the County Council stated it proposed levels of 11%, 25%, 0%, 33% and 20% coterminosity, respectively. In options A and B for Worcester City the County Council proposed 20% and 10% coterminosity, respectively. We were concerned that the County Council did not provide sufficient justification to make a case for its proposed division of district wards between county divisions. Within this review we seek proposals that would secure electoral equality, provide the best balance of community identities and interests, secure effective and convenient local government while attaining acceptable levels of coterminosity. We have therefore had to consider a number of alternative division patterns across the county. Where possible we have used the County Council's proposals and the other locally

generated schemes as the basis of our proposals. Overall our proposals would result in a level of 54% coterminosity.

65 As stated above we propose adopting the County Council's proposals for 57 members. Within Bromsgrove district we propose adopting our own pattern of nine single-member divisions. In Malvern Hills we propose using parts of the County Council's and Martley Parish Council's scheme for this area. Within Redditch district we propose adopting our own scheme with a pattern of four two-member wards attaining 100% coterminosity. Within Worcester City we propose adopting large elements of the County Council's Option A, but to provide better levels of coterminosity we propose a single-member St Peter division. In Wychavon district we propose adopting large elements of the Liberal Democrats proposals which share two identical divisions with the County Council proposals. In Wyre Forest district we propose substantially adopting the County Council's proposals. We therefore propose a pattern of 52 divisions, representing 57 members.

66 As highlighted above, we are proposing five two-member divisions. Following the commencement of Part IV of the Local Government Act 2000 and, in particular, section 89, the constraints which previously prevented the creation of multi-member county divisions have been removed. In proposing these two-member divisions we judge that they would provide the best balance between achieving a good level of electoral equality while securing effective and convenient local government.

67 Our proposals would improve electoral equality and coterminosity compared to the current arrangements. We judge that this reflects the geographical nature of the county and in particular, our aim to provide the best balance between electoral equality, reflecting community identities and interests and providing for effective and convenient local government. For county division purposes, the six district areas in the county are considered in turn, as follows:

- i. Bromsgrove district (page 29)
- ii. Malvern Hills district (page 31)
- iii. Redditch borough (page 33)
- iv. Worcester City (page 35)
- v. Wychavon district (page 39)
- vi. Wyre Forest district (page 41)

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

Bromsgrove district

69 Under the current arrangements Bromsgrove district is represented by ten county councillors serving ten divisions. The division of Alvechurch currently has 8% fewer electors per councillor than the county average (11% fewer by 2007). The division of Barnt Green currently has a percentage equal to the county average (2% fewer by 2007). The division of Bromsgrove North currently has 10% more electors per councillor than the county average (6% more by 2007). The division of Bromsgrove South currently has 33% more electors per councillor than the county average (45% more by 2007). The division of Bromsgrove West currently has 19% more electors per councillor than the county average (17% more by 2007). The division of Hagley & Furlongs currently has 10% fewer electors per councillor than the county average (12% fewer by 2007). The division of Rubery currently has 31% fewer electors per councillor than the county average (32% fewer by 2007). The division of Uffdown currently has 75% fewer electors per councillor than the county average (75% fewer by 2007). The division of Woodvale currently has 7% fewer electors per councillor than the county average (10% fewer by 2007). The division of Wythall is currently equal to the county average (3% fewer by 2007).

70 We received one submission for this area from the County Council. In accordance with the correct allocation under 57 members, it proposed a division pattern of nine single-member divisions with a level of 11% coterminosity across the district. These proposals would provide no electoral divisions with an electoral variance above 9% by 2007.

71 In the north of the district the County Council proposed a Clent Hills division comprising the district wards of Hagley and Uffdown, along with Belbroughton parish ward part of Furlongs ward. It stated that it sought to link the Hagley and Romsley areas together due to the poor access between Romsley and the south-eastern area of the district.

72 The County Council stated the area to the west of the M42 should be linked to the Catshill area as there are several roads crossing the M5 to Catshill that provide good access. The County Council therefore proposed a new Woodvale division comprising the district wards of Woodvale and Catshill, and Fairfield parish ward, part of the Furlongs ward. It also proposed this division encompass the part of Sidemoor ward generally west of Broad Street.

73 Towards the centre of the district it proposed a new Rubery division comprising Waseley and Beacon district wards and the Bellevue area, which is part of Marlbrook district ward. The County Council also proposed that the Cofton Hackett area that forms the northern part of Hillside district ward also be included in this proposed division.

74 To the south of the district the County Council argued that there were few alternatives other than linking the Alvechurch settlement with its surrounding rural areas. It therefore proposed Alvechurch and Wythall South district wards be combined with part of Tardebigge district ward generally east of the A448 road.

75 It further proposed the retention of the Wythall division comprising Drakes Cross & Walkers Heath and Hollywood & Majors Green wards.

76 Within the Bromsgrove area the County Council proposed four single-member divisions. It proposed that the central and northern parts of Bromsgrove be linked. The County Council proposed that Bromsgrove East division comprise Linthurst ward, and parts of the district wards of Marlbrook, Hillside, St Johns and Norton. It proposed that the western boundary follow along Stratford Road, northwards along Birmingham Road, the A38 Roman road, then follow the western boundary of Marlbrook district ward and then along Golden Cross Lane. It proposed that the eastern boundary follow along the railway line, along the M42, and then northward along the north-eastern boundary of Alvechurch division.

77 To the west it proposed a new Bromsgrove North division comprising parts of St Johns, Sidemoor and Norton district wards. In the south-west it proposed a new Bromsgrove South division comprising the district wards of Stoke Prior, Slideslow, and parts of the Stoke Heath, Charford and Tardebigge district wards. Towards the south it proposed a new Bromsgrove West division comprising Whitford ward, and parts of Charford and Stoke Heath wards. Under these proposals no division would have a variance above 9% by 2007.

78 We have carefully considered the County Council's proposals for Bromsgrove. As stated above, in developing proposals for the districts we have regard for the overall level of coterminosity achieved. We were concerned at the low level of coterminosity achieved by its proposals and do not consider that sufficient evidence and argumentation has been provided to support its proposed division pattern. We consider that it is possible to propose a division pattern that provides a good balance between coterminosity and good levels of electoral equality. We therefore propose a different division pattern of nine single-member divisions. We consider that our proposals secure a good balance of the statutory criteria and achieve 100% coterminosity within Bromsgrove.

79 In the east of the district we propose adopting the County Council's proposal for Wythall division. We also propose combining Alvechurch and Wythall South district wards in a new Alvechurch division, noting that the A435 and M42 provide good access between the Wythall and Alvechurch areas.

80 To the south of the district we propose combining the district wards of Linhurst, Tardebigge and Slideslow in a new Bromsgrove East division, with access between the more urban Slideslow ward and the Tardebigge settlements being provided by the A448 road. Linhurst ward would be well served by access to the rest of the division by the B4096 and Pike Pool Lane roads. We further propose that Stoke Prior, Stoke Heath and Charford district wards be combined in a proposed Bromsgrove South ward.

81 Within the north of Bromsgrove town we propose combining the district wards of Sidemoor and Whitford within a proposed Bromsgrove West division. To the east of the town we propose a new Bromsgrove Central division, combining Norton and St Johns district wards with access between the wards being provided by A38 Roman road.

82 To the centre of the district we propose a new Woodvale division comprising Catshill, Marlbrook and Woodvale district wards. In north of Bromsgrove town, south of the M5 motorway, we propose uniting Beacon, Hillside and Waseley district wards in a new Beacon division.

83 Generally to the north of the M5 motorway we propose one new division similar to that proposed by the Council, a new Clents Hill division comprising the district wards of Furlongs, Hagley and Uffdown.

84 We are aware that our proposed divisions would not secure as good a level of electoral equality as the County Council's scheme. However, we have not been persuaded to adopt its scheme with such low levels of coterminosity, considering the alternative options available. In Bromsgrove we are proposing three divisions, Alvechurch, Beacon and Clent Hills, with variances of 11%, 15% and 11% respectively by 2007. All three of these variances facilitate 100% coterminosity within Bromsgrove.

85 Our draft recommendations would achieve 100% coterminosity within Bromsgrove district between county divisions and district ward boundaries. Under our draft recommendations the proposed divisions of Alvechurch, Beacon, Bromsgrove Central, Bromsgrove East, Bromsgrove South, Bromsgrove West, Clents Hills, Woodvale and Wythall would initially have 7% fewer, 20% more, 3% fewer, 6% fewer, 2% fewer, 4% more, 15% more, 13% more and equal to the county average per councillor respectively (11% fewer, 15% more, 1% fewer, 5% more, 2% more, 2% fewer, 11% more, 9% more and 5% fewer respectively by 2007). Our draft proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Malvern Hills district

86 Under the current arrangements, the district of Malvern Hills is represented by eight county councillors serving eight divisions. The division of Croome currently has 7% fewer electors per councillor than the county average (7% fewer by 2007). The division of Hallow currently has 2% more electors per councillor (3% more by 2007). The division of Malvern Chase is currently equal to the county average (2% fewer by 2007). The division of Malvern Langland currently has 10% fewer electors per councillor (11% fewer by 2007). The division of Malvern Link currently has 18% more electors per councillor (16% more by 2007). The division of Malvern Trinity currently has 3% fewer electors per councillor (5% more by 2007). The division of Powick currently has 1% more electors per councillor (equal to the county average by 2007). The division of Tenbury currently has 26% fewer electors per councillor (27% fewer by 2007).

87 The County Council proposed a pattern of eight single-member divisions for the district of Malvern Hills, providing a level of coterminosity of 25% across the district, with no electoral variance above 10% by 2007. It proposed that in the south, the area west of the River Severn be linked to Upton-upon-Severn parish ward, as it argued there were no viable alternative configurations for the area. It therefore proposed a Croome division comprising Kempsey and Ripple district wards and the parish of Upton-upon-Severn. On the western side of the River Severn it proposed Powick, Morton and Longdon wards and Hanley parish be combined in a new Powick division.

88 In the centre of Malvern Hills the County Council proposed that the district council wards of Wells and Chase also be combined in a new Malvern Chase division. It also proposed combining the central Malvern district wards of Pickersleigh and Priory in a proposed Malvern Langland division. It proposed a new Malvern Link division comprising Alfrick & Leigh district ward, part of Link district ward and the parish of Martley. It further proposed a Malvern Trinity division comprising West and Dyson Perrins wards and part of the Link district ward. The County Council proposed that the area of West Malvern be linked to the northern part of Malvern town to the west of the railway line.

89 In the north of the district, in order to 'generate sufficient electorate', the County Council proposed a Tenbury division, extending from Tenbury district ward in the west to Teme Valley ward towards the east and including Lindridge ward and the parishes of Pensax and Abberley.

90 The County Council also proposed a new Hallow division comprising Baldwin, Hallow and Broadheath district wards and the parishes of Great Witley, Little Witley, Hillhampton, Wichenford and Kenswick.

91 Under the County Councils proposals in Malvern Hills the eight divisions of Tenbury, Hallow, Malvern Link, Powick, Croome, Malvern Trinity, Malvern Langland and Malvern Chase would have electoral variances of 5% below, 7% below, 6% below, 3% above, 9% below, 3% below, 2% above and 2% above the country average respectively in 2002 (5% below, 7% below, 5% below, 3% below, 10% below, 7% above, 1% above and 1% below by 2007).

92 Eldersfield Parish Council proposed that there should be no change to the arrangements for the division of Powick.

93 Martley Parish Council proposed a pattern of eight single-member divisions based on electorate projections for 2006. It proposed identical arrangements to the County Council's for the south of the district.

94 However, in the north of the district, it proposed two coterminous divisions. It proposed a new Tenbury division comprising Lindridge, Teme Valley, Tenbury and Woodbury district wards. It also proposed a new Hallow division comprising the district wards of Baldwin, Broadheath, Hallow and Martley. It argued that the 'natural valleys form geographic and demographic corridors linking Martley to neighbouring parishes to the northeast and east. Along these corridors the majority of local transport and service infrastructure is directed to and from the Parish.' It further argued that the parish of Martley has close ties to neighbouring parishes and communities, and has coordinated programmes with Wichenford in support for the elderly, and in transport schemes with Hallow and Broadheath.

95 Martley Parish Council's proposals for pattern of eight divisions secured a level of coterminosity of 38%. In the south of the district it proposed an identical division pattern to the County Council's proposals. It proposed identical arrangements for the proposed Powick and Croome divisions. However, it proposed a new coterminous Malvern Link division comprised of Alfrick & Leigh and Link district wards. It also proposed minor amendments to the County Council's proposed Malvern Langland and Malvern Trinity divisions. It proposed

that Malvern Langland division be comprised of Pickersleigh ward and part of Priory district ward. It also proposed that Malvern Trinity division be comprised of West district ward, Dyson Perrins district ward, part of Priory district ward and part of Wells district ward.

96 It argued that Martley parish had no direct links with Alfick and Leigh, nor Malvern Link. It argued that the orientation of the parish and its boundaries lies to the north, with Berrow Green being the only small hamlet to the south of the centre

97 We have carefully considered the proposals submitted for Malvern Hills. As stated above, in developing proposals for the districts we must have regard for the overall level of coterminosity achieved. Again we were concerned at the low level of coterminosity achieved by the County Council's proposals.

98 In the south of the district, both the County Council and Martley Parish Council proposed the same division pattern with the area west of the River Severn being linked to Upton-upon Severn parish. We accept the difficulty in providing two coterminous divisions in the south of the district where the River Severn provides such a distinct grouping of settlements to the east. In light of the agreement on this configuration being the best option available, we propose adopting the County Council's and Martley Parish Council's proposed Croome and Powick divisions.

99 In the north of the district we propose adopting Martley Parish Council's proposals for the two coterminous divisions of Tenbury and Hallow. We consider these proposals provide for good levels of electoral equality, maintain a better reflection of the community identity than the County Council's scheme in this area and contribute to a better level of coterminosity across the county.

100 In the central area of Malvern town we noted the similarities between the two schemes. However, in light of our proposals for the north of the district, we propose a new Malvern Link division comprising the whole of Link district ward and Alfrick & Leigh district ward as proposed by Martley Parish Council. Although similar to Martley Parish Council's proposals, we propose utilising fully coterminous divisions within the Malvern town area. We propose adopting the County Council's proposed Malvern Langland and Chase divisions the former being comprised of Pickersleigh and Priory wards, and the latter combining Wells and Chase wards. We further propose a coterminous division of Malvern Trinity comprising both the district wards of Dyson Perrins and West.

101 Our draft recommendations would achieve 75% coterminosity between county divisions and district ward boundaries. Under our draft recommendations the proposed divisions of Croome, Hallow, Malvern Chase, Malvern Langland, Malvern Link, Malvern Trinity, Powick and Tenbury would initially have 10% fewer, 11% fewer, 2% more, 2% more, 1% more, -22% fewer, 3% more and 5% more electors per councillor than the county average respectively (10% fewer, 10% fewer, 1% fewer, 1% more, 1% more, 12% fewer, 3% more and 6% more respectively by 2007). Our draft proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Redditch borough

102 Under the current arrangements, the borough of Redditch is represented by eight county councillors serving eight divisions. Batchley division currently has 7% fewer electors per councillor than the county average (7% more by 2007). Church Hill division currently has 3% fewer electors per councillor (3% more by 2007). Crabbs Cross division currently has 28% more electors per councillor (28% more by 2007). Lodge Park division currently has 11% fewer electors per councillor (11% fewer by 2007). Matchborough division currently has 23% more electors per councillor (15% more by 2007). Redditch Central division currently has 18% fewer electors per councillor (17% fewer by 2007). Redditch West division currently

has 1% more electors per councillor (equal to the county average by 2007). The Winyates division currently has 13% fewer electors per councillor (18% fewer by 2007).

103 At Stage One the County Council proposed a pattern of eight divisions, none of which were coterminous, but no ward having an electoral variance above 5% by 2007. It noted that, although Redditch was designated a 'New Town' and is predominantly urban in character, it retained the parish of Feckenham in the south-west which contains a substantial rural hinterland. It stated that it sought to formulate a pattern of four electoral divisions north of the A448 and A4189 roads and four to the south of these roads.

104 The County Council proposed that in the north-east of the borough a new Church Hill division combine Church Hill borough ward and parts of Abbey ward generally to the west of the River Arrow. It argued that in order to generate sufficient electorate for a division to the east of the borough, parts of the south of Lakeside needed to be added to the Winyates area. It therefore proposed a new Winyates division comprising Winyates borough ward and that part of Lodge Park borough ward east of the Arrow Valley and south of the Lakeside area. It also proposed a new Matchborough division comprising Matchborough borough ward and areas of Green Lane, Park Farm and Woodrow, which are part of the Greenlands borough ward west of the Arrow Valley.

105 It proposed that Batchley be linked to Riverside in a new Batchley division, combining the Batchley borough ward with the areas of Enfield and Riverside which are part of Abbey borough ward. It further proposed that the northern part of the Lakeside area be placed in a new Redditch Central division. It proposed that this new division combine Central borough ward with part of Lodge Park borough ward and part of Abbey borough ward.

106 The County Council also proposed a new Lodge Park division linking the area of Headless Cross to the areas of Greenlands and Oakenshaw. It proposed that this division comprise part of Headless Cross & Oakenshaw borough ward and part of Greenlands borough ward.

107 It further proposed that the remaining urban part of Redditch towards the south-west be divided in two and be combined with the rural areas of Feckenham. It proposed a new Redditch West division linking the settlements of Webheath and Callow Hill with Feckenham. This division would comprise West borough ward, part of Astwood Bank & Feckenham borough ward, part of Crabbs Cross borough ward and part of Headless Cross & Oakenshaw borough ward. It also proposed a new Crabbs Cross division combining part of Astwood Bank & Feckenham borough ward and part of Crabbs Cross borough ward.

108 Under the County Council's proposals Redditch borough would comprise eight single-member wards, Redditch West, Crabbs Cross, Lodge Park, Matchborough, Winyates, Church Hill, Redditch Central and Batchley with electoral variances of 4% above, 1% below, 1% above, 4% above, equal to the county average, 2% above, 2% above and 10% below the county average (5% above, 3% fewer, 2% fewer, equal to the county average, 2% fewer, 2% fewer, 4% more and 5% more by 2007).

109 Redditch Borough Council noted the significant difficulty the County Council experienced in developing proposals for the borough. It stated that it supported the County Council's proposals to unite the Church Hill area in one division. It proposed that the Wirehill area remain attached to the Greenlands borough ward as there are no direct links apart from footpaths to the Oakenshaw South area.

110 The Borough Council noted that the proposed boundaries around the Headcross, Crabbs Cross and Webheath areas and to the north of the town centre did not achieve good levels of coterminosity. It objected to the County Council's proposals to extend the western boundary of the proposed Winyates division to include parts of the Lodge Park and Lakeside

areas across the Arrow Valley Park. It proposed that a lower number of electors should be accepted for the Winyates division, or that Studley Road be used as the boundary between the Lakeside and Lodge Park localities to form the eastern boundary of an extended Winyates division.

111 Having carefully considered the County Council's proposals, we have not been convinced that its proposals, though securing good levels of electoral equality, represent the best option available for Redditch with a level of coterminosity of 0%. We appreciate the difficulty posed in formulating a scheme in urban areas with an allocation of eight members. However, in order to provide a balance between the statutory criteria and the need to maintain a good level of coterminosity across the borough, we propose creating four coterminous two-member divisions. We noted the comments of Redditch Borough Council and have sought where possible to provide a pattern that addresses its concerns and maintains divisions that reflect borough ward boundaries.

112 To the east we propose using the Arrow Valley as the boundary between the proposed Arrow Valley East and Arrow Valley West divisions. Arrow Valley East division would combine the Churc Hill, Matchborough and Winyates borough wards. We propose that Arrow Valley West division comprises Abbey, Lodge Park and Greenlands borough wards. In the south of the borough we propose combining Astwood Bank & Feckenham, Crabbs Cross and Headless Cross & Oakenshaw borough wards in a proposed Redditch South division. The remainder of the borough would be combined to form a Redditch North division. Under our scheme all four divisions would be coterminous and no division would have a electoral variances above 10% by 2007.

113 Our draft recommendations would achieve 100% coterminosity within Redditch borough between county divisions and borough ward boundaries. Under our draft recommendations the proposed divisions of Arrow Valley East, Arrow Valley West, Redditch South and Redditch North would initially have 16% more, 8% more, 9% fewer and 3% fewer electors per councillor than the county average respectively (10% more, 10% fewer, 1% more and 1% more by 2007). Our draft proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Worcester City

114 Under the current arrangements the district of Worcester City is represented by nine county councillors serving nine divisions. The Bedwardine division currently has 28% fewer electors per councillor than the country average (27% fewer by 2007). The Claines division currently has 17% more electors per councillor (17% more by 2007). The Nunnery division currently has 11% more electors per councillor (11% more by 2007). The St Barnabas division currently has 12% fewer electors per councillor (13% fewer by 2007). The St Clement division currently has 14% fewer electors per councillor (15% fewer by 2007). The St John division currently has 33% fewer electors per councillor (31% fewer by 2007). The St Martin division currently has 93% more electors per councillor (94% more by 2007). The St Peter division currently has 38% more electors per councillor (44% more by 2007). The St Stephen division currently has 3% fewer electors per councillor (3% fewer by 2007).

115 At Stage One the County Council submitted two proposals for the district of Worcester City, but it did not provide division names. It stated that the area to the west of the River Severn would be entitled to 2.3 electoral divisions and therefore this would create difficulties in providing a division pattern with the correct allocations within the terms of the statutory criteria. It proposed that a division must cross the river to allow a viable district-wide division pattern.

116 Under Option A the County Council proposed a division pattern that provided 20% coterminosity with none of the proposed divisions having an electoral variance above 10% by 2007. It proposed that the northern part of the area on the west bank of the River Severn

in St Clement district ward be combined with the area on the east bank that runs from Cherry Orchard to Pitchcroft in Cathedral district ward to form the proposed WC1(a) division. Access between either sides of the river would be provided by the Sabrina footbridge.

117 It further proposed a WC3(a) division comprising part of St John district ward south of Bromyard Road and the whole of Bedwardine district ward. It also proposed a new WC2(a) division comprising part of St John district ward and that part of St Clement district generally to the east of Henwick Road and to the rear of properties on Henwick Avenue.

118 To the east of the district the County Council proposed the district wards of Warndon Parish North and Warndon Parish South in a new coterminous WC10(a) division. It also proposed a coterminous WC9(a) division comprising Warndon and Gorse Hill district wards. In the north of the district the County Council proposed a new WC4(a) division comprising Claines district ward and part of Arboretum district ward generally to the south of Waterworks Road and to the west of Barbourne Road.

119 In the centre of the district it proposed a new WC5(a) division comprising St Stephen district ward and that part of Arboretum district ward west of Gillam Street, east of Barbourne Road and bounded by the railway line to the south. It proposed that a new WC8(a) division comprise Rainbow Hill district ward and that part of Cathedral division east of City Walls Road and bound by London Road to the south. It also proposed a new WC7(a) division comprising Nunnery district ward and that part of Battenhall district ward including the Red Hill area and the area generally west of Battenhall Road and south of the properties of Sebright Avenue. To the south of the city the County Council proposed a new WC6(a) division comprising St Peters Parish district ward and the remaining western part of Battenhall district ward.

120 Under Option B the County Council proposed a division pattern that provided 10% coterminosity with none of the proposed divisions having an electoral variance above 8% by 2007. In relation to the north of the district, it proposed WC4(b), WC9(b) and WC10(b) divisions that are identical to its proposed WC4(a), WC9(a) and WC10(a) divisions. To the south of the city the County Council's proposed WC6(b) and WC7(b) divisions are identical to its WC6(a) and WC7(a).

121 In the centre of the district it proposed a new WC8(b) division comprising Rainbow Hill district ward, and that part of the Gorse Hill to the south of Tolladine Road and north of the properties on Avon Road. It proposed that this division also include the area east of Astwood Road and south of Bilford Road, the properties north of Green Lane, parts of St Stephen district ward and that part of Arboretum district ward east of the Worcester and Birmingham Canal.

122 It proposed a new WC5(b) division comprising the remaining part of St Stephen ward, part of Arboretum district ward bound by the railway line in the south, and that part of the Cathedral district ward bound by Pitchcroft Recreation Ground to the west.

123 The County Council stated that the key difference between Option B and Option A was that the former proposal links the area just west of the main river crossing, the Worcester Bridge, with the City Council Cathedral ward south of the Worcester to Malvern railway line. It proposed that this new WC3(b) division comprise the part of Cathedral ward generally south of the railway, and part of St Clement district ward across the River Severn bound by the river to the east and generally east of Comer Road. The County Council also proposed that this division include that part St John district ward bound by Bromyard Road to the south and the properties around Buck Street and McIntyre Road. Under this option, access across the River Severn would be provided by the Worcester Bridge. The County Council further proposed a new WC2(b) division comprising Bedwardine district ward and that part of St John district ward south of the railway line. It also proposed a new WC1(b) division comprising the remaining parts of St Clement and St John district wards.

124 Worcester City Council stated that it supported a council size of 57 as the appropriate number of councillors for the County Council. When its proposals were put forward before a full council meeting, 31 of the 36 councillors were present. Of these, 21 voted in favour of an amended version of the County Council's Option A, eight voted against and two abstained. It also supported 10 members as the appropriate number of councillors for the City of Worcester and further that stated the number of electors on the west side of the River Severn warranted more than two electoral divisions but fewer than three, and therefore a division that crosses it was needed. It made its proposals based on 2001/2006 electorate data.

125 Worcester City Council stated that it supported the County Council's Option A scheme. However, it proposed that this scheme be amended to provide for a pattern of 10 divisions providing a level of 40% coterminosity. East of the River Severn, Worcester City Council proposed no changes to the proposals that were originally put out for consultation by the County Council.

126 On the west side of the River Severn, it stated that within its proposals none of the three city council wards would be split into more than two parts and no county division would be comprised of parts of more than two wards. It proposed that the whole of St Clement district ward be included with part of Cathedral district ward. It proposed that its St John and Bedwardine county divisions be identical to the city district wards of the same names. It conceded that these divisions would both have high variances (12% fewer and 17% fewer respectively by 2006). However, it considered that these divisions would facilitate increased coterminosity to 40% across the district as opposed to 20% under Option A of the County Council's scheme and 10% under the County Council's Option B.

127 The Worcester Conservative Association stated that it supported 57 members as the council size and the allocation of 10 county councillors for Worcester City. It also based its proposals on the electorate data for 2001/2006. It opposed the County Council's Option B, stating that the level of 10% coterminosity was too low. It stated that it preferred the Option A proposals on the east side of the River Severn, but did not support the County Council's proposals for west of the River Severn. It therefore used the County Council's proposals as a basis for its proposals for the east of the River Severn.

128 It further stated that by 2006 the electorate to the west of the River Severn would be entitled to more than two members but fewer than three. It therefore supported using a cross-river division. It proposed identical arrangements to Worcester City Council west of the River Severn, with Bedwardine and St John district wards made coterminous with two county divisions, and St Clement district ward combined with part of the Cathedral ward to the east of the River Severn. It argued that the high variances did not exceed 20% and that this electoral equality facilitated an overall scheme for Worcester City. Under its proposals there would be a 40% level of coterminosity.

129 County Councillor Drinkwater, member for St Stephen ward, objected to the County Council's Option B, arguing that it was not appropriate due to its low level of coterminosity and stated that this option would confuse the local electorate and would not reflect community identities. She stated support for the amendment to the Option A scheme proposed by Worcester City Council and the Conservatives, arguing that this option would involve less confusion to electors, a greater maintenance of community identity, lower administration costs and encourage easier liaison between city and county councillors.

130 Councillor Drinkwater also argued that the resulting electoral imbalances of the proposed St John and Bedwardine county divisions were justified on the grounds that the two divisions east of the river Severn had historically been smaller and had coincided with the ward boundaries. She also noted that the present political balance of the divisions would not be altered. Councillor Drinkwater further stated that there was sufficient access via the

Sabrina cycle and foot bridge between both sides of the proposed Riverside division that would straddle the River Severn. She stated that residents on both sides of the river share common interests associated with their location such as flooding, riverside enhancement, river traffic and possible development.

131 Councillor Cairns member for St Peter division opposed both Option A and B in respect of their effects on the present St Peter division. He argued that the area of Battenhall be combined with the St Peter area due to the community links between them. He proposed that the area of Battenhall ward bounded by London Road to the north, Bath Road and the River Severn to the west and the railway line to the east be combined with that part of the St Peter's Parish east of the same railway line.

132 We have carefully considered the proposals submitted for Worcester City and note the difficulty in providing a scheme which for a viable division pattern either side of the River Severn. We considered creating two single-member divisions to the west of the River Severn. However, we found this would not secure good levels of electoral equality. We accept that in this particular case, due to the demography of the electorate across the two parts of the City either side of the River Severn, achieving higher levels of coterminosity would not be possible. We therefore propose adopting the County Council's Option A to the west of the River Severn which creates two single-member divisions and another division that straddles the River Severn combining St Clement ward with parts of Cathedral district ward. However, we also propose modifications to the proposals to the east of the River Severn to provide a better balance of the statutory criteria.

133 In considering the proposed WC3(b) division which crosses the River Severn in Option B, we were not persuaded that the access between the south-eastern parts of Cathedral district ward and the central parts of St John district ward made this a viable option.

134 To the east of the City we propose two coterminous single-member divisions of Gorse Hill & Warndon and Warndon. The former would combine Warndon and Gorse Hill district wards. The latter would comprise Warndon Parish North and Warndon Parish South district wards. In the south we had considered a two-member division combining Battenhall, Nunnery and St Peters Parish district wards; however, we consider that there would not be suitable access between the north of Nunnery district ward and communities in the St Peter area. We therefore propose adopting a coterminous single-member St Peters division combining St Peters Parish and Battenhall district wards. Although this division would result in a 13% variance by 2007, it would facilitates a higher level of coterminosity and a better balance of the statutory criteria across the district. We further note that this provision incorporates the proposals of Councillor Cairns.

135 In the north we propose adopting the County Council's proposal to combine the north-western part of Arboretum district ward with Claines district ward in Claines division. We also propose adopting the County Council's proposal that the remaining part of Arboretum ward be combined with St Stephen ward in a proposed St Stephen division.

136 In the centre of the district we propose adopting a similar proposal to the County Council's proposed Rainbow Hill division comprising part of the Cathedral and Rainbow Hill wards. However to provide better levels of electoral equality in Nunnery division we propose transferring the area bounded by Rose Avenue and Tolladine Road to Nunnery division. We also propose transferring that part of Cathedral ward east of the railway line into the new Nunnery division. Under our scheme three of the ten divisions (or 30%) in the city would be coterminous, with no division with an electoral variance above 13% by 2007.

137 To the west of the River Severn we propose adopting the County Council's proposed division pattern of a new St John division comprising part of St John district ward and that part of St Clement district ward between Henwick Road and Henwick Avenue. We further

propose adopting a new Bedwardine division comprising Bedwardine district ward and that part of St John district ward south of Bromyard Road. We also propose a St Clement division following the County Council's proposal linking the remaining part of St Clement district ward west of the River Severn and part of Cathedral ward to the east of the river.

138 Our draft recommendations would achieve 30% coterminosity within Worcester City between county divisions and district ward boundaries. Under our draft recommendations the proposed divisions of Bedwardine, Claines, Gorse Hill & Warndon, Nunnery, Rainbow Hill, St Clement, St John, St Peter, St Stephen and Warndon Parish would have 11% fewer, 2% fewer, 8% more, 13% fewer, 9% fewer, 10% fewer, 14% fewer, 12% more, 3% more and 4% more electors than the county average respectively initially (10% fewer, 3% fewer, 8% more, 10% fewer, 11% fewer, 13% fewer, 7% fewer, 13% more, 2% more and 5% more by 2007). Our draft proposals are illustrated on the large map and on Map 1 at the back of the report.

Wychavon district

139 Under the current arrangements the district of Wychavon is represented by 11 county councillors serving 11 divisions. The district is wholly parished, containing 80 parishes. The Bowbrook division currently has 17% more electors per councillor than the county average (22% more by 2007). The Bredon division currently has 6% fewer electors per councillor (7% fewer by 2007). The Broadway division currently has 5% fewer electors per councillor (2% fewer by 2007). The Droitwich Rural division currently has 10% fewer electors per councillor (10% fewer by 2007). The Droitwich South division currently has 51% more electors per councillor (56% more by 2007). The Droitwich Town division currently has 4% fewer electors per councillor (9% fewer by 2007). The Evesham Hampton division currently has 52% more electors per councillor (51% more by 2007). The Evesham Town division currently has 7% more electors per councillor (16% more by 2007). The Inkberrow division currently has 2% more electors per councillor (2% fewer by 2007). The Pershore Town division currently has 4% more electors per councillor (6% more by 2007). The Littletons division currently has 11% more electors per councillor (10% more by 2007).

140 At Stage One the County Council proposed a pattern of 12 divisions, providing a level of 33% coterminosity, with no ward having an electoral variance above 10%. The County Council considered that the rural areas west and north of Droitwich town should be combined. It proposed a new Droitwich Rural division comprising the district wards of Hartlebury and Ombersley, and the parishes of North Claines, Elmbridge, Hampton Lovett, Westwood and Elmley Lovett.

141 It proposed that the urban division of Droitwich West be comprised of the district wards of Droitwich West and Droitwich South West. It proposed that Droitwich East division be comprised of the district wards of Droitwich Central, Droitwich East and Dodderhill. To the south of Droitwich the County Council proposed a new Bowbrook division comprising the district wards of Bowbrook and Droitwich South East and the parishes of Hanbury, Stock & Bradley, Hindlip, Martin Hussingtree and Sarlwarpe.

142 Towards the centre of the of the district the County Council proposed a new Inkberrow division comprising the wards of Norton & Whittington and Upton Snodsbury, and the parishes of Abbots Morton, Church Lench, Cookhill, Rous Lench, Abberton and Inkberrow. It further proposed a Pershore division comprising Pershore and Pinvin district wards. In the east of the district the County Council proposed a new Bredon Hill division comprising Eckington, Bredon and Drakes Broughton district wards, and the parishes of Great Comberton, Little Comberton, Wick and Bricklehampton.

143 In the urban area encompassing Evesham town the County Council proposed a pattern of three county divisions. It proposed a new Evesham North division comprising the district wards of Evesham North and Harvington & Norton, and the parishes of Offenham

and Aldington. It proposed a new Evesham South division comprising Evesham South and Bengeworth district wards. It further proposed a new Evesham West division comprising Little Hampton and Great Hampton district wards and the parishes of Charlton, Crophorne and Fladbury. To the south of the district it proposed a new Broadway division comprising South Bredon Hill, Broadway & Wickhamford, and the parishes of Elmley Castle, Netherton, Aston Somerville, Hinton-on-the-Green and Sedgeberrow. It further proposed a Littletons division comprising the parishes of Badsey and Bretforton and the district wards of Honeybourne & Pebworth and The Littletons. Under the County Council proposals no division would have a variance above 10% by 2007.

144 West Worcestershire Constituency Liberal Democrats proposed an alternative division pattern that achieved a level of 25% coterminosity. They argued that their proposals retained a better reflection of community identities, with divisions that utilised the town boundaries. They proposed identical arrangements for the County Council's proposed Pershore and Evesham South divisions.

145 To the north of the district they proposed a new Ombersley division combining all the rural areas from Ombersley parish in the west to the northern parts of Inkberrow ward in the east of the district. The new Ombersley division would combine the wards of Hartlebury, Ombersley and Dodderhill and the parishes of Elmley Lovett, Elmbridge, Hampton Lovett, Hanbury, Stock & Bradley, and Westwood. The Liberals proposed the majority of Droitwich be split into two divisions, with the new Droitwich East division being comprised of Droitwich East district ward, part of Droitwich South West district ward and part of Droitwich South East district ward. It proposed a new Droitwich West division comprising Droitwich West, Droitwich Central and part of Droitwich South West district wards.

146 The Liberal Democrats proposed that the southern part of Droitwich town be bound by Worcester Road and Oakland Avenue be combined with the parishes of Hadzor, Hindlip, Himbleton, Huddington, Oddingley, Martin Hussingtree, North Claines, Salwarpe and Tibberton in a new Bowbrook division.

147 Concerning the south of the district the Liberal Democrats stated that during the consultation period Fladbury, Crophorne and Charlton Parish Councils all objected to the County Council's proposals to link parishes with the more urban areas of Evesham. They proposed that the majority of Evesham town be split between two divisions. They further proposed a new Evesham North West division combining part of Evesham North district ward and the district wards of Great Hampton and Little Hampton. The Liberal Democrats also proposed a new Harvington division comprising Harvington & Norton district ward, those parts of Evesham North bound by the railway line, Swan Lane and Common Road, and the parishes of Abberton, Abbots Morton, Cookhill, Church Lench, Inkberrow and Rous Lench. They further proposed a Bredon division comprising the district wards of Eckington, Bredon, South Bredon Hill, and the parishes of Bricklehampton, Elmley Castle, Great Comberton, Little Comberton Netherton and Wick. To the east of the district they proposed a coterminous Littletons division comprising The Littletons, Honeybourne & Pebworth, Badsey and Bretforton & Offenham district wards.

148 To the west of the district the Liberal Democrats proposed a new Upton Snodsbury division comprising the parish of Crowle, and the district wards of Drakes Broughton, Norton & Whittington and Upton Snodsbury. It further proposed a Bredon division comprising the district wards of Eckington, Bredon, South Bredon Hill, parts of Fladbury and parts of Elmley Castle & Somerville. The Liberal Democrats proposed a new Broadway division comprising Broadway and Wichhamford district ward, part of Elmley Castle and Somerville district ward and part of Fladbury district ward. Under the Liberal Democrats scheme there would be no division with a electoral variance above 10% by 2007.

149 Bishampton & Throckmorton Parish Council argued that the Pinvin district ward, of which it forms part, should not be split between divisions. It argued that the area had

developed a strong community identity. It further stated support for the County Council's proposals to combine Pershore and Pinvin wards in one division. Charlton Parish Council stated that it objected to being within a division with part of the urban area of Evesham town. It stated that its traditional links were with the Pershore area. Drakes Broughton & Wadborough with Pirton Parish Council stated that it preferred to be represented by a county councillor who also represented part of Pershore town. It further stated that it objected to the County Council's proposal to place it within the proposed Bredon Hill division. Droitwich Spa Town Council stated that it preferred minimal disruption to the current town boundary. Norton-Juxta-Kempsey Parish Council commented on the lack of 2002 (2007) baseline data and proposed that until it was available the whole review should be deferred.

150 We have carefully considered the proposals submitted for Wychavon. Both schemes provided by the County Council and the Liberal Democrats provided good levels of electoral equality but were low in levels of coterminosity. However, in light of the local submissions received we considered that the Liberal Democrats' scheme better reflected rural communities in providing divisions that kept the urban areas of Evesham and Droitwich in more compact division patterns. We therefore propose adopting the entire Liberal Democrats' scheme for this district noting that it also shares three identical coterminous divisions with the County Council's proposals.

151 While we note that these proposals do not secure a good level of coterminosity we accept that it has proven difficult in this district to provide for coterminous divisions while reflecting the statutory criteria. Therefore we are of the view that these proposals provide for the best division pattern available at this time given the constraints of the area. We further note the concerns raised by Norton-Juxta-Kempsey Parish Council in relation to the availability of 2002 (2007) data. In the course of conducting this review we are reliant on the County Council providing the most accurate electorate data available. Noting the difficulties it experienced in collating this data we are now satisfied that the best possible data has been provided to us for the purposes of this review. However, we would welcome further comment of this issue and Stage Three.

152 Our draft recommendations would achieve 25% coterminosity within Wychavon, between county divisions and district ward boundaries. Under our draft recommendations the proposed divisions of Bowbrook, Bredon, Broadway, Droitwich East, Droitwich West, Evesham North West, Evesham South, Harvington, Littletons, Ombersley, Pershore and Upton Snodsbury would initially have 3% fewer, 2% more, 12% fewer, 5% more, 5% more, 13% more, 2% more, 8% fewer, 11% more, 2% more, 10% more and 5% fewer electors than the county average respectively (6% fewer, 1% more, 10% fewer, 9% more, 3% more, 10% more, 6% more, 2% fewer, 11% more, 7% more, 10% more and 6% fewer by 2007). Our draft proposals are illustrated on the large map and Maps 3 and 4 at the back of the report.

Wyre Forest district

153 Under the current arrangements the district of Wyre Forest is represented by 11 county councillors serving 11 divisions. The Brinton Park division currently has 12% fewer electors per councillor than the county average (18% fewer by 2007). The Chaddlesley division currently has 3% fewer electors per councillor (9% fewer by 2007). The Cookley, Wolverley & Wribbenhill division currently has 5% more electors per councillor (3% more by 2007). The Habberley & Blakebrook division currently has 8% fewer electors per councillor (15% fewer by 2007). The Hoobrook division currently has 23% fewer electors per councillor (11% fewer by 2007). The Hurcott division currently has 7% fewer electors per councillor (11% fewer by 2007). The Mitton division currently has 14% more electors per councillor (12% more by 2007). The Puxton division currently has 17% fewer electors per councillor (16% fewer by 2007). The Severn division currently has 7% fewer electors per councillor (8% fewer by 2007). The St Chads division currently has 26% fewer electors per councillor

(24% fewer by 2007). The Rock & Bewdley division currently has 11% fewer electors per councillor (14% fewer by 2007).

154 At Stage One the County Council proposed a pattern of 10 divisions, providing a level of coterminosity of 10%, with no ward having an electoral variance above 6% by 2007. It stated that where possible it sought to keep urban areas together and group rural areas separately. It stated that its proposals accomplished this the Hoobrook/Spennells areas to the Chaddesley Corbett area. To the east of the district it proposed that a being linked Chaddesley & Spennells division be comprised of Blakedown & Chaddesley ward and that part of Aggborough and Spennells ward east of the River Stour. In the north of the district it proposed a Cookley, Wolverley & Wribbenhall division comprise the parishes of Wolverley, Cookley and Wribbenhall. In the west, the County Council proposed that a Bewdley division be comprising of Rock and Bewdley & Arley district wards.

155 To the south of the district the County Council proposed that the Stourport-on-Severn area be divided into two electoral divisions. It proposed that Areley Kings district ward be combined with parts of Mitton district ward, the Walshes area, and part of Lickhill district ward, in a new Severn division. It further proposed a new Mitton division comprising the area of Wilden that is part of Mitton district ward and the area of Burlish Park that is part of Lickhill district ward.

156 In the Kidderminster area the County Council proposed a pattern of five single-member divisions. In the centre it proposed a new St Marys division encompassing both banks of the River Stour almost along the entire length of Kidderminster town. The County Council proposed that this division combine the central part of Kidderminster and extend south-west encompassing the Oldington & Foley Park and Bichen Coppice areas and south-east encompassing the area of Aggborough. It proposed combining Oldington & Foley Park district ward with part of Aggborough district ward, part of Sutton Park district ward, part of Broadwaters district ward and part of Greenhill district ward within the new St Marys division. The eastern boundary would follow south along Blackwell Street, the Ringway Road, Comberton Hill and south along the railway. Its proposed western border follow along Rifle Range Road, Sutton Park Road, then along the A4535.

157 To the north-east of Kidderminster town it proposed a Hurcott division combining parts of Broadwaters and Greenhill district wards. To the east of the Birmingham railway line and north of the golf course it proposed a new St Chads division, comprising Offmore & Comberton district ward and that part of Greenhill district ward west of the railway.

158 To the north-west the County Council proposed a new St Barnabas division encompassing the Franche and Habberley areas including the hospital. This division would comprise Franche district ward and the northern part of Habberley & Blakebrook district ward. It proposed southern border be bounded by Holmwood Avenue, Canterbury Road and the Salisbury Drive.

159 The County Council also proposed a new St Johns division comprising that part of Sutton Park district ward generally west of the A4535, and the area to the east between Crescent Road and the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal. To the north it would encompass part of the Summerhill area generally south of Holmwood Avenue, Canterbury Drive and Salisbury Drive. In the south the County Council's proposed St Johns division would be bounded by Rifle Range Road and Sutton Park Road. Under the County Council proposals no division would have a variance above 6% by 2007.

160 The Chief Executive of Wyre Forest District Council, Walter Delin, stated that he and the Leader of the Council, Howard Martin, considered that the County Council's scheme did not take sufficient account of the district council wards and would cause confusion for the electorate. However, they stated support the County Council's proposal to retain 57 members and agreed that there should be a reduction from the present 11 members to 10

for Wyre Forest district. They proposed an alternative pattern of 10 divisions based on 2001 electorate data, with 20% coterminosity. They supported the County Council's proposals for the new Bewdley and Cookley, Wolverley and Wribbenhall divisions. They further stated that they preferred a minimum of change to the present arrangements.

161 They proposed that Blakedown & Chaddesley wards should be combined with part of the adjacent Aggborough & Spennells district ward. They also proposed that within Stourport-on-Severn two electoral divisions, Stourport East and Stourport West, be created comprising of three town council wards each. In the Kidderminster urban area, they proposed five divisions, stating that under their proposals in all but one division it used one whole district council ward supplemented by whole polling districts from an adjoining ward. They proposed that Puxton division comprise three whole polling districts from Broadwaters district ward and two polling districts from the adjoining Franche district ward. Under their proposals no ward would have an electoral variance above 8%.

162 Chaddesley Corbett Parish Council stated that it preferred the status quo to remain. Stourport-on-Severn Town Council stated that the increase in the population within Stourport –on Severn should be taken into account in this review.

163 We have carefully considered all the proposals submitted for Wyre Forest. We note the good levels of electoral achieved by the two schemes for this area and the difficulty in providing a division pattern around the urban Kidderminster area that is divided by the River Stour. However, we were not convinced by the level of argumentation provided in support of Mr Walter Delin and Mr Howard Martin's proposals. We therefore propose using the County Council's proposals as the basis of our draft recommendations in this district. However, again we are concerned at the low levels of coterminosity that this scheme proposed. We therefore propose adopting the County Council's proposals for the majority of the district, but with our own amendment in the Stourport area to the south.

164 We considered the County Council's division pattern for the urban Kidderminster area provided the most viable option in this area. We therefore propose adopting these divisions along with the proposed Bewdley and Cookley, Wolverley & Wribbenhall divisions. However, to raise the levels of coterminosity in this district, we propose a new two-member Stourport division combining the district wards of Lickhill and Mitton. This proposal would provide a good level of electoral equality, maintain the unity of the Stourport area and raise the overall level of coterminosity in the Wyre Forest district to 33%.

165 Our draft recommendations would achieve 33% coterminosity within Wyre Forest district between county divisions and district ward boundaries. Under our draft recommendations the proposed divisions of Bewdley, Chaddesley, Cookley, Wolverley & Wribbenhall, Hurcott, St Barnabas, St Chads, St Marys, Stourport-on-Severn and Sutton Park would have 4% fewer, 2% more, 3% fewer, 4% more, 5% more, 1% more, 4% fewer, 3% more and 3% fewer electors per councillor than the county average respectively (6% fewer, 1% fewer, 5% fewer, 2% more, 3% more, 1% fewer, 4% fewer, 2% more and 4% fewer by 2007). Our draft proposals are illustrated on the large map on map 2 at the back of the report.

Conclusions

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

- The current council of 57 members should be retained;
- the boundaries of all divisions will be subject to change as the divisions are based on district wards which have themselves changed as a result of the district reviews.

167 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the County Council's proposals, but propose to depart from them in the following areas:

- In Bromsgrove district we propose using our own division pattern to provide for improved levels of coterminosity across the county.
- In Malvern Hills district we propose adopting the County Council's proposals for four single- member divisions across the south of the district. We also propose adopting Martley Parish Council's proposals for two single-member divisions in the north of the district and its proposed Malvern Link division in the centre.
- In Redditch borough we propose our own division pattern of four two-member divisions to provide for an improved level of coterminosity across the borough.
- In Worcester City we propose adopting seven of the County Council's proposed Option A divisions, its proposed Rainbow Hill and Nunnery divisions with two modifications and to the south of the district a new St Peter division combining Battenhall and St Peter's Parish district wards.
- In Wychavon district we proposed adopting two of the County Council's proposed single- member divisions. For the remainder of the district we propose adopting the Liberal Democrats' proposals for ten single-member divisions.
- In Wyre Forest district we propose adopting eight of the County Council's proposed single member divisions. However, to the south we propose a new two-member Stourport-on-Severn division.

168 Table 5 shows how our draft recommendations will effect electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements (based on 2002 electorate figures) and with forecast electorates for the year 2007.

Table 5: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	2002 Electorate		2007 Forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft arrangements	Current arrangements	Draft arrangements
Number of councillors	57	57	57	57
Number of divisions	57	52	57	52
Average number of electors per councillor	7,494	7,486	7,715	7,714
Number of divisions with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	29	13	34	8
Number of divisions with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	14	1	13	0
Level of coterminosity	53%	54%	53%	54%

169 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for Worcestershire would result in a reduction in the number of divisions with an electoral variance of more than 10 % from 29 to 13. By 2007 eight divisions are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10%.

Draft recommendation

Worcestershire County Council should comprise 57 councillors serving 52 divisions, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated in Appendix A and on the large map inside the back cover.

Parish council electoral arrangements

170 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 county divisions it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single division of the county. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Evesham, and Droitwich to reflect the proposed county divisions in those areas.

171 The Evesham Town Council is currently served by 24 councillors representing five wards: Evesham North parish ward (returning six councillors), Bengeworth, Evesham South and Little Hampton parish wards (each returning five councillors) and Great Hampton parish ward (returning three councillors).

172 The Liberal Democrats proposed new Harvington and Evesham North West divisions divides the present Evesham North Parish Ward along the railway line and then south along the A4184 High Street. Having considered all the evidence and the argumentation put by the Liberal Democrats in respect of a viable division pattern that reflects community identities we propose adopting their proposals for this area.

173 As a consequence of adopting the Liberal Democrats' proposals for Harvington and Evesham North West divisions we must create an additional parish ward for Evesham Town Council, while amending the existing parish wards and reallocating the parish councillors. We have created two new parish wards out of the present Evesham North parish ward to reflect the modified boundaries. These are the proposed Evesham Avon parish ward returning three councillors and the proposed Evesham Twyford parish ward returning three councillors.

Draft recommendation

Evesham Town Council should comprise 24 councillors, as at present, representing six parish wards: Evesham Avon (returning three councillors), Evesham Twyford (returning three councillors), Bengeworth, Evesham South and Little Hampton parish wards (each returning five councillors) and Great Hampton parish ward (returning three councillors). The boundary between the two parish wards of should reflect the proposed county division boundary, as illustrated and named on Map A4 in Appendix A.

174 Droitwich Spa Town Council is currently served by 18 councillors representing five wards: Droitwich East, Droitwich South East, Droitwich South West and Droitwich West, (each returning four councillors), and Droitwich Central parish ward, (returning two councillors).

175 The Liberal Democrats proposed two new divisions for the urban area of Droitwich: Droitwich East and Droitwich West, and a further new division of Bowbrook incorporating part of Droitwich South East district ward. Having considered the evidence and argumentation in respect of these proposals we propose adopting them in this area.

176 As a consequence of adopting the Liberal Democrats proposals for Droitwich we must create four new parish wards for Droitwich Spa Town Council. We propose that Droitwich South West parish ward be split along the rear of houses on Alexander Avenue into Droitwich Chawson parish ward to the west and Droitwich Witton parish ward to the east. We propose that each parish ward returns two parish councillors.

177 We further propose that the present Droitwich South East parish ward be split along Newland road, with a new Droitwich Bowden parish ward to the west comprising part of a new Bowbrook division. We further propose a new Droitwich Tagwell parish ward to the east that would form part of the new Droitwich East division. We propose both parish wards return two parish wards.

Draft recommendation

Droitwich Spa Town Council should comprise 18 councillors, as at present, representing seven parish wards: Droitwich East, Droitwich West (each returning four councillors), Droitwich Bowden, Droitwich Central, Droitwich Chawson, Droitwich Witton and Droitwich Tagwell (each returning two councillors). The boundaries between the seven parish wards should reflect the proposed county division boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map A3 in Appendix A.

5 What happens next?

178 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Worcestershire County Council contained in this report. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 26 April 2004. Any received *after* this date may not be taken into account. All responses may be inspected at our offices and those of the County Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

179 Express your views by writing directly to us:

**The Team Leader
Worcestershire County Council Review
Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

180 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 Worcestershire County Council: **Detailed mapping**

The following maps illustrate our proposed division boundaries for the Worcestershire County Council area.

Sheet 1 of 3 is the **large map** inserted at the back of this report which illustrates in outline form the proposed divisions for Worcestershire, including constituent district wards and parishes.

Sheet 2 of 3 Map 1 illustrates, the proposed electoral divisions in Worcester City.

Sheet 2 of 3 Map 2 illustrates the proposed electoral divisions in Kidderminster in Wyre Forest district.

Sheet 3 of 3 Map 3 illustrates the proposed divisions in Droitwich in Wychavon district.

Sheet 3 of 3 Map 4 illustrates the proposed divisions in Evesham in Wychavon district.

Appendix B

Code of practice on written consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, <http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/regulation/Consultation/Code.htm> requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Public bodies, such as The Boundary Committee 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: The Boundary Committee for England's 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.