

Final recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Newark & Sherwood in Nottinghamshire

Further electoral review

July 2006

Translations and other formats

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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. It is responsible for conducting reviews as directed by the Electoral Commission or the Secretary of State.

Members of the Committee are:

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

Director:

Archie Gall

When conducting reviews our aim is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, the number of councillors and ward names. We can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils.

Executive summary

The Boundary Committee for England is the body responsible for conducting electoral reviews of local authorities. A further electoral review of Newark & Sherwood is being undertaken to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the district. It aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each district councillor is approximately the same. The Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee to undertake this review on 10 February 2005.

Current electoral arrangements

Under the existing arrangements, nine wards currently have electoral variances of more than 10% from the district average. Overall, the development forecast for the five-year period between 1999 and 2004 produced during the last review was largely not realised. By contrast, in Balderton North ward more development was undertaken than expected resulting in its having a particularly poor variance, with 16% more electors than the district average.

Every review is conducted in four stages:

Stage	Stage starts	Description
One	17 May 2005	Submission of proposals to us
Two	9 August 2005	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	6 December 2005	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	7 March 2006	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Draft recommendations

We proposed recommendations largely based on the information provided by the District Council. In the rural areas surrounding the urban settlements of Newark town and Balderton, and in the north of the district, we proposed wards that the Council had considered when forming proposals but which it did not formally submit to us. In the west of the district we have made some amendments to the Council's proposals to improve the level of electoral equality in the area.

Responses to consultation

At Stage Three we received 32 submissions including objections to our proposal to include Oxtun parish within the proposed Blidworth ward. We also received conflicting arguments as to the appropriate warding arrangements for Southwell town.

Analysis and final recommendations

Electorate figures

The electorate of Newark & Sherwood is forecast to increase by approximately 5% by 2009. The main area of growth is expected to be in Farndon ward. Additionally, significant growth is anticipated in the wards of Beacon, Castle, Clipstone and Ollerton. General growth is expected across the remainder of the district. During Stage One the Council amended its figures twice. During Stage Two the Council provided updated forecast figures for six wards. We received no further comment at Stage Three. Therefore we are content that the Council's revised figures represent the best estimates currently available.

Council size

During Stage One we received a submission from the District Council, which was to retain the existing council size of 46 members. We received two submissions supporting this proposal. As part of our draft recommendations we proposed to retain the council size of 46 members. At Stage Three the District Council and Liberal Democrat Group supported our proposal for a council size of 46 members.

General analysis

We propose endorsing the majority of our draft recommendations as final. However, we have been persuaded by the evidence received to include Oxtun parish within our proposed Farnsfield & Bilsthorpe ward. We note the conflicting arguments received regarding the appropriate warding arrangements for Southwell town but on balance are of the view that the town should be represented by three single-member wards.

What happens next?

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be sent to the Electoral Commission through the contact details below. The Commission will not make an Order implementing them before 22 August 2006. The information in the representations will be available for public access once the Order has been made.

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

Fax: 020 7271 0667

Email: implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk

The contact details above should only be used for implementation purposes.

The full report is available to download at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Table 1: Final recommendations: summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1	Balderton North	2	Part of the existing Balderton North ward (the proposed Balderton North parish ward of Balderton parish)
2	Balderton West	2	The existing Balderton West ward, part of the existing Balderton North ward and part of the existing Balderton South parish ward (the proposed Balderton West parish ward of Balderton parish)
3	Beacon	3	The existing Beacon ward, part of the existing Bridge ward (the proposed Beacon parish ward of Newark parish) and part of the existing Winthorpe ward (the proposed Coddington West parish ward of Coddington parish)
4	Blidworth	2	The existing Blidworth ward (the parish of Blidworth) and part of the existing Rainworth ward (the parish of Lindhurst)
5	Boughton	2	Unchanged: the existing Boughton ward (the parishes of Kirton and Walesby, and Boughton parish ward of Ollerton & Boughton parish)
6	Bridge	2	Parts of the existing Bridge and Castle wards (the proposed Bridge parish ward of Newark parish)
7	Castle	2	Part of the existing Castle ward (the proposed Castle parish ward of Newark parish)
8	Caunton	1	Unchanged: the existing Caunton ward (the parishes of Caunton, Egmanton, Hockerton, Kersall, Kneesall, Laxton & Moorhouse, Maplebeck, Ompton, Ossington, Wellow and Winkburn)
9	Clipstone	2	Unchanged: the existing Clipstone ward (the parish of Clipstone)

Table 1 (continued): Final recommendations: summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
10	Collingham & Meering	2	Unchanged: the existing Collingham & Meering ward (the parishes of Besthorpe, Collingham, Girton, Harby, Meering, North Clifton, South Clifton, South Scarle, Spalford, Thorney and Wigsley)
11	Devon	2	Parts of the existing Castle and Devon wards (the proposed Devon parish ward of Newark parish)
12	Edwinstowe	2	Unchanged: the existing Edwinstowe ward (the parish of Edwinstowe)
13	Farndon	2	Part of the existing Farndon ward (the parishes of Alverton, Cotham, East Stoke, Elston, Farndon, Hawton, Kilvington, Staunton, Syerston and Thorpe and the proposed Balderton South parish ward of Balderton parish)
14	Farnsfield & Bilsthorpe	3	The existing Farnsfield ward (the parishes of Eakring, Edingley, Farnsfield, Halam, Kirklington and Oxton) and part of the existing Bilsthorpe ward (the parish of Bilsthorpe)
15	Lowdham	2	Unchanged: the existing Lowdham ward (the parishes of Bulcote, Caythorpe, Epperstone, Gonalston, Gunthorpe, Hoveringham and Lowdham)
16	Magnus	2	The existing Magnus ward and parts of the existing Castle and Devon wards (the proposed Magnus parish ward of Newark parish)
17	Muskham	1	Part of the existing Muskham ward (the parishes of Averham, Bathley, Kelham, North Muskham, South Muskham and Staythorpe) and part of the existing Sutton-on-Trent ward (the parish of Cromwell)
18	Ollerton	3	Unchanged: the existing Ollerton ward (the parish of Perlethorpe cum Budby and North and South parish wards of Ollerton & Boughton parish)

Table 1 (continued): Final recommendations: summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
19	Rainworth	3	Part of the existing Bilsthorpe ward (Rufford parish and Rainworth North parish ward of Rainworth parish) and part of the existing Rainworth ward (Rainworth South parish ward of Rainworth parish)
20	Southwell East	1	Part of the existing Southwell East ward (the proposed Southwell East parish ward of Southwell parish) and part of the existing Muskham ward (the parish of Upton)
21	Southwell North	1	Parts of the existing Southwell East and Southwell North wards (the proposed Southwell North parish ward of Southwell parish)
22	Southwell West	1	Unchanged: the existing Southwell West ward (the parish of Halloughton and Southwell West parish ward of Southwell parish)
23	Sutton-on-Trent	1	Part of the existing Sutton-on-Trent ward (the parishes of Carlton-on-Trent, Grassthorpe, Norwell, Sutton-on-Trent and Weston)
24	Trent	1	The existing Trent ward (the parishes of Bleasby, Fiskerton cum Morton, Rolleston and Thurgarton)
25	Winthorpe	1	Part of the existing Winthorpe ward (the parishes of Barnby in the Willows, Holme, Langford and Winthorpe) and the proposed Coddington East parish ward of Coddington parish

Notes

- 1 The whole district is parished.
- 2 The maps accompanying this report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.

Table 2: Final recommendations for Newark & Sherwood district

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Balderton North	2	3,885	1,943	6	3,882	1,941	1
2	Balderton West	2	3,866	1,933	5	3,939	1,970	2
3	Beacon	3	5,175	1,725	-6	5,664	1,888	-2
4	Blidworth	2	3,251	1,626	-11	3,273	1,637	-15
5	Boughton	2	3,703	1,852	1	3,851	1,926	0
6	Bridge	2	3,431	1,716	-6	3,845	1,923	0
7	Castle	2	3,638	1,819	-1	3,842	1,921	0
8	Caunton	1	1,845	1,845	1	1,867	1,867	-3
9	Clipstone	2	2,836	1,418	-23	3,244	1,622	-16
10	Collingham & Meering	2	3,720	1,860	1	3,957	1,979	3
11	Devon	2	3,807	1,904	4	3,799	1,900	-1
12	Edwinstowe	2	4,099	2,050	12	4,397	2,199	14

Table 2 (continued): Final recommendations for Newark & Sherwood district

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
13	Farndon	2	3,538	1,769	-3	4,169	2,085	8
14	Farnsfield & Bilsthorpe	3	6,341	2,114	15	6,404	2,135	11
15	Lowdham	2	3,812	1,906	4	3,978	1,989	3
16	Magnus	2	3,659	1,830	0	3,875	1,938	1
17	Muskham	1	1,948	1,948	6	1,991	1,991	3
18	Ollerton	3	4,940	1,647	-10	5,429	1,810	-6
19	Rainworth	3	5,328	1,776	-3	5,332	1,777	-8
20	Southwell East	1	1,886	1,886	3	1,994	1,994	4
21	Southwell North	1	1,962	1,962	7	1,954	1,954	2

Table 2 (continued): Final recommendations for Newark & Sherwood district

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
22	Southwell West	1	1,923	1,923	5	1,949	1,949	1
23	Sutton-on-Trent	1	1,882	1,882	3	1,940	1,940	1
24	Trent	1	1,919	1,919	5	1,932	1,932	0
25	Winthorpe	1	1,926	1,926	5	2,019	2,019	5
	Totals	46	84,320	-	-	88,526	-	-
	Averages	-	-	1,833	-	-	1,924	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Newark & Sherwood District Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor in each ward varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

1 Introduction

1 This report contains our final recommendations for the electoral arrangements for the district of Newark & Sherwood.

2 At its meeting on 12 February 2004 the Electoral Commission agreed that the Boundary Committee should make ongoing assessments of electoral variances in all local authorities where the five-year forecast period following a periodic electoral review (PER) has elapsed. More specifically, it was agreed that there should be closer scrutiny where either:

- 30% of wards in an authority had electoral variances of over 10% from the average, or
- any single ward had a variance of more than 30% from the average.

3 The intention of such scrutiny was to establish the reasons behind the continuing imbalances, to consider likely future trends, and to assess what action, if any, was appropriate to rectify the situation.

4 Newark & Sherwood's last review was carried out by the Local Government Commission for England (LGCE), which reported to the Secretary of State in May 2000. An electoral change Order implementing the new electoral arrangements was made on 15 December 2000 and the first elections on the new arrangements took place in May 2003.

5 In carrying out our work, the Boundary Committee has to work within a statutory framework.¹ This refers to the need to:

- reflect the identities and interests of local communities
- secure effective and convenient local government
- achieve equality of representation.

In addition we are required to work within Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

6 Details of the legislation under which the review of Newark & Sherwood is being conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and procedural advice for periodic electoral reviews* (published by the Electoral Commission in July 2002). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review and will be helpful in both understanding the approach taken by the Boundary Committee for England and in informing comments interested groups and individuals may wish to make about our recommendations.

7 Our task is to make recommendations to the Electoral Commission on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also propose changes to the electoral arrangements for any parish and town councils in the district. We cannot consider changes to the external boundaries of either the district or of parish areas as part of this review.

¹ As set out in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3962).

8 The broad objective of an electoral review is to achieve, as far as possible, equal representation across the district as a whole, i.e. that all councillors in the local authority represent similar numbers of electors. Schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10% in any ward will have to be fully justified. Any imbalances of 20% or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

9 Electoral equality, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a 'vote of equal weight' when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. Accordingly, the objective of an electoral review is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor is, as near as is possible, the same across a district. In practice, each councillor cannot represent exactly the same number of electors given geographic and other constraints, including the make up and distribution of communities. However, our aim in any review is to recommend wards that are as close to the district average as possible in terms of the number of electors per councillor, while also taking account of evidence in relation to community identity and effective and convenient local government.

10 We are not prescriptive about council size and acknowledge that there are valid reasons for variations between local authorities. However, we believe that any proposals relating to council size, whether these are for an increase, a reduction, or the retention of the existing size, should be supported by strong evidence and arguments. Indeed, we believe that consideration of the appropriate council size is the starting point for our reviews and whatever size of council is proposed to us should be developed and argued in the context of the authority's internal political management structures, put in place following the Local Government Act 2000. It should also reflect the changing role of councillors in the new structure.

11 As indicated in its *Guidance*, the Electoral Commission requires the decision on council size to be based on an overall view about what is right for the particular authority and not just by addressing any imbalances in small areas of the authority by simply adding or removing councillors from these areas. While we will consider ways of achieving the correct allocation of councillors between, say, a number of towns in an authority or between rural and urban areas, our starting point must always be that the recommended council size reflects the authority's optimum political management arrangements and best provides for convenient and effective local government and that there is evidence for this.

12 In addition, we do not accept that an increase or decrease in the electorate of the authority should automatically result in a consequent increase or decrease in the number of councillors. Similarly, we do not accept that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of neighbouring or similarly sized authorities; the circumstances of one authority may be very different from that of another. We will seek to ensure that our recommended council size recognises all the factors and achieves a good allocation of councillors across the district.

13 Where multi-member wards are proposed, we believe that the number of councillors to be returned from each ward should not exceed three, other than in very exceptional circumstances. Numbers in excess of three could result in an

unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate and we have not, to date, prescribed any wards with more than three councillors.

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

Table 3: Stages of the review

Stage	Stage starts	Description
One	17 May 2005	Submission of proposals to us
Two	9 August 2005	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	6 December 2005	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	7 March 2006	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

15 Stage One began on 17 May 2005, when we wrote to Newark & Sherwood District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Nottinghamshire Police Authority, Nottinghamshire Local Councils' Association, parish and town councils in the district, Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district, Members of the European Parliament for the East Midlands Region and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Newark & Sherwood District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 8 August 2005.

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

17 Stage Three began on 6 December 2005 with the publication of the report *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Newark & Sherwood in Nottinghamshire*, and ended on 6 March 2006.

18 During Stage Four we reconsidered the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decided whether to modify them, and now submit final recommendations to the Electoral Commission. It is now for the Commission to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If the Electoral Commission accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, it will make an electoral changes Order. The Electoral Commission will determine when any changes come into effect.

Equal opportunities

19 In preparing this report the Boundary Committee has had regard to 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 the need to:

- eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity
- promote good relations between people of different racial groups

National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Broads

20 The Boundary Committee has also had regard to:

- Section 11A(2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as inserted by section 62 of the Environment Act 1995). This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in a National Park, any relevant authority shall have regard to the Park's purposes. If there is a conflict between those purposes, a relevant authority shall attach greater weight to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Park.
- Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of the AONB.
- Section 17A of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act (as inserted by section 97 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000). This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in the Broads, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purposes of the Broads.

2 Current electoral arrangements

21 The district of Newark & Sherwood covers 65,000 hectares and has a population of approximately 106,000. It is the largest district in Nottinghamshire and covers a third of the county. The district is made up of contrasting areas, with agricultural heritage in the east and industrial mining towns in the west and north.

22 The electorate of the district is 84,320 (December 2004). The Council presently has 46 members who are elected from 26 wards. There are currently eight single-member wards, 16 two-member wards and two three-member wards. The district average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the district by the total number of councillors representing them on the council. At present each councillor represents a district average of 1,833 electors (84,320 divided by 46), which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,924 by the year 2009 if the present number of councillors is maintained (88,526 divided by 46).

23 During the last review of Newark & Sherwood the District Council forecast there would be an increase of approximately 7,000 electors between 1999 and 2004. However, electorate growth since that time has resulted in a significant amount of electoral inequality between wards. To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward varies from the district average in percentage terms.

24 Data from the December 2004 electoral register showed that under these arrangements, electoral equality across the district met the criteria that the Electoral Commission agreed would warrant further investigation. The number of electors per councillor in nine of the 26 wards (35%) varies by more than 10% from the district average. The worst imbalance is in Clipstone ward where the councillor represents 23% fewer electors than the district average. Having noted that this level of electoral inequality is unlikely to improve, the Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee to undertake a review of the electoral arrangements of Newark & Sherwood District Council on 10 February 2005.

Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements in Newark & Sherwood district

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Balderton North	2	4,253	2,127	16	4,250	2,125	10
2	Balderton West	2	3,462	1,731	-6	3,535	1,768	-8
3	Beacon	2	4,102	2,051	12	4,604	2,302	20
4	Bilsthorpe	2	3,844	1,922	5	3,882	1,941	1
5	Blidworth	2	3,244	1,622	-12	3,263	1,632	-15
6	Boughton	2	3,703	1,852	1	3,851	1,926	0
7	Bridge	2	3,908	1,954	7	4,032	2,016	5
8	Castle	3	4,671	1,557	-15	5,152	1,717	-11
9	Caunton	1	1,845	1,845	1	1,867	1,867	-3
10	Clipstone	2	2,836	1,418	-23	3,244	1,622	-16
11	Collingham & Meering	2	3,720	1,860	1	3,957	1,979	3
12	Devon	2	3,538	1,769	-3	3,530	1,766	-8

Table 4 (continued): Existing electoral arrangements in Newark & Sherwood district

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
13 Edwinstowe	2	4,099	2,050	12	4,397	2,199	14
14 Farndon	2	3,574	1,787	-3	4,205	2,103	9
15 Farnsfield	2	3,934	1,967	7	3,953	1,977	3
16 Lowdham	2	3,812	1,906	4	3,978	1,989	3
17 Magnus	2	3,381	1,691	-8	3,597	1,799	-7
18 Muskham	1	2,094	2,094	14	2,132	2,132	11
19 Ollerton	3	4,940	1,647	-10	5,429	1,810	-6
20 Rainworth	2	3,898	1,949	6	3,911	1,956	2
21 Southwell East	1	1,708	1,708	-7	1,814	1,814	-6
22 Southwell North	1	1,810	1,810	-1	1,802	1,802	-6
23 Southwell West	1	1,923	1,923	5	1,949	1,949	1

Table 4 (continued): Existing electoral arrangements in Newark & Sherwood district

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
24	Sutton-on-Trent	1	2,066	2,066	13	2,131	2,131	11
25	Trent	1	1,919	1,919	5	1,932	1,932	0
26	Winthorpe	1	2,036	2,036	11	2,129	2,129	11
Totals		46	84,320	-	-	88,526	-	-
Averages		-	-	1,833	-	-	1,924	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Newark & Sherwood District Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2004, electors in Clipstone ward had 23% fewer electors per councillor than the district average, while electors in Sutton-on-Trent ward had 13% more. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 Draft recommendations

25 During Stage One 34 submissions were received, including a draft district-wide scheme from the District Council. We also received representations from two local political parties, seven parish and town councils and 24 local residents. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Newark & Sherwood in Nottinghamshire*.

26 We noted that at the end of Stage One we had only received a copy of the District Council's draft proposals but the Council could not forward its final proposals in time to be considered by us in formulating our final recommendations. However, we used the Council's draft submission for information and based much of our proposals on the draft proposals of the District Council although we proposed amendments to these proposals in the north-west and in Balderton and Newark towns in order to provide for improved levels of electoral equality. We proposed that:

- Newark & Sherwood District Council should be served by 46 councillors, the same as at present, representing 25 wards, one fewer than at present
- there should be new parish warding arrangements for Newark, Southwell and Coddington

27 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 23 of the 25 wards varying by no more than 10% from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to be maintained, with only two wards varying by more than 10% from the average by 2009.

4 Responses to consultation

28 During the consultation on the draft recommendations report, 32 representations were received, all of which may be inspected at both our offices and those of the District Council. Representations may also be viewed on our website at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Newark & Sherwood District Council

29 The District Council supported the majority of our proposals, including our proposal that the current council size of 46 be maintained and that Southwell town be represented by three single-member wards. It objected to our proposed Blidworth and Farnsfield & Bilsthorpe wards.

Political groups

30 The Liberal Democrat Group on the Council and Southwell & Trent Liberal Democrats proposed that Southwell town be represented one three-member ward rather than the three single-member wards proposed in our draft recommendations. Newark & Retford Conservative Association supported our proposal for three single-member wards in Southwell.

Member of Parliament

31 Paddy Tipping MP stated that he supported the majority of our proposals but objected to our proposal to include Oxtun parish within Blidworth ward rather than Farnsfield & Bilsthorpe ward.

Parish and town councils

32 Representations were received from seven parish and town councils. The parish councils of Sutton-on-Trent, Weston and North Muskham supported our proposals in their areas. The parish councils of Blidworth and Oxtun objected to our proposal to place Oxtun parish within the proposed Blidworth ward. Newark Town Council proposed 18 single-member town council wards in Newark town. Southwell Town Council proposed that the town be represented by a single three-member ward.

Other representations

33 A further 20 representations were received from a residents' association, three district councillors, a town councillor and 15 local residents. Fernwood & District Residents Association supported our proposals in the Balderton area. Councillor Gregory, a town councillor (Councillor Merryweather) and two local residents supported our proposal for three single-member wards in Southwell town. Councillor Rodgers, a town councillor (Councillor Toy) and 13 local residents proposed that Southwell town be represented by a single three-member ward.

5 Analysis and final recommendations

34 We have now finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Newark & Sherwood.

35 As described earlier, the prime aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Newark & Sherwood is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended), which refers to the need to:

- secure effective and convenient local government
- reflect the identities and interests of local communities
- secure the matters in respect of equality of representation referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

36 Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being 'as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough'. 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 clearly identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

37 In reality, the achievement of absolute electoral equality is unlikely to be attainable. There must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach, in the context of the statutory criteria, is to keep variances to a minimum.

38 If electoral imbalances are to be minimised, the aim of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should make electoral equality their starting point, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate should also be taken into account, and we aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this period.

39 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 which are based on these issues.

Electorate figures

40 As part of the previous review of Newark & Sherwood district, the District Council forecast an increase in the electorate of 8% between 1999 and 2004. The actual increase was just 1%. There has only been significant growth in the ward of Farndon. The inaccuracy of these forecasts has resulted in a number of wards with significant imbalances in electors per councillor compared to the district average. The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2009, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 5% from 84,320 to 87,677 over the five-year period from 2004 to 2009. It expected most of the growth to be in Farndon, although a

significant amount is also expected in Beacon, Castle, Clipstone and Ollerton wards where the electorate is expected to grow, in each ward, by between 400 and 500 electors by 2009.

41 During Stage Two the Council provided updated forecast figures for Beacon, Castle, Clipstone, Ollerton, Boughton and Blidworth wards. It stated that these updated figures reflected information that had been provided by its planning department. It considered that, although they were minor, the changes were significant enough to justify amending the figures. Officers provided a revised total electorate of 88,526. We were content that the Council's revised figures represented the best estimates currently available.

42 We received no comments on the Council's electoral forecasts during Stage Three, and we remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates currently available.

Council size

43 Newark & Sherwood District Council presently has 46 members. The District Council proposed retaining this council size, and we received two submissions in relation to council size which supported the retention of the current council size.

44 In its initial draft submission the District Council provided some information regarding the political management structure of the Council. The last periodic electoral review of Newark & Sherwood was completed in 2000, and since then the Council 'has had an opportunity for the new decision-making procedures to become embedded and to review how they are working'. The Council now operates under a cabinet with overview and scrutiny functions.

45 It provided some details of the workload of the Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny Committees, the Non-Executive Committees and their functions within the new structure. The Full Council, Cabinet, the Overview and Scrutiny, Licensing and General Purposes Committees meet on a six-weekly basis. Additionally, it noted that due to the 'highest number of planning applications in the County [...] reflected in the high volume of work dealt with by the planning Committee', workloads for members were increasing. It also highlighted a number of working parties and their duties and provided some information regarding the commitment and duties of a councillor, including dealing with individual casework, their representational role and representation on outside bodies.

46 However, we did not consider that this provided sufficient discussion of the ways in which the proposed council size would secure effective and convenient local government. Therefore we requested further evidence in support of a council size of 46. We specifically asked how the representational role of councillors and the role of new panels and forums would continue to work most effectively under a council size of 46. We received further information from the Council which provided further details of the current structure and the time councillors spend on council business.

47 Although we would have liked further evidence about the appropriateness of 46 being the optimum council size, given the lack of alternative proposals and information on which to justify an alternative council size, we proposed adopting a council size of 46 as part of our draft recommendations.

48 At Stage Three the District Council supported our proposal for a council size of 46 members. It stated that given the changing role of councillors under the current political management structure and the geographical area covered by the district a council size of 46 would ensure effective and convenient local government. A local resident also supported our proposal. We received no further specific comments regarding council size.

49 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 46 members.

Electoral equality

50 Electoral equality, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a vote of equal weight when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. The Electoral Commission expects the Boundary Committee's recommendations to provide for high levels of electoral equality, with variances normally well below 10%. However, when making recommendations we will not simply aim for electoral variances of under 10%. Where no justification is provided for specific ward proposals we will look to improve electoral equality, seeking to ensure that each councillor represents as close to the same number of electors as is possible, providing this can be achieved without compromising the reflection of the identities and interests of local communities and securing effective and convenient local government. We take the view that any proposals that would result in, or retain, electoral imbalances of over 10% from the average in any ward will have to be fully justified, and evidence provided which would justify such imbalances in terms of community identity or effective and convenient local government. We will rarely recommend wards with electoral variances of 20% or more, and any such variances proposed by local interested parties will require the strongest justification in terms of the other two statutory criteria.

51 The district average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the district, 84,320, by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, 46 under our final proposals. Therefore the average number of electors per councillor under our final recommendations is 1,833. This is forecast to increase to 1,924 by 2009.

52 At Stage One in the north-west of the district Newark & Sherwood District Council proposed wards of Clipstone, Blidworth and Edwinstowe with particularly high variances from the district average. It stated that 'it was not possible or desirable to change the boundaries without adversely affecting the identity and interests of local communities'. Therefore it proposed that these wards remain unchanged. We acknowledged that these particular wards lie at the edge of the district and it is difficult to improve the electoral equality without affecting community identities or creating unsuitable parish wards. As a result our draft recommendations resulted in electoral variances over 10%.

53 At Stage Three we received a number of objections to our proposed Blidworth and Farnsfield & Bilsthorpe wards, arguing that Oxtun and Blidworth parishes do not share good social or physical links and proposing that Oxtun parish be included within the proposed Farnsfield & Bilsthorpe ward. We note that this proposal would result in Blidworth ward having 15% fewer electors per councillor than the district average and Farnsfield & Bilsthorpe ward having 11% more. However, we have noted the arguments put forward and are of the view that these amended proposals

would provide for a better reflection of community identity in the area and are therefore proposing to amend our proposals in this area.

General analysis

54 The District Council did not make an official submission to us during Stage One of the review. However, it did provide us with draft proposals which we used for information when formulating our draft recommendations. We proposed a number of wards which were identical to the District Council's draft proposals. We recommended 25 wards in the borough: eight single-member wards, 13 two-member wards and four three-member wards. In the rural areas surrounding Newark Town and the settlement of Balderton we proposed three wards that the Council had considered when forming its proposals but which it did not eventually submit to us during Stage One. We considered that these wards provided a satisfactory level of electoral equality in light of the statutory criteria. We considered that the Council's draft proposals in the north, east and south of the district provided strong boundaries and relatively good levels of electoral equality, and therefore we proposed to adopt those proposed wards in full.

55 At Stage Three we received conflicting evidence as to the appropriate warding for Southwell town, some respondents proposing a single three-member ward for the town while others proposed three single-member wards for the town. We also received objections to our proposal to place Oxton parish within our proposed Blidworth ward. We found our decision in Southwell town to be particularly difficult but remain persuaded that our draft proposals for three single-member wards in the town would best reflect the statutory criteria. Given the arguments received in relation to Oxton parish we have been persuaded to move away from our draft recommendations and place Oxton parish in our proposed Farnsfield & Bilsthorpe ward.

Warding arrangements

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

- Clipstone, Edwinstowe and Ollerton wards (page 30)
- Bilsthorpe, Blidworth, Farnsfield and Rainworth wards (page 32)
- Boughton, Caunton and Sutton-on-Trent wards (page 34)
- Collingham & Meering, Muskham and Winthorpe wards (page 35)
- Newark-on-Trent (five wards) (page 36)
- Southwell town (three wards) (page 37)
- Balderton North, Balderton West and Farndon wards (page 40)
- Lowdham and Trent wards (page 41)

57 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 12, respectively), and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Clipstone, Edwinstowe and Ollerton wards

58 Under the existing arrangements Clipstone ward comprises the parish of Clipstone. Edwinstowe ward comprises the parish of Edwinstowe. Ollerton ward

comprises the parish of Perlethorpe cum Budby and North and South parish wards of Ollerton & Boughton parish. Table 4 (pages 20–22) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

59 We received only two submissions in relation to this area during Stage One, from the District Council and the Newark Constituency Liberal Democrats who supported the Council's proposals. The Council proposed that the current Edwinstowe, Clipstone and Ollerton wards remain unchanged. The wards of Edwinstowe and Clipstone lie next to each other on the edge of the district and are each represented by two councillors, while Ollerton is represented by three councillors.

60 The District Council's proposals in this area provided for poor levels of electoral equality. Clipstone, Edwinstowe and Ollerton wards would initially have 23% fewer, 12% more and 10% fewer electors than the district average respectively. By 2009 the wards would have 16% fewer, 14% more and 6% fewer electors than the district average respectively.

61 We noted the difficulties in forming wards in the rural areas of Newark & Sherwood which provide a good level of electoral equality but which do not combine diverse communities in the same ward. In regard to Edwinstowe, the Council accepted that its proposals would result in a high level of electoral imbalance; however, the only realistic alternative to secure improved levels of electoral equality appeared to be to include part of Edwinstowe parish in Clipstone ward. It stated that 'the alternative of including part of Edwinstowe parish in Clipstone ward would not reflect the interests and identities of the two respective communities'. It argued that its proposals would achieve the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in the area.

62 We carefully considered the proposals received during Stage One and noted the high levels of electoral imbalance that would result by 2009 under the Council's proposals. Therefore we examined a number of alternative configurations. We investigated parish warding the Lidgett area of Edwinstowe and including this within the proposed Clipstone ward. However, it contained twice as many electors as were necessary to move and we did not consider that we could divide the area further to the north and reflect community identities while still achieving electoral equality. Therefore, given the lack of alternative options in the area we proposed retaining the existing Edwinstowe and Ollerton wards.

63 As discussed, we attempted to improve the level of electoral equality in the proposed Clipstone ward by considering the inclusion of a Lidgett parish ward as discussed above. However, given the location of Clipstone at the edge of the district, our deliberations with regard to parish warding, its position with regard to the neighbouring parish of Rainworth and the distribution and size of settlements in the area it was not possible to find a satisfactory solution that achieved good levels of electoral equality and did not divide communities. We noted that Clipstone is bounded to the west by the district boundary with Mansfield and to the south by Rufford parish, which is sparsely populated. We therefore proposed adopting the Council's proposed Clipstone ward.

64 Under our draft recommendations the proposed Clipstone, Edwinstowe and Ollerton wards would have 16% fewer, 14% more and 6% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2009.

65 At Stage Three the District Council supported the draft recommendations in this area. We received no other comments regarding these proposed wards. We note the support for our proposals from the District Council and we have therefore decided to endorse the draft recommendations for Clipstone, Edwinstowe and Ollerton wards as final.

66 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 12, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Clipstone, Edwinstowe and Ollerton wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Bilsthorpe, Blidworth, Farnsfield and Rainworth wards

67 Under the existing arrangements Bilsthorpe ward comprises the parishes of Bilsthorpe and Rufford and Rainworth North parish ward of Rainworth parish. Blidworth ward comprises the parish of Blidworth. Farnsfield ward comprises the parishes of Eakring, Edingley, Farnsfield, Halam, Kirklington and Oxtun. Rainworth ward comprises the parish of Lindhurst and the Rainworth South parish ward of Rainworth parish. Table 4 (on pages 20–22) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

68 We received two relevant submissions in relation to this area during Stage One, from the District Council and the Newark Constituency Liberal Democrats who supported the Council's proposals. The District Council proposed three revised wards in this area. It proposed that Rainworth parish be combined with Rufford parish within a proposed three-member Rainworth ward. It proposed a revised single-member Bilsthorpe ward. It proposed to remove Lindhurst parish from the existing Rainworth ward and place it within a proposed two-member Blidworth ward. Additionally, it proposed to retain the existing electoral arrangements for Farnsfield ward.

69 We noted that the District Council's proposed Bilsthorpe and Blidworth wards would provide for poor levels of electoral equality. Its proposed Bilsthorpe, Blidworth, Farnsfield and Rainworth wards would initially have 31% more, 11% fewer, 7% more and 3% fewer electors than the district average respectively. By 2009 the wards would have 27% more, 15% fewer, 3% more and 8% fewer electors than the district average respectively.

70 Given the high levels of electoral imbalance in the area as a whole we considered alternative warding patterns. In the Rainworth area, we noted that given the location of the parish in relation to the neighbouring parishes and the district ward boundary and the distribution and size of populations in the area, it was not possible to ward parishes in this area satisfactorily. The solutions we investigated either divided communities or did not provide for good levels of electoral equality. Therefore, given the reasonable level of electoral equality secured by the Council's proposed Rainworth ward, we proposed adopting it as part of our draft recommendations.

71 We noted that the Council's proposals for Bilsthorpe ward would result in an electoral variance of 27% by 2009. We did not consider that we had received any community identity argument in this area to justify such a high electoral imbalance. We were not persuaded, on the basis of the evidence received, that the District Council's proposals for Bilsthorpe ward would achieve the best balance between the statutory criteria and we therefore considered alternative electoral arrangements. In order to address the electoral imbalance we proposed to combine the Council's proposed two-member Farnsfield ward, subject to one amendment discussed below, with Bilsthorpe parish to create a three-member Farnsfield & Bilsthorpe ward, which would result in an electoral variance of 3% by 2009. We also noted the good communication links throughout the ward.

72 The Council's proposed Blidworth ward would result in a relatively high electoral variance by 2009 (-15%). Again, we investigated alternative options to improve this high level of electoral inequality. Blidworth is bordered to the north by Rainworth and to the east by Farnsfield. Due to the size of these settlements it would not be practical to ward these parishes in order to improve the level of electoral equality in the area without dividing communities. We investigated the possibility of including the parish of Oxtan, from the neighbouring Farnsfield ward, with Blidworth as they share communication links. We noted that this would create a ward containing two parishes which do not share a substantial common boundary; however, the two parishes are linked, albeit only through a narrow gap to the south of the boundary with Farnsfield parish. Such a proposal provided for improved levels of electoral equality in both the proposed Blidworth and Farnsfield & Bilsthorpe wards and appeared, in our view, to include well-linked communities.

73 Under our draft recommendations the proposed Blidworth, Farnsfield & Bilsthorpe and Rainworth wards would have 3% fewer, 3% more and 8% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2009.

74 At Stage Three the District Council objected to our proposal to place Oxtan parish in our proposed Blidworth ward. It argued that the two villages of Oxtan and Blidworth are distinct and separate communities and that Oxtan and the surrounding villages of Farnsfield, Kirklington, Halam, Eakring and Edingley are predominantly rural and share strong economic and social links with each other and with Southwell town while Blidworth has strong links with Mansfield town. It stated that there are no social or economic ties linking Blidworth and Oxtan and that the two parishes have different school catchment areas. It argued further that the common boundary between Blidworth and Oxtan is only 70 metres in length without a right of way or road and that the two communities are divided by the two major arterial roads, the A614 and A6097. It proposed that Oxtan be transferred to our proposed Farnsfield & Bilsthorpe ward. However, it supported our proposed Rainworth ward.

75 Paddy Tipping MP, Oxtan and Blidworth parish councils also objected to the proposal to link Blidworth and Oxtan, reiterating the arguments put forward by the District Council.

76 We have considered the arguments put forward regarding our proposal to include Oxtan parish within Blidworth ward. We note that transferring Oxtan parish to the proposed Farnsfield & Bilsthorpe ward would result in Blidworth ward having 15% fewer electors per councillor than the district average and Farnsfield & Bilsthorpe ward having 11% more. However, we note the arguments put forward by the District

Council, Paddy Tipping MP and Blidworth and Oxton parish councils regarding the limited physical links between Blidworth and Oxton parishes and their relative connections to each other, the surrounding areas and the towns of Southwell and Mansfield and have been persuaded that including Oxton parish within the proposed Farnsfield & Bilsthorpe ward would better reflect community identities in the area.

77 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 12, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Blidworth, Farnsfield & Bilsthorpe and Rainworth wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Boughton, Caunton and Sutton-on-Trent wards

78 Under the existing arrangements Boughton ward comprises the parishes of Kirkton and Walesby and the Boughton parish ward of Ollerton & Boughton parish. Caunton ward comprises the parishes of Caunton, Egmanton, Hockerton, Kneesall, Kersall, Laxton & Moorhouse, Maplebeck, Ompton, Ossington, Wellow and Winkburn. Sutton-on-Trent ward comprises the parishes of Carlton-on-Trent, Cromwell, Norwell, Grassthorpe, Sutton-on-Trent and Weston. Table 4 (on pages 20 –22) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

79 We received four submissions in relation to this area during Stage One. The District Council proposed that there be no change to the existing arrangements in Boughton and Caunton wards. It proposed one amendment to Sutton-on-Trent ward to improve electoral equality. It proposed to remove Cromwell parish from Sutton-on-Trent and place it within its proposed Muskham ward. None of the Council's proposed wards varied by more than 3% from the district average by 2009. Newark Constituency Liberal Democrats supported the District Council's proposals. Weston Parish Council and Sutton-on-Trent Parish Council proposed that Weston parish remain in the Sutton-on-Trent ward.

80 We noted that the District Council's proposals throughout this area provided good levels of electoral equality. In light of the good electoral equality in the Council's proposals, the relatively good links in the wards and the lack of any alternative evidence we proposed to adopt the Council's proposals in their entirety.

81 Under our draft recommendations the proposed Boughton, Caunton and Sutton-on-Trent wards would have equal to the district average number of electors, 3% fewer and 1% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2009.

82 At Stage Three the District Council, Sutton-on-Trent Parish Council and Weston Parish Council all supported our proposals in this area. Having considered the representations and given the support received we have decided to endorse the draft recommendations for the proposed Boughton, Caunton and Weston wards as final.

83 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 12, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Boughton, Caunton and Sutton-on-Trent wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Collingham & Meering, Muskham and Winthorpe wards

84 Under the existing arrangements Collingham & Meering ward comprises the parishes of Besthorpe, Girton, Harby, Meering, North Clifton, Collingham, South Clifton, South Scarle, Thorney, Spalford and Wigsley. Muskham ward comprises the parishes of Averham, Bathley, Kelham, North Muskham, South Muskham, Staythorpe and Upton. Winthorpe ward comprises the parishes of Barnby in the Willows, Coddington, Holme, Langford and Winthorpe. Table 4 (on pages 20–22) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

85 We received 14 submissions in relation to this area during Stage One. The District Council proposed no change to the existing arrangements in Collingham & Meering ward. It proposed that Upton parish be removed from Muskham ward and placed in Southwell East ward in order to improve the level of electoral equality. It also proposed to remove Cromwell parish from Sutton-on-Trent ward and include it within Muskham ward, again to improve the level of electoral equality. It proposed to remove part of Coddington parish (Balmoral Drive, Bayford Drive, Cludd and Edgehill) from Winthorpe ward and include this in the proposed Beacon ward. Newark Constituency Liberal Democrats supported the Council's proposals. North Muskham Parish Council and Bathley Parish Council proposed no change to the existing arrangements linking North Muskham and Bathley parishes. We received 10 submissions from local residents who objected to any proposals that separated Bathley parish from Muskham ward.

86 The District Council's proposals in this area provided for good levels of electoral equality. Collingham & Meering, Muskham and Winthorpe wards would initially have 1%, 6% and 5% more electors than the district average respectively. By 2009 the wards would have 3%, 3% and 5% more electors than the district average respectively.

87 We noted that the District Council's proposals throughout this area provided good levels of electoral equality, with no ward varying by more than 5% from the district average by 2009. We also noted that the District Council's proposals reflected the comments received from North Muskham and Bathley parish councils. The District Council's proposal to transfer part of Coddington parish from the proposed Winthorpe ward to the proposed Beacon ward transferred an area of urban overspill into a ward with electors from the rest of Newark town. We concurred with the District Council that such a proposal provided a better reflection of community identity as it separates urban and rural areas while providing good electoral equality. In light of the strong boundaries and good level of electoral equality that would result we adopted the District Council's proposals in this area in their entirety.

88 Under our draft recommendations the proposed Collingham & Meering, Muskham and Winthorpe wards would have 3% more, 3% more and 5% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2009.

89 At Stage Three the District Council and North Muskham Parish Council supported our proposals in this area. Having considered the representations and given the support received we have decided to endorse the draft recommendations for the proposed Collingham & Meering, Muskham and Winthorpe wards as final.

90 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 12, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Collingham & Meering, Muskham and Winthorpe wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Newark-on-Trent (five wards)

91 Under the existing arrangements Beacon ward comprises the parish wards of Harcourt, Hilltop and Ransome. Bridge ward comprises the parish wards of Bishop Alexander, Gilstrap, Fosse and Welbeck. Castle ward comprises the parish wards of Lovers Lane, Sconce and Ossington. Devon ward comprises the parish wards of Cardinal Hinsley, St Mary's, Grange and Gopher. Magnus ward comprises the parish wards of Bowbridge, Byron, Clumber and Lilley & Stone. Table 4 (on pages 20–22) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

92 We received three representations in relation to this area. The District Council proposed retaining the existing five wards with some amendments to improve electoral equality. Newark Constituency Liberal Democrats supported the Council's proposals. Newark Town Council stated that it had no proposals to offer for change.

93 The District Council proposed to move Welbeck parish ward from the existing Bridge ward to its proposed Beacon ward. It also proposed to remove part of Coddington parish, that part 'of [the] parish which lies to the west of the A1 and is separated from the rest of the parish by this road', from Winthorpe ward and place it within Beacon ward. The Council proposed to increase the number of councillors in this ward from two to three. In respect of Bridge ward, it proposed to add Lovers Lane parish ward which currently lies in Castle ward. The Council did not propose to make any changes to the existing arrangements for Devon and Magnus wards.

94 The District Council's proposals in this area provided for reasonably good levels of electoral equality. Beacon, Bridge, Castle, Devon and Magnus wards would initially have 6% fewer, equal to the district average, 8% more, 3% fewer and 8% fewer electors than the average respectively. By 2009 the wards would have 2% fewer, 6% more, 8% more, 8% fewer and 7% fewer electors than the district average respectively.

95 Having considered the District Council's proposals for the town of Newark, we adopted the Council's scheme with some amendments to improve electoral equality. We put forward amendments to four of the five proposed wards, adopting the proposed Beacon ward; we considered that given the urban nature of Newark town it was possible to achieve levels of electoral equality much closer to the district average than the District Council's proposals achieved.

96 Under our draft recommendations the proposed Beacon, Bridge, Castle, Devon and Magnus wards would have 2% fewer, equal to the district average, equal to the district average, 1% fewer and 1% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2009.

97 At Stage Three the District Council supported our proposals in Newark town. Newark Town Council objected to our proposal to reduce the number of town council wards from 18 to five.

98 We note the support from the District Council regarding our proposals in Newark town and are therefore content to confirm our proposal for five district wards in Newark town as final. Newark Town Council's proposals for town council wards are considered in the parish electoral arrangements section on page 42.

99 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 12, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Beacon, Bridge, Castle, Devon and Magnus wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2 accompanying this report.

Southwell town

100 Under the existing arrangements Southwell East ward comprises Southwell East parish ward of Southwell parish. Southwell North ward comprises Southwell North parish ward of Southwell parish. Southwell West ward comprises Southwell West parish ward of Southwell parish and Halloughton parish. Table 4 (on pages 20 –22) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

101 We received 18 submissions in relation to this area during Stage One. The District Council proposed retaining three single-member wards for the Southwell town area and objected to proposals to create a single three-member ward in the town. Newark Constituency Liberal Democrats proposed a single three-member ward. We received 13 submissions from local residents who proposed retaining the existing three single-member wards and objected to proposals to create a single three-member ward in the town. We received a further three submissions from Southwell Town Council, Southwell Liberal Democrats and a local resident. All three submissions proposed a single three-member ward for Southwell.

102 The District Council proposed to retain the existing ward arrangements for Southwell West ward. It proposed to transfer Upton parish into its proposed Southwell East ward in order to address the electoral imbalance in Muskham ward; however, this resulted in Southwell East ward having a high electoral imbalance. In order to address this the Council proposed to move electors between Southwell East ward and Southwell North ward.

103 The District Council's proposals in this area provided good levels of electoral equality. Southwell East, Southwell North and Southwell West wards would initially have 3%, 7% and 5% more electors than the district average respectively. By 2009 the wards would have 4%, 2% and 1% more electors than the district average respectively.

104 The District Council stated that 'consideration has been given to making minimal changes and achieving more easily identifiable boundaries'. Additionally, it stated that most of the responses received during its consultation exercise were in support of its proposals. We noted the District Council's objections to a single three-member ward, that a 'multi-member district ward would be inconsistent with the Southwell

parishing warding arrangements' and that the 'proposal would not be in the best interest of Upton parish to be subsumed into a single ward for the whole of Southwell'. It also noted that any change would be unnecessary to achieve good electoral equality.

105 We received 14 submissions asking us to retain three single-member wards in the area. Additionally, the majority of the submissions received proposed that the parish of Upton be included with Southwell town for community identity reasons. It was argued that Southwell East ward had more affinity with the agricultural nature of Upton parish, that electors would be confused by the list of candidates and that three single-member wards would 'keep councillors close to their public'. It was argued further that the wards created during the previous electoral review had been an improvement on the previous arrangements and that each elected councillor had developed a relationship with the voters and town councillors. However, we received four submissions arguing for a single three-member ward that would effectively represent the one community of Southwell, which it was argued is a strong single community. It was argued that the current ward boundaries were artificial and that important issues such as affordable housing and town centre vibrancy were cross-cutting. It was argued further that these cross-cutting issues resulted in councillors sharing caseloads. The levels of electoral equality under a single three-member ward or three single-member wards are excellent; we therefore sought to make our decision based on the community identity arguments advanced by respondents.

106 We considered these arguments to be finely balanced, and that the arguments for a three-member ward have some merit. We noted the argument that cross-cutting issues have resulted in shared caseloads and that the town is a strong single community. We also noted the argument for three single-member wards that councillors had developed relationships with electors and town councillors. We have found our decision in the area a difficult one to make. However, it should be noted that the proposed three-member ward would include the two smaller settlements of Upton and Halloughton, along with the town of Southwell; it is not clear whether the identities of the three communities would continue to be reflected in a single three-member ward. In light of the evidence provided for the Southwell town area we proposed adopting the Council's proposals in their entirety. We considered that the Council's proposals secured easily identifiable boundaries with minimal change to the existing wards and provided good levels of electoral equality. However, as stated above, we considered this to be a finely balanced decision.

107 Under our draft recommendations the proposed Southwell East, Southwell North and Southwell West wards would have 4% more, 2% more and 1% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2009.

108 At Stage Three the District Council supported our draft proposals for Southwell town arguing that the proposals provide easily identifiable boundaries with minimal change to the existing boundaries and provide for good levels of electoral equality. Newark & Retford Conservative Association also supported three single-member wards for the town arguing that the parish of Upton would be swamped if it were to be absorbed into a three-member ward. Councillor Gregory argued that a three-member ward would increase the costs for an independent candidate standing for election and make it difficult to compete against established parties. Town Councillor Merryweather argued that one member per ward best served the electorate. We also received submissions from two local residents supporting three single-member wards

for Southwell town. They argued that single-member wards led to greater accountability and made for a more efficient democratic operation of the council. It was argued further that the current system of three single-member wards meant that there was close contact between electors and their representatives and that this contact would not be as close with a single three-member ward.

109 We also received a number of objections to our proposals in the town, all of which stated a preference for a single three-member ward. The Liberal Democrat Group on the Council argued that, although three single-member wards were supported by the Council during the previous electoral review, in practice this has not been the best way to deal with the town's representation. They also argued that many of the issues were town-wide, such as the town's commercial centre and its viability, conservation and parking and public transport. Southwell & Trent Liberal Democrats argued that most electors identify with the town rather than with their ward, that town issues were cross-cutting, that the current district councillors work as a team and that the current arrangements were confusing to the elector.

110 Southwell Town Council, in addition to the previous arguments, also argued that we had proposed multi-member wards for all other built-up areas in the district and that the same approach should be taken to Southwell for reasons of consistency. Councillor Rodgers argued that under a single three-member ward it would be more likely that the unity established by councillors and citizens would continue. Town Councillor Toy argued that the town was a close-knit community and that electors approach whichever councillor they know, not necessarily the councillor for their ward.

111 Thirteen residents also objected to our proposal for three single-member wards, supporting a three-member ward for the town, reiterating the arguments already mentioned.

112 Having considered the representations received, we note the lack of consensus as to the appropriate warding pattern for the town. We note that good cases have been made for both three single-member wards and a single three-member ward. However, on balance we remain of the view that three single-member wards would provide for the best warding arrangements for Southwell town. We note the strong arguments for a three-member ward in the town, particularly the arguments relating to cross-cutting issues; however, there is no reason to believe that these cross-cutting issues could not be effectively dealt with under a system of single-member wards. We also note the argument that we are recommending multi-member wards in other built-up areas, but this is not a deliberate policy. We seek to secure the best warding pattern for an area regardless of whether this is facilitated by single- or multi-member wards.

113 The arguments advanced in support of two opposing proposals provide similar levels of community identity evidence in relation to Southwell town itself. Our proposed single-member wards in the town secure easily identifiable boundaries and good levels of electoral equality. We were also concerned that little evidence was submitted about how the identities of Halloughton and Upton parishes would be suitably represented in a three-member ward. Therefore we propose confirming our draft recommendations as final.

114 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 12, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Southwell

East, Southwell North and Southwell West wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 3 accompanying this report.

Balderton North, Balderton West and Farndon wards

115 Under the existing arrangements Balderton North ward comprises Balderton North parish ward of Balderton parish. Balderton West ward comprises Balderton West parish ward of Balderton parish. Farndon ward comprises the parishes of Cotham, East Stoke, Thorpe, Elston, Farndon, Hawton, Alverton, Kilvington, Staunton and Syerston and Balderton South parish ward of Balderton parish. Table 4 (on pages 20–22) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

116 We received three submissions in relation to this area during Stage One. The District Council proposed to amend the boundary between Balderton North and Balderton West wards to ensure easily identifiable boundaries and address the existing electoral imbalance. Newark Constituency Liberal Democrats proposed that Farndon ward revert to a single-member ward. Balderton Parish Council proposed four single-member wards for the Balderton area which would incorporate the Fernwood development.

117 The District Council's proposals in this area provided fairly good levels of electoral equality. Balderton North, Balderton West and Farndon wards would initially have 11% more, 1% more and 3% fewer electors than the district average respectively. By 2009 the wards would have 5% more, 2% fewer and 8% more electors than the district average respectively.

118 We noted that the Council's proposals to amend the boundary between Balderton North and Balderton West wards would ensure easily identifiable boundaries and address the existing electoral imbalance. We did not receive any further evidence to support Balderton Parish Council's proposal to create four single-member wards within the Balderton area and we noted that this proposal would result in a high level of electoral imbalance for both the Farndon and Balderton wards if implemented. In light of these facts, we proposed to adopt the Council's proposals with one minor amendment to improve electoral equality further. We proposed to move 170 electors in Linden Avenue, Grove Street and London Road from Balderton North ward to Balderton West ward.

119 South of Balderton lies the Council's proposed Farndon ward, which would have a variance of 8% by 2009. We considered various alternatives to improve electoral equality, including moving electors into either the proposed Balderton North or Balderton West wards. However, such an amendment would involve an arbitrary division of a new housing estate which we did not believe would reflect community identity. We noted that Farndon was a difficult area in which to achieve good levels of electoral equality as a result of the geography of the area. It is bordered by the River Trent to the west and urban Balderton and Newark to the north and east. We did not receive any further evidence to support Newark Constituency Liberal Democrats' proposal for a single-member Farndon ward and noted that this proposal would result in a high level of electoral imbalance. Given those factors we proposed to adopt the Council's proposals for Farndon in their entirety.

120 Under our draft recommendations the proposed Balderton North, Balderton West and Farndon wards would have 1% more, 2% more and 8% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2009.

121 At Stage Three the District Council supported our draft recommendations for this area. Fernwood & District Residents' Association supported our proposals in the area but noted that our mapping did not completely reflect our proposed changes.

122 We note the support received for our proposals in this area and are therefore proposing to confirm our draft recommendations for Balderton North, Balderton West and Farndon wards as final. We note Fernwood & District Residents' Associations comment that our mapping did not fully reflect our proposals. The correct mapping accompanies this report.

123 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 12, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Balderton North, Balderton West and Farndon wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2 accompanying this report.

Lowdham and Trent wards

124 Under the existing arrangements Lowdham ward comprises the parishes of Bulcote, Caythorpe, Epperstone, Gunthorpe, Gonalston, Hoveringham and Lowdham. Trent ward comprises the parishes of Bleasby, Fiskerton cum Morton, Rolleston and Thurgarton. Table 4 (on pages 20–22) outlines the electoral variances for 2004 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

125 We received two submissions in relation to this area during Stage One. The District Council proposed that there be no change to the existing arrangements for Lowdham and Trent wards. Newark Constituency Liberal Democrats supported the Council's proposals.

126 The District Council's proposals in this area provided good levels of electoral equality. In light of this and the lack of any alternative evidence we proposed to adopt the Council's proposals for these wards in their entirety. Under our draft recommendations the proposed Lowdham and Trent wards had 4% more and 5% more electors per councillor than the district average. By 2009 the wards would have 3% more electors and equal to the district average respectively.

127 At Stage Three the District Council supported our draft recommendations in this area. We received no further representations in this area. Given the support received we have decided to endorse the draft recommendations for Lowdham and Trent wards as final.

128 Under our final recommendations the proposed Lowdham and Trent wards would have 4% more and 5% more electors per councillor than the district average.

129 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 12, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Lowdham and Trent wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Conclusions

130 Table 5 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements based on 2004 and 2009 electorate figures.

Table 5: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	Current arrangements		Final recommendations	
	2004	2009	2004	2009
Number of councillors	46	46	46	46
Number of wards	26	26	25	25
Average number of electors per councillor	1,833	1,924	1,833	1,924
Number of wards with a variance of more than 10% from the average	9	8	4	4
Number of wards with a variance of more than 20% from the average	1	0	1	0

131 As shown in Table 5, our final recommendations for Newark & Sherwood District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from nine to four. By 2009 only four wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10%. We propose to retain the existing council size of 46 members.

Final recommendation

Newark & Sherwood District Council should comprise 46 councillors serving 25 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

132 As part of an FER the Committee can make recommendations for new electoral arrangements for parishes. Where there is no impact on the district council's electoral arrangements, the Committee will generally be content to put forward for consideration proposals from parish and town councils for changes to parish electoral arrangements in FERs. However, the Boundary Committee will usually wish to see a degree of consensus between the district council and the parish council concerned. Proposals should be supported by evidence, illustrating why changes to parish

electoral arrangements are required. The Boundary Committee cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an FER.

133 Responsibility for reviewing and implementing changes to the electoral arrangements of existing parishes, outside of an electoral review conducted by the Boundary Committee, lies with district councils.² If a district council wishes to make an Order amending the electoral arrangements of a parish that has been subject to an electoral arrangements Order made by either the Secretary of State or the Electoral Commission within the past five years, the consent of the Commission is required.

134 The parish of Rainworth is currently served by 12 councillors representing two wards: North (returning three councillors) and South (returning nine councillors).

135 At Stage Three the District Council proposed that Rainworth parish be de-warded as part of this electoral review, stating that Rainworth parish supported this view.

136 Having considered the representation of the District Council we propose retaining the existing parish wards in Rainworth parish. While we note the support mentioned by the District Council we would wish for official confirmation from Rainworth Parish Council itself. However, we have no objection in principle to the proposal and it is open to the Council to undertake a review under Section 17 of the Local Government and Ratings Act 1997.

137 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Local Government Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district.

138 The parish of Balderton is currently served by 18 councillors representing three wards: North (returning seven councillors), South (returning three councillors) and West (returning eight councillors). As part of our draft recommendations we proposed amending the boundaries of all three wards in order that they be coincident with our proposed district ward boundaries.

139 We received no comments at Stage Three specifically regarding the proposed parish warding for Balderton parish and therefore confirm the proposals as final.

Final recommendation

Balderton Parish Council should comprise 18 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: North (returning seven councillors), South (returning three councillors) and West (returning eight councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map 1.

140 The parish of Coddington is currently served by 10 councillors and is not warded. As part of our draft recommendations we proposed to include part of Coddington parish in our proposed Beacon ward. This proposal resulted in an area of

² Such reviews must be conducted in accordance with section 17 of the Local Government and Rating Act 1997.

urban overspill being included in a ward with electors of Newark town. Therefore, given that our draft recommendations put forward this proposal it was necessary to create two new parish wards for Coddington parish.

141 Newark & Sherwood District Council stated that 'it would seem sensible to review the parish boundaries between Newark Town ... and Coddington parish after the completion of this electoral review'.

142 At Stage Three we received no specific comments and therefore confirm our draft recommendations for parish warding in Coddington as final.

Final recommendation

Coddington Parish Council should comprise 10 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Coddington East (returning one councillor) and Coddington West (returning nine councillors). The boundary between the two wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on Map 2.

143 The parish of Newark is currently served by 18 councillors representing 18 single-member parish wards: Bishop Alexander, Bowbridge, Byron, Cardinal Hinsley, Clumber, Fosse, Gilstrap, Gopher, Grange, Harcourt, Hilltop, Lilley & Stone, Lovers Lane, Ossington, Sconce, St Mary's, Ransome and Welbeck.

144 At Stage one Newark Town Council proposed no change to the existing parish electoral arrangements.

145 Given the proposed amendments to the district wards, we proposed new parish warding arrangements in the town. We noted that the town council is currently represented by single-member parish wards. However, the amendments we proposed to the district wards, to achieve good electoral equality, resulted in significant amendments to these single-member parish wards. We considered proposing 18 new single-member wards but without evidence of communities we were not convinced that our proposals for new parish wards would reflect community identity, particularly given that our district warding proposals divided the existing parish wards unequally. We therefore proposed that the town council be represented by five parish wards coincident with our proposed district wards in the town.

146 At Stage Three Newark Town Council supported the retention of 18 councillors representing 18 wards, arguing that a councillor will know their ward intimately due to its smaller size and that electors would have one point of call. We would have no objection in principle to this proposal but we would look to base proposals on evidence of communities and upon reliable figures. However, the Town Council did not provide detailed proposals for 18 new town council wards. Following requests for further details the Town Council could not provide detailed electorate figures to supplement their proposals in time for us to make our recommendations.

147 Given that we do not have detailed proposals for 18 single-member town council wards we do not consider that we can put this recommendation forward as part of our final recommendations. Given the evidence available to us at this time we were not convinced that we could divide the proposed district wards into single-member wards without dividing communities. However, it is open to the District Council to undertake a review of Newark Town Council's electoral arrangements under Section 17 of the Local Government and Ratings Act 1997. If, following the conduct of a Section 17

review, the district council wished to make an Order creating new parish electoral arrangements, it must seek the consent of the Electoral Commission if this falls within the five years following any electoral change Order made by the Electoral Commission.

Final recommendation

Newark Town Council should comprise 18 councillors representing five wards: Beacon (returning six councillors), Bridge (returning three councillors), Castle (returning three councillors), Devon (returning three councillors) and Magnus (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map 2.

148 The parish of Southwell is currently served by 15 councillors representing three wards: East (returning five councillors), North (returning five councillors) and West (returning five councillors). As part of our draft recommendations we proposed amending the boundary between the proposed Southwell East and Southwell North wards. Therefore we proposed amending the boundary between East and North parish wards in order that it be coincident with the district ward boundary.

149 At Stage Three we received a number of submissions regarding the appropriate district warding arrangements for Southwell town. However, we have decided to endorse our proposals for three single-member wards in the town and therefore also propose endorsing our proposals for three parish wards in the town coincident with the district wards in the town.

Final recommendation

Southwell Town Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Southwell East, Southwell North and Southwell West, (each returning five councillors). The boundaries between the parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map 3.

150 Bilsthorpe Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present and should remain unwarded.

Final recommendation

Bilsthorpe Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors as at present and should remain unwarded.

151 Carlton-on-Trent Parish Council should continue to be represented by seven councillors and should remain unwarded.

Final recommendation

Carlton-on-Trent Parish Council should comprise seven councillors, as at present and should remain unwarded.

152 Collingham Parish Council should continue to be represented by 10 councillors and should remain unwarded.

Final recommendation

Collingham Parish Council should comprise 10 councillors and should remain unwarded.

153 Edwinstowe Parish Council should continue to be represented by 11 councillors and should remain unwarded.

Final recommendation

Edwinstowe Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors and should remain unwarded.

154 Farnsfield Parish Council should continue to be represented by 11 councillors and should remain unwarded.

Final recommendation

Farnsfield Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors and should remain unwarded.

155 Langford Parish Council should continue to be represented by two councillors and should remain unwarded.

Final recommendation

Langford Parish Council should comprise two councillors and should remain unwarded.

156 Ollerton & Boughton Town Council should continue to be represented by 15 councillors representing three wards: Boughton, North and South (each represented by five councillors).

Final recommendation

Ollerton & Boughton Town Council should comprise 15 councillors representing three wards: Boughton, North and South (each represented by five councillors).

157 Rufford Parish Council should continue to be represented by seven councillors and should remain unwarded.

Final recommendation

Rufford Parish Council should continue to be represented by seven councillors and should remain unwarded

158 Winthorpe Parish Council should continue to be represented by seven councillors and should remain unwarded.

Final recommendation

Winthorpe Parish Council should continue to be represented by seven councillors and should remain unwarded.

6 What happens next?

159 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Newark & Sherwood and submitted our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation.³

160 It is now up to the Electoral Commission to decide whether or not to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 22 August 2006, and the Electoral Commission will normally consider all written representation made to them by that date.

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

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

Fax: 020 7271 0667

Email: implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk

The contact details above should only be used for implementation purpose.

The full report is available to download at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

³ Under the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI No. 2001/3962).

7 Mapping

Final recommendations for Newark & Sherwood

162 The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for Newark & Sherwood district.

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for Newark & Sherwood district, including constituent parishes.
- **Sheet 2, Map 2** illustrates the proposed boundaries in Newark town.
- **Sheet 3, Map 3** illustrates the proposed boundaries in Southwell town.

Appendix A

Glossary and abbreviations

AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)	A landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it
Boundary Committee	The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, responsible for undertaking electoral reviews
Constituent areas	The geographical areas that make up any one ward, expressed in parishes or existing wards, or parts of either
Consultation	An opportunity for interested parties to comment and make proposals at key stages during the review
Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve a council
Order (or electoral change Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Electoral Commission	An independent body that was set up by the UK Parliament. Its mission is to foster public confidence and participation by promoting integrity, involvement and effectiveness in the democratic process
Electoral equality	A measure of ensuring that every person's vote is of equal worth

Electoral imbalance	Where there is a large difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the district
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in local government elections
FER (or further electoral review)	A further review of the electoral arrangements of a local authority following significant shifts in the electorate since the last periodic electoral review conducted between 1996 and 2004
Multi-member ward	A ward represented by more than one councillor and usually not more than three councillors
National Park	<p>The 12 National Parks in England and Wales were designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 and will soon be joined by the new designation of the South Downs. The definition of a National Park is:</p> <p>‘An extensive area of beautiful and relatively wild country in which, for the nation's benefit and by appropriate national decision and action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the characteristic landscape beauty is strictly preserved; – access and facilities for open-air enjoyment are amply provided; – wildlife and buildings and places of architectural and historic interest are suitably protected; – established farming use is effectively maintained’
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors

Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward than the average the electors can be described as being over-represented
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single district enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents
Parish council	A body elected by residents of the parish who are on the electoral register, which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries
Parish electoral arrangements	The total number of parish councillors; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward
Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever parish ward they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
PER (or periodic electoral review)	A review of the electoral arrangements of all local authorities in England, undertaken periodically. The last programme of PERs was undertaken between 1996 and 2004 by the Boundary Committee for England and its predecessor, the now-defunct Local Government Commission for England

Political management arrangements	The Local Government Act 2000 enabled local authorities to modernise their decision making process. Councils could choose from three broad categories; a directly elected mayor and cabinet, a cabinet with a leader, or a directly elected mayor and council manager. Whichever of the categories it adopted became the new political management structure for the council
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward than the average the electors can be described as being under-represented
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward varies in percentage terms from the district average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district council

Appendix B

Code of practice on written consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation* (available at 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 comply with this requirement.
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.