

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

Further electoral review

December 2005

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

Archie Gall (Director)

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. This review aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each district councillor is approximately the same. As a result of the poor levels of electoral inequality that existed in 2004, The Electoral Commission directed The Boundary Committee to undertake an electoral review of Newark & Sherwood district 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. Development forecast for the five-year period that occurred between 1999 and 2004 during the last review was largely not realised. In Balderton North ward more development was undertaken than expected, which has resulted 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

Submissions received

During Stage One we received 34 submissions which were relevant to this review. The District Council proposed a district-wide scheme based on the existing council size. However, we could not officially consider the District Council's submission as it was received after the official deadline. Therefore we could only consider it as information to assist us in making our draft recommendations.

Analysis and draft 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 are content that the Council's revised figures represent the best estimates currently available.

Council size

During Stage One we received one submission relating to council size 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 recommendations we propose to retain the council size of 46 members.

General analysis

We are proposing recommendations largely based on the District Council's information. In the rural areas surrounding the urban settlements of Newark town and Balderton, and in the north of the district, we have 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.

What happens next?

There will now be a consultation period, during which we encourage comment on our draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Newark & Sherwood contained in the report. We welcome views from all parts of the community and believe that the more feedback we receive, based on clear evidence, the better informed we will be in forming our final recommendations. We will take into account all submissions received by 6 March 2006. Any received **after** this date will not be taken into account.

We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Newark & Sherwood and welcome comments from interested parties. In particular, we found our decisions regarding Southwell town to be a difficult judgement between our statutory criteria. We would particularly welcome local views, backed up by demonstrable evidence, during Stage Three. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

Express your views by writing directly to us:

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This report is available to download at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Table 1: Draft recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1 Balderton North	2	The proposed Balderton North parish ward of Balderton parish
2 Balderton West	2	The proposed Balderton West parish ward of Balderton parish
3 Beacon	3	The proposed Beacon parish ward of Newark parish and the proposed Coddington West parish ward of Coddington parish
4 Blidworth	2	The parishes of Blidworth, Lindhurst and Oxtun
5 Boughton	2	The parishes of Kirton and Walesby; Boughton parish ward of Ollerton & Boughton parish
6 Bridge	2	The proposed Bridge parish ward of Newark parish
7 Castle	2	The proposed Castle parish ward of Newark parish
8 Caunton	1	The parishes of Caunton, Egmanton, Hockerton, Kersall, Kneesall, Laxton & Moorhouse, Maplebeck, Ompton, Ossington, Wellow and Winkburn
9 Clipstone	2	The parish of Clipstone
10 Collingham & Meering	2	The parishes of Besthorpe, Collingham, Girton, Harby, Meering, North Clifton, South Clifton, South Scarle, Spalford, Thorney and Wigsley
11 Devon	2	The proposed Devon parish ward of Newark parish
12 Edwinstowe	2	The parish of Edwinstowe
13 Farndon	2	The parishes of Alverton, Cotham, East Stoke, Elston, Farndon, Hawton, Kilvington, Staunton, Syerston and Thorpe; the proposed Balderton South parish ward of Balderton parish
14 Farnsfield & Bilsthorpe	3	The parishes of Bilsthorpe, Eakring, Edingley, Farnsfield, Halam and Kirklington
15 Lowdham	2	The parishes of Bulcote, Caythorpe, Epperstone, Gonalston, Gunthorpe, Hoveringham and Lowdham
16 Magnus	2	The proposed Magnus parish ward of Newark parish
17 Muskham	1	The parishes of Averham, Bathley, Cromwell, Kelham, North Muskham, South Muskham and Staythorpe

Table 1: Draft recommendations: Summary (continued)

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent district areas
18 Ollerton	3	The parish of Perlethorpe cum Budby; North and South parish wards of Ollerton & Boughton parish
19 Rainworth	3	The parishes of Rainworth and Rufford
20 Southwell East	1	The parish of Upton; the proposed Southwell East parish ward of Southwell parish
21 Southwell North	1	The proposed Southwell North parish ward of Southwell parish
22 Southwell West	1	The parish of Halloughton; Southwell West parish ward of Southwell parish
23 Sutton-on-Trent	1	The parishes of Carlton-on-Trent, Grassthorpe, Norwell, Sutton-on-Trent and Weston
24 Trent	1	The parishes of Bleasby, Fiskerton cum Morton, Rolleston and Thurgarton
25 Winthorpe	1	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.
3. We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors.

Table 2: Draft 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	3,720	1,860	1	3,738	1,869	-3
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

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

	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 %
12	Edwinstowe	2	4,099	2,050	12	4,397	2,199	14
13	Farndon	2	3,538	1,769	-3	4,169	2,085	8
14	Farnsfield & Bilsthorpe	3	5,872	1,957	7	5,939	1,980	3
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	1,865	1,865	2	1,973	1,973	3
21	Southwell North	1	1,983	1,983	8	1,975	1,975	3
22	Southwell West	1	1,923	1,923	5	1,949	1,949	1

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

	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 %
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 draft proposals for the electoral arrangements for the district of Newark & Sherwood, on which we are now consulting.

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 a 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 is to establish the reasons behind the continuing imbalances, to consider likely future trends, and to assess what action, if any, is 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; and
- 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 both in understanding the approach taken by The Boundary Committee for England and in informing comments that 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 do not in these reviews consider changes to the external boundaries of areas.

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. to ensure 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 nearly as 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 identities 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 that the size of council proposed to us should be developed and argued for 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 to address 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 we must be satisfied 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 another's. 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, the Local Government Association, 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 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 6 December 2005 and will end on 6 March 2006, involves publishing the draft proposals in this report and public consultation about them. **We take this consultation very seriously, and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.**

18 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to modify them, and submit final recommendations to The Electoral Commission. It will then be for 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 change 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. the duty to have due regard to:
 - eliminating unlawful racial discrimination;
 - promoting equality of opportunity; and
 - promoting good relations between people of different racial groups.

National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty 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 Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (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 Newark & Sherwood district is entirely parished and comprises 69 parish councils and parish meetings. Newark & Sherwood comprises a number of dispersed communities and settlements and includes the urban settlements of Balderton, Newark and Southwell towards the south of the district, surrounded by rural parishes largely to the north.

23 In 2004 the district had an electorate of 84,320. By 2009 this is forecast to increase by 5% to 88,526. In the last review of Newark & Sherwood the forecast electorate for 2004 was 89,516, an increase of 8%. This increase was not achieved and the electorate remained stable between 1999 and 2004.

24 As a result of the further research undertaken into the continuing levels of electoral inequality, The Electoral Commission directed The Boundary Committee to undertake a review of the electoral arrangements of Newark & Sherwood District Council on 10 February 2005.

25 The Council presently has 46 members who are elected from 26 wards, 10 of which are relatively urban in Newark Town, Balderton and Southwell and the remainder being predominantly rural. Two wards are represented by three members, 16 by two members and eight by a single member.

26 At present each councillor represents an average of 1,833 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,924 by the year 2009 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to overestimations of electorate growth during the last electoral review the number of electors per councillor in nine of the 26 wards varies by more than 10% from the district average, and in one ward by more than 20%. The worst imbalance is in Clipstone ward, where the councillors represent 23% fewer electors than the district average.

27 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. 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, currently 46. Therefore the average number of electors per councillor is currently 1,833. In Balderton North ward, currently represented by two councillors, there are currently 4,253 electors, therefore each councillor represents, on average, 2,127 electors, 16% more than the current district average.

Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements in Newark & Sherwood district – 2004 electorate

	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: Existing electoral arrangements in Newark & Sherwood district – 2004 electorate (continued)

	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	2,131	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: Existing electoral arrangements in Newark & Sherwood district – 2004 electorate (continued)

	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 and 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 were relatively over-represented by 23% while electors in Balderton North ward were significantly under-represented by 16%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 Submissions received

28 At the start of the review members of the public and other interested parties were invited to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Newark & Sherwood District Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

29 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Committee visited the area and met with officers and members from the District Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their cooperation and assistance. We received 34 relevant representations during Stage One, including the District Council's draft district-wide scheme, 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.

Political groups

30 The Southwell Liberal Democrats proposed that the town of Southwell be represented as a single three-member ward. The Newark Constituency Liberal Democrats proposed that the current council size of 46 be maintained and supported the majority of the District Council's proposals, with the exception of the District Council's proposed two-member Farndon ward and its proposed Southwell wards.

Parish and town councils

31 Representations were received from seven parish and town councils. Weston Parish Council and Sutton-on-Trent Parish Council proposed that their parishes remain together within the Sutton-on-Trent ward. North Muskham Parish Council proposed no change to the existing arrangements linking the parishes of Bathley and North Muskham due to community interest. Bathley Parish Council strongly opposed any division of the parishes of Bathley and North Muskham. Southwell Town Council proposed a single three-member ward in the town of Southwell. Newark Town Council proposed no change to the current arrangements for Newark-on-Trent. Balderton Parish Council proposed that the Balderton area be made into four single-member wards and proposed that other villages should not be added to ensure electoral equality.

Other representations

32 A further ten representations were received from local residents concerning the North Muskham and Bathley areas, proposing that the two parishes be maintained within the same ward. We received 13 representations regarding the Southwell town area from local residents who proposed retaining the existing three single-member wards. One local resident proposed a single three-member ward for Southwell town.

33 We also received three representations regarding the district boundary between Newark & Sherwood and Mansfield districts. However, we are not able to consider principal area boundaries as part of this review and have therefore been unable to take these representations into consideration.

Newark & Sherwood District Council

34 At the end of Stage One (8 August 2005) we had only received a copy of the District Council's draft proposals, which had not been agreed by the full Council. We asked the Council if it wished us to consider its draft proposals as its official submission. The council declined and stated they would forward us their official submission following their council meeting on 1 September 2005. Unfortunately this was too late for us to consider their submission, therefore, we used the council's draft proposals for information when formulating our recommendations rather than treating it as an official submission. The official proposals which we received from the council were identical to the draft proposals we had previously been forwarded. Therefore, where we refer to the District Council's proposals in this report it should be assumed that we are referring to its draft proposals received before the end of Stage One.

35 The District Council's draft proposals proposed a council of 46 members, the same as at present, serving 26 wards, the same as at present. The Council proposed a mix of one-, two-, and three-member wards. Four wards would vary by more than 10% by 2009.

4 Analysis and draft recommendations

36 Before finalising our recommendations on the electoral arrangements for Newark & Sherwood we invite views on our initial thoughts as expressed in these draft recommendations. We welcome comments from all those interested relating to the number of councillors, proposed ward boundaries, ward names, and parish and town council electoral arrangements. In particular, we found that our decisions regarding Southwell town and the arguments to retain three single-member wards and proposals to create a single three-member ward required difficult judgements between our statutory criteria. This was due to conflicting arguments received from interested parties during Stage One. In such cases, we would normally look to achieve the best levels of electoral equality. However, in this instance the electoral equality in both proposals would be good, therefore we would particularly welcome local views, backed up by demonstrable evidence, during Stage Three. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

37 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 defines the need:

- to secure effective and convenient local government;
- to reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
- to 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.

38 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.

39 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.

40 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 identities 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.

41 The recommendations do not affect county, district or parish external boundaries, or 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

42 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 88,526 over the five-year period from 2004 to 2009. It expects 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.

43 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, an increase of 1,654 electors. We are content that the Council's revised figures represent the best estimates currently available.

44 We recognise that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having considered the District Council's figures, accept that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council size

45 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.

46 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.

47 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 it provided some information regarding the commitment and duties of a councillor, including dealing with individual casework, their representational role and representation on outside bodies.

48 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.

49 Although the information provided is not exhaustive, given the lack of alternative proposals and information on which to justify an alternative council size we propose adopting a council size of 46 as part of our draft recommendations. However, we would invite comment at Stage Three from interested parties on the appropriate council size for Newark & Sherwood District Council.

50 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

51 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%. Therefore when making recommendations we will not simply aim for electoral variances of under 10%. Where inadequate 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 possible, providing this can be achieved without compromising the reflection of the identities and interests of local communities and the provision of 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 must be 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.

52 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 acknowledge 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 result in electoral variances over 10%.

53 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 draft proposals. Therefore the average number of electors per councillor under our draft recommendations is 1,833. This is forecast to increase to 1,924 by 2009.

General analysis

54 As discussed in Chapter 3 the District Council did not make an official submission to us during Stage One of the review. However, they did provide us with draft proposals which we used for information when formulating our draft recommendations. We are proposing a number of wards which are identical to the District Council's proposals. We are recommending 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 have 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 consider that these wards provide a satisfactory level of electoral equality in light of the statutory criteria. We consider that the Council's draft proposals in the north, east and south of the district provide strong boundaries and relatively good levels of electoral equality, and therefore we propose to adopt those proposed wards in full.

55 In the urban Newark town and Balderton area we propose a number of amendments to the Council's proposals in order to secure improved levels of electoral equality. In the north-west of the district the Council proposed wards with high levels of electoral inequality; therefore we have proposed amendments to address these. The Council proposed Bilsthorpe ward with a variance of 27% by 2009; we propose creating a three-member ward to address this imbalance. In Southwell town we have adopted the Council's proposals in full. We propose to revise the electoral arrangements of Newark parish to reflect the revised district wards.

56 We received a number of comments relating to the administrative boundary between the districts of Mansfield and Newark & Sherwood. While we acknowledge the boundary anomaly and agree with respondents that the existing boundary divides the community of Rainworth, we have no power to address the external boundary as part of this review. The Boundary Committee can only review principal area administrative boundaries following a direction from the Secretary of State.

Warding arrangements

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

- a Clipstone, Edwinstowe and Ollerton wards (page 29)
- b Bilsthorpe, Blidworth, Farnsfield and Rainworth wards (page 30)
- c Boughton, Caunton and Sutton-on-Trent wards (page 32)
- d Collingham & Meering, Muskham and Winthorpe wards (page 32)
- e Newark-on-Trent (five wards) (page 33)
- f Southwell town (three wards) (page 35)
- g Balderton North, Balderton West and Farndon wards (page 36)
- h Lowdham and Trent wards (page 38)

58 Details of our draft recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Clipstone, Edwinstowe and Ollerton wards

59 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.

60 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.

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

62 We note 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 would appear 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 also noted that during the last periodic electoral review of Newark & Sherwood proposals to combine these communities met with strong resistance locally. It argued that its proposals would achieve the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in the area.

63 We have carefully considered the proposals received during Stage One and note 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. The Lidgett area, to some degree, stands apart from the remainder of the built-up area in Edwinstowe parish to the south of the railway line, and we consider that it would form a viable parish 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 propose retaining the existing Edwinstowe and Ollerton ward.

64 As discussed, we have 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 has not been possible to find a satisfactory solution that achieves good levels of electoral equality and does not divide communities. We note 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 propose adopting the Council's proposed Clipstone ward.

65 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9–10 and 11–13, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Clipstone, Edwinstowe and Ollerton wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Bilsthorpe, Blidworth, Farnsfield and Rainworth wards

66 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.

67 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. We also received three representations regarding amendments to the principal area boundary that divides the Rainworth area between Newark & Sherwood and Mansfield districts. However, we are not able to consider principal area boundaries as part of this review and have therefore been unable to take these representations into consideration. In addition, we received numerous letters regarding Rainworth village; however, these did not include a return address and therefore we were unable to acknowledge these submissions or take them into consideration.

68 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, 'thereby reuniting that part of Rainworth which lies within the district'. 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 note 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 We note that Rainworth village is divided between Newark & Sherwood and Mansfield districts, and acknowledge that Rainworth is currently a split community. As stated earlier, this issue is outside the scope of this review and therefore could not be addressed. We note that during the last PER Rainworth was divided and part of it was included within the Bilsthorpe ward. We note the Council's proposals for

Bilsthorpe and Rainworth wards 'bring those parts of the village within the district boundary back together'. The Council forwarded to us a 'referendum' from 1,077 local residents indicating their support for a single three-member Rainworth ward. When formulating our recommendations it is quality of evidence we consider against the statutory criteria rather than the number of signatures on a petition.

71 Given the high levels of electoral imbalance in the area as a whole we have 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 has not been possible to satisfactorily ward parishes in this area. The solutions we have investigated either divide communities or do 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 propose adopting it as part of our draft recommendations.

72 We note 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. With regard to the ward the Council stated that 'Whilst it is acknowledged that this would result in a single-member ward in Bilsthorpe with a high electoral variance of 27% it is considered that the importance of acknowledging community identity within the village of Rainworth justifies this.' We were not persuaded, on the basis of the evidence received, that the District Council's proposals for Bilsthorpe would achieve the best balance between the statutory criteria and we therefore considered alternative electoral arrangements. In order to address the electoral imbalance we propose 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 note the good communication links throughout the ward.

73 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 Oxtou, from the neighbouring Farnsfield ward, with Blidworth as they share communication links. We note 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 would provide for improved levels of electoral equality in both the proposed Blidworth and Farnsfield & Bilsthorpe wards and would appear, in our view, to include well linked communities. Therefore we propose to adopt this proposal. However, we would particularly welcome comments from local people on the appropriateness of the proposal at Stage Three.

74 Although we recognise that the level of electoral equality in these wards is not as good as our recommendations in other parts of the district we consider that these wards provide the best option in the area as they achieve a good balance between the statutory criteria.

75 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9–10 and 11–13, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Blidworth, Farnsfield & Bilsthorpe and Rainworth wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Boughton, Caunton and Sutton-on-Trent wards

76 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, Egmanon, 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.

77 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. Newark Constituency Liberal Democrats supported the District Council's proposals. Weston Parish Council and Sutton-on-Trent Parish Council proposed that Weston Parish Council remain in the Sutton-on-Trent ward.

78 The District Council's proposals in this area would provide good levels of electoral equality. Boughton, Caunton and Sutton-on-Trent wards would initially have 1%, 1% and 3% more electors than the district average respectively. By 2009 the wards would have equal to the district average, 3% fewer and 1% more electors than the average respectively.

79 We note that the District Council's proposals throughout this area provide 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 propose to adopt the Council's proposals in their entirety.

80 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9–10 and 11–13, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Boughton, Caunton and Sutton-on-Trent wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Collingham & Meering, Muskham and Winthorpe wards

81 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.

82 We received 14 submissions in relation to this area during Stage One. The District Council proposed that there be 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 separate Bathley parish from Muskham ward.

83 The District Council's proposals in this area would provide 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.

84 We note that the District Council's proposals throughout this area provide good levels of electoral equality, with no ward varying by more than 5% by 2009. We also note that the District Council's proposals reflect 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 transfers an area of urban overspill into a ward with electors from the rest of Newark town. We concur with the District Council that such a proposal provides a better reflection of community identity as it separates urban and rural areas while providing good electoral equality. We welcome the indication from the District Council that it will review the administrative boundaries of the parish following the completion of the FER. This proposed amendment to the district ward boundary necessitates parish warding which is discussed at the end of this chapter. In light of the strong boundaries and good level of electoral equality that would result we propose to adopt the District Council's proposals in this area in their entirety.

85 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9–10 and 11–13, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Collingham & Meering, Muskham and Winthorpe wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report

Newark-on-Trent (five wards)

86 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.

87 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 proposed that there be no change to the existing arrangements for Newark-on-Trent.

88 The District Council proposed to move Welbeck parish ward from the existing Bridge ward to its proposed Beacon ward. It also proposed to place 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.

89 The District Council's proposals in this area would provide 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.

90 Having considered the District Council's proposals for the town of Newark, we are adopting the Council's scheme with some amendments to improve electoral equality. We are putting forward amendments to four of the five proposed wards, we consider that given the urban nature of Newark town it is possible to achieve levels of electoral equality much closer to the district average than the District Council's proposals achieve. We looked at a number of ways of achieving improvements in electoral equality. We propose to move approximately 550 electors from the Council's proposed Castle ward into its proposed Devon and Magnus wards. We propose that the area bounded by Hawton Road, Windsor Road, Devon Road and Beech Avenue be transferred to our proposed Devon ward, while the area bounded by Boundary Road, Windsor Road and Gladstone Road should be transferred to our proposed Magnus ward. We also propose that the area bounded by and including all the properties on Gopher Road and the current ward boundary on Staunton Road be transferred to our proposed Magnus ward from the proposed Devon ward. These proposals would result in electoral variances in Devon and Magnus wards of -1% and 1% by 2009.

91 We noted that the Council's proposed Castle ward would, as a result of our proposals in this area, have an electoral variance of -6%. To further improve electoral equality in this ward we propose moving electors from the Council's proposed Bridge ward, which had a variance of 6% by 2009, into Castle ward. We propose that the boundary run to the south of Mumby Close and then follow the river north. By amending the boundary between the two wards we have been able to secure an electoral variance equal to the district average in both wards. We propose adopting the Council's Beacon ward without amendment, which will have a variance of -2%. Additionally, we propose amending the electoral arrangements of Newark parish to reflect the revised district wards.

92 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9–10 and 11–13, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Beacon, Bridge, Castle, Devon and Magnus wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2 accompanying this report

Southwell town (three wards)

93 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 page 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.

94 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.

95 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. It proposed to transfer 357 electors (from Byron Gardens, Burgage, Lower Kirklington Road, Manor Close, Monckton Drive, The Ropewalk, King Street, Kings Court, Leeks Close, Private Road, Queen Street and Sheppards Row) from Southwell East to Southwell North. It also proposed to transfer 205 electors (from Archers Field, Chatham Street, Dover Street, Lower Kirklington Road and Station Road) from Southwell North to Southwell East.

96 The District Council's proposals in this area would provide 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.

97 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 note 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.

98 Southwell has been a contentious area within this review. As stated earlier, 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 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.

99 These arguments are finely balanced, and the arguments for a three-member ward do have some merit. We note the argument that cross cutting issues have resulted in shared caseloads and that the town is a strong single community. We also note the argument for three single-member wards that councillors had developed relationships with electors and town councillors and 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 propose 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, this is a finely balanced decision and we would welcome comments at Stage Three from interested parties.

100 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9–10 and 11–13, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Southwell East, North and West wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 3 accompanying this report.

Balderton North, Balderton West and Farndon wards

101 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.

102 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. It proposed to remove part of Balderton North parish ward (1–187 Grove Street, 1–3 Old Cobham Orchard, Rown Way and Sapling Close) and include this within Balderton West ward. It proposed to remove part of Balderton South parish ward (Bilton Close, Great North Road 2–Queens Cottages, Staple Lane–Red Maples) from Farndon ward and place it within Balderton West ward. Newark Constituency Liberal Democrats proposed that Farndon ward revert -to a single-member ward. Balderton Parish Council proposed to create four single-member wards for the Balderton area which would incorporate the Fernwood development.

103 The District Council's proposals in this area would provide 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.

104 We note 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 note 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 propose to adopt the Council's proposals with one minor amendment to improve electoral equality further. We propose to move 170 electors in Linden Avenue, Grove Street and London Road from Balderton North ward to Balderton West ward. Our proposal secures variances, by 2009, of 1% and 2% for Balderton North and Balderton West respectively.

105 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 do not believe would reflect community identity. We note that Farndon is 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 note that this proposal would result in a high level of electoral imbalance. Given those factors we propose to adopt the Council's proposals for Farndon in their entirety.

106 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9–10 and 11–13, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Balderton North, Balderton West and Farndon wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Lowdham and Trent wards

107 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.

108 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.

109 The District Council's proposals in this area would provide good levels of electoral equality. Lowdham and Trent wards would initially have 4% and 5% more electors than the district average respectively. By 2009 the wards would have 3% more electors and equal to the district average respectively.

110 We note that the District Council's proposals throughout this area provide good levels of electoral equality. In light of this and the lack of any alternative evidence we propose to adopt the Council's proposals for these wards in their entirety.

111 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9–10 and 11–13, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Lowdham and Trent wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report

Conclusions

112 Table 5 shows how our draft recommendations would affect electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements (based on 2004 electorate figures) and with forecast electorates for the year 2009.

Table 5: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	Current arrangements		Draft 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	2	2
Number of wards with a variance of more than 20% from the average	1	0	1	0

113 As shown in Table 5, our draft 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 two. By 2009 only two wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10%. We propose to retain a council size of 46 members.

Draft 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

114 As part of an electoral review 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 electoral reviews. 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 electoral review.

115 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.

116 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. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Coddington, Newark and Southwell to reflect the proposed district wards.

117 The parish of Coddington is currently served by 10 councillors and is not warded. As part of our draft recommendations we are proposing to include part of Coddington in our proposed Beacon ward. This proposal results in an area of urban overspill being included in a ward with electors of Newark town. It has been necessary to create two new parish wards for Coddington parish.

118 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'. We would welcome such a review by the District Council.

Draft recommendation

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

119 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.

120 Newark Town Council's submission proposed no change to the existing parish electoral arrangements.

121 Given the proposed amendments to the district wards, we are proposing new parish warding arrangements in the town. We note that the town council is currently represented by single-member parish wards. However, the amendments we are proposing to the district wards, to achieve good electoral equality, would result in significant amendments to these single-member parish wards. We are therefore

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

proposing that the town council be represented by five parish wards coincident with our proposed district wards in the town. However, should local people wish to put forward proposals for single-member parish wards, that reflect the district wards in the town, we will consider these when formulating our final recommendations. Given the significant changes to the current parish electoral arrangements we would particularly welcome comments from local people at Stage Three.

Draft recommendation

Newark Town Council should comprise 18 councillors, as at present, 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.

122 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 propose amending the boundary between the proposed Southwell East and Southwell North wards. Therefore we are proposing to amend the boundary between East and North parish wards in order that it be coincident with the district ward boundary.

Draft recommendations

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 boundary between the parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map 3.

5 What happens next?

123 There will now be a consultation period of 13 weeks, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Newark & Sherwood contained in this report. We will fully take into account all submissions received by 6 March 2006. Any received after this date will not be taken into account.

124 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Newark & Sherwood and welcome comments from interested parties relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, ward names and parish council electoral arrangements. In particular, we found our decisions regarding Southwell town and the arguments to retain three single-member wards and proposals to create a single three-member ward to be a difficult judgement between our statutory criteria. This was due to conflicting arguments received from interested parties during Stage One. We would particularly welcome local views, backed up by demonstrable evidence, during Stage Three. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

125 Express your views by writing directly to:

**Review Manager
Newark & Sherwood Review
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

reviews@boundarycommittee.org.uk

Submissions can also be made online at
www.boundarycommittee.org.uk/our-work/ferfeedback.cfm

126 Please note that the consultation stages of an electoral review are public consultations. In the interests of openness and transparency, the Committee now makes available for public inspection full copies of all representations it takes into account as part of a review. Accordingly, copies of all Stage Three representations will be placed on deposit locally at the offices of Newark & Sherwood Council, at the Committee's offices in Trevelyan House and on its website at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

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

6 Mapping

Draft recommendations for Newark & Sherwood district:

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
The 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 on a council
Order (or electoral change Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
The 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	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: 'an extensive area of beautiful and relatively wild country in which, for the nation's benefit and by appropriate national decision and action: – 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 the 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.

