

Final recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for South Gloucestershire

Further electoral review

May 2006

Translations and other formats

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Contents

- What is the Boundary Committee for England? 5
- Executive summary 7
- 1 Introduction 19
- 2 Current electoral arrangements 23
- 3 Draft recommendations 29
- 4 Responses to consultation 31
- 5 Analysis and final recommendations 33
 - Electorate figures 33
 - Council size 34
 - Electoral equality 35
 - General analysis 36
 - Warding arrangements 37
 - North Fringe area: Bradley Stoke Baileys Court; Bradley Stoke Bowsland; Bradley Stoke Sherbourne; Filton; Patchway; Stoke Gifford and Winterbourne wards 38
 - Severn Vale area: Almondsbury; Alveston; Pilning & Severn Beach; Severn; Thornbury North and Thornbury South wards 45
 - Central Rural area: Charfield; Frampton Cotterell and Ladden Brook wards 49
 - Yate, Chipping Sodbury and Dodington area: Chipping Sodbury; Dodington; Yate Central; Yate North and Yate West wards 53
 - Kingswood North area: Downend; Kings Chase; Rodway; Siston and Staple Hill wards 56
 - Kingswood South area: Bitton; Hanham; Longwell Green; Oldland Common; Parkwall and Woodstock wards 60
 - Eastern & Southern Rural area: Boyd Valley; Cotswold Edge and Westerleigh wards 66
 - Conclusions 69
 - Parish electoral arrangements 69
- 6 What happens next? 79

7	Mapping	81
Appendices		
A	Glossary & abbreviations	83
B	Code of practice on written consultation	87

What is the Boundary Committee for England?

The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. It is responsible for conducting reviews as directed by the Electoral Commission or the Secretary of State.

Members of the Committee are:

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

Director:

Archie Gall

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

Executive summary

The Boundary Committee for England is the body responsible for conducting electoral reviews of local authorities. A further electoral review of South Gloucestershire is being undertaken to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the district. It aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same. The Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee to undertake this review on 2 June 2004.

Current electoral arrangements

The Council presently has 70 members who are elected from 35 wards. The district contains 46 parishes, but the Kingswood area is unparished. The electorate of the district is 194,952 (December 2003).

Due to underestimations in the forecast of electorate growth during the last electoral review, the number of electors per councillor in five of the 35 wards varies by more than 10% from the district average, two wards by more than 20% and one ward by more than 40%.

Every review is conducted in four stages:

Stage	Stage starts	Description
One	3 August 2004	Submission of proposals to us
Two	30 November 2004	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	21 June 2005	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	13 September 2005	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Draft recommendations

We broadly based our draft recommendations on the Council and the Conservative Group's proposals. However, we moved away from these in a number of areas, to adopt a mixture of our own proposals and those put forward by the Liberal Democrat Group for the Yate area.

Responses to consultation

We received 110 responses during Stage Three. There was significant support and objections to our proposals for the Bradley Stoke and Stoke Gifford area. We received significant support and objections to our proposals for a two-member Bitton & Oldland Common ward. We also received objections to our proposals for a two-member Charfield & Ladden Brook ward. Across the remainder of the area we received general support and a few objections to our proposals.

Analysis and final recommendations

Electorate figures

During the last review South Gloucestershire Council predicted a 4.6% growth in electorate, from 183,260 in 1997 to 192,084 in 2002. By 2003, the electorate had actually grown by 6% from the 1997 figure to 194,952. The Council continues to predict substantial growth, chiefly in the urban 'north fringe' area to the south of the district. It is predicting almost 5% growth in electorate over the next five years, from 194,952 in 2003 to 204,751 by 2008.

Council size

We received no further comments on council size and are therefore confirming the existing council size of 70 as final.

General analysis

We note the support and objections to our proposals in the Bradley Stoke and Stoke Gifford area. Given the evidence received we propose confirming our Stoke Gifford ward as final. However, we do propose moving away from a three-member Bradley Stoke North ward, to create a single-member Bradley Stoke North and two-member Bradley Stoke Central & Stoke Lodge ward. We propose moving away from our two-member Charfield & Ladden Brook ward to create two single-member Charfield and Ladden Brook wards. Although the balance of evidence was close, we propose moving away from our three-member Bitton & Oldland Common ward, to create a single-member Bitton and two-member Oldland Common ward. In the remainder of the area we propose a number of minor amendments, but are broadly confirming our draft recommendations as final.

What happens next?

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Electoral Commission, which will not make an Order implementing them before 27 June 2006. The information in the representations will be available for public access once the Order has been made.

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

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

Table 1: Final recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1 Almondsbury	1	Part of the existing Almondsbury ward (the parish wards of Hallen, Almondsbury and Compton of Almondsbury parish).
2 Bitton	1	The existing Bitton ward (the parish ward of Bitton South of Bitton parish and the parish ward of Willsbridge of Oldland parish).
3 Boyd Valley	2	The existing Boyd Valley ward (the parishes of Cold Ashton, Doynton, Dryham & Hinton, Marshfield, Pucklechurch and Wick & Abson).
4 Bradley Stoke Central & Stoke Lodge	2	Part of the existing Bradley Stoke Bowsland ward (the existing parish ward of Primrose Bridge of Bradley Stoke parish); part of the existing Bradley Stoke Sherbourne ward (the proposed parish ward of Manor Farm of Bradley Stoke parish); part of the existing Patchway ward (the proposed parish ward of Stoke Lodge of Patchway parish).
5 Bradley Stoke North	1	Part of the existing Bradley Stoke Bowsland ward (Woodlands parish ward of Bradley Stoke parish).
6 Bradley Stoke South	2	Part of the existing Bradley Stoke Sherbourne ward (the parish wards of Lakeside and Meadowbank parish wards of Bradley Stoke parish); part of the existing Bradley Stoke Baileys Court ward (the parish ward of Baileys Court of Bradley Stoke parish).
7 Charfield	1	The existing Charfield ward (the parishes of Charfield, Cromhall and Tortworth); part of the existing Thornbury North ward (the parish of Falfield).

Table 1 (continued): Final recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
8 Chipping Sodbury	2	Part of the existing Sodbury ward (the existing parish wards of South West and North East of Sodbury parish); part of the existing Cotswold Edge ward (the existing parish ward of North East of Dodington parish).
9 Cotswold Edge	1	The existing Cotswold Edge ward (the parishes of Acton Turville, Badminton, Hawkesbury, Horton, Little Sodbury and Tormarton and Old Sodbury parish ward of Sodbury parish).
10 Dodington	2	Part of the existing Dodington ward (the proposed parish ward of North West of Dodington parish) and part of the existing Yate Central ward (the proposed parish ward of South of Yate parish).
11 Downend	3	The existing Downend ward (the existing parish wards of Bromley Heath East, Bromley Heath West, Downend East and Downend West of Downend & Bromley Heath parish).
12 Emersons Green	3	Part of the existing Emerson's Green ward (the existing parish wards of Badminton, Blackhorse; Emersons Green and Pomphrey of Mangotsfield Rural parish; the existing parish ward of Leap Brook of Downend & Bromley Heath parish).
13 Filton	3	The existing Filton ward (Filton parish).
14 Frampton Cotterell	2	The existing Frampton Cotterell ward (Frampton Cotterell parish) and part of the existing Ladden Brook ward (the existing parish ward of Iron Acton West of Iron Acton parish).
15 Frenchay and Stoke Park	2	Part of the existing Stoke Gifford ward (the existing parish wards of University and South of Stoke Gifford parish) and part of the existing Winterbourne ward (the existing parish ward of Winterbourne of Winterbourne parish).

Table 1 (continued): Final recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
16 Hanham	3	The existing Hanham ward (Hanham parish and the existing parish ward of Hanham Abbots West of Hanham Abbots parish) and part of the existing Woodstock ward (unparished).
17 Kings Chase	3	Part of the existing Kings Chase ward (unparished).
18 Ladden Brook	1	Part of the existing Ladden Brook ward (the parishes of Rangeworthy and Wickwar; the existing Iron Acton East parish ward of Iron Acton parish); part of existing Thornbury South ward (the parish of Tytherington).
19 Longwell Green	2	Part of the existing Longwell Green ward (the existing parish ward of Hanham Abbots East of Hanham Abbots parish and the proposed parish wards of Barrs Court and Longwell Green parish wards of Oldland parish).
20 Oldland Common	2	The existing Oldland Common (North Common and Oldland Common parish wards of Bitton parish; and the Orchard parish ward of Oldland parish).
21 Parkwall	2	Part of the existing Parkwall and Woodstock wards (the proposed parish ward of Wraxhall of Oldland parish and the proposed parish ward of Cadbury Heath of Oldland parish).
22 Patchway	3	Part of the existing Almondsbury ward (the proposed parish ward of Cribbs Causeway of Almondsbury parish) and part of the existing Patchway ward (the existing parish ward of Coniston of Patchway parish and the proposed parish ward of Callicroft of Patchway parish).
23 Pilning & Severn Beach	1	The existing Pilning & Severn Beach ward (the parish of Pilning & Severn Beach).

Table 1 (continued): Final recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
24 Rodway	3	Part of the existing Rodway ward (unparished) and part of the existing Siston ward (the existing parish ward of Springfield of Mangotsfield Rural parish).
25 Severn	1	The existing Severn ward (the parishes of Aust, Hill, Oldbury-upon-Severn, Olveston and Rockhampton).
26 Siston	1	Part of the existing Siston ward (the parish of Siston) and part of the existing Kings Chase ward (unparished).
27 Staple Hill	2	The existing Staple Hill ward (unparished).
28 Stoke Gifford	3	Part of the existing Bradley Stoke Baileys Court ward (the proposed parish ward of Stoke Brook of Bradley Stoke parish) and part of the existing Stoke Gifford ward (the existing parish wards of Central and North of Stoke Gifford parish).
29 Thornbury North	2	Part of the existing Thornbury North ward (the proposed parish wards of Central, North West and North East of Thornbury parish).
30 Thornbury South & Alveston	2	The existing Alveston ward (the parish of Alveston) and part of the existing Thornbury North ward (the proposed parish wards of East and South of Thornbury parish).
31 Westerleigh	1	The existing Westerleigh ward (the parish of Westerleigh) and part of the existing Cotswold Edge ward (the parish ward of South of Dodington parish).
32 Winterbourne	2	Part of the existing Winterbourne ward (the existing parish wards of Winterbourne and Winterbourne Down & Harnbrook of Winterbourne parish).
33 Woodstock	3	Part of the existing Woodstock ward (unparished).

Table 1 (continued): Final recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
34 Yate Central	2	Part of the existing Yate North ward (the proposed Central and South East parish wards of Yate parish).
35 Yate North	3	Part of the existing Yate North ward (The proposed North and West parish wards of Yate parish).

Notes

- 1 The district comprises 46 parishes and the unparished area of Kingswood.
- 2 The maps at the back of 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: Final recommendations for South Gloucestershire

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2008)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Almondsbury	1	2,613	2,613	-6	3172	3,172	8
2	Bitton	1	2,736	2,736	-2	2,786	2,786	-5
3	Boyd Valley	2	5,635	2,818	1	5,777	2,889	-1
4	Bradley Stoke Central & Stoke Lodge	2	5,149	2,575	-8	5,745	2,873	-2
5	Bradley Stoke North	1	2,885	2,885	4	2,885	2,885	-1
6	Bradley Stoke South	2	6,038	3,019	8	6,093	3,047	4
7	Charfield	1	3,083	3,083	11	3,105	3,105	6
8	Chipping Sodbury	2	5,670	2,835	2	5,757	2,879	-2
9	Cotswold Edge	1	2,702	2,702	-3	2,760	2,760	-6
10	Dodington	2	5,952	2,976	7	5,955	2,978	2

Table 2 (continued): Final recommendations for South Gloucestershire

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2008)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
11	Downend	3	8,515	2,838	2	8,639	2,880	-2
12	Emersons Green	3	8,441	2,814	1	9,016	3,005	3
13	Filton	3	7,933	2,644	-5	8,433	2,811	-4
14	Frampton Cotterell	2	5,682	2,841	2	5,750	2,875	-2
15	Frenchay and Stoke Park	2	3,280	1,640	-41	5,937	2,969	1
16	Hanham	3	8,442	2,814	1	8,636	2,879	-2
17	Kings Chase	3	8,213	2,738	-2	8,533	2,844	-3
18	Ladden Brook	1	2,795	2,795	0	2,885	2,885	-1
19	Longwell Green	2	5,660	2,830	2	5,815	2,908	-1
20	Oldland Common	1	5,895	2,948	6	5,945	2,973	2
21	Parkwall	2	5,966	2,983	7	6,045	3,023	3
22	Patchway	3	6,796	2,265	-19	8,376	2,792	-5

Table 2 (continued): Final recommendations for South Gloucestershire

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2008)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
23	Pilning & Severn Beach	1	2773	2,773	0	2802	2,802	-4
24	Rodway	3	8,707	2,902	4	8,721	2,907	-1
25	Severn	1	2,792	2,792	0	2,871	2,871	-2
26	Siston	1	2,574	2,574	-8	3,012	3,012	3
27	Staple Hill	2	5,565	2,783	0	5,786	2,893	-1
28	Stoke Gifford	3	8,970	2,990	7	8,988	2,996	2
29	Thornbury North	2	6,233	3,117	12	6,278	3,139	7
30	Thornbury South & Alveston	2	5,987	2,994	7	6,106	3,053	4
31	Westerleigh	1	2,954	2,954	6	2,986	2,986	2
32	Winterbourne	2	5,770	2,885	4	5,830	2,915	0
33	Woodstock	3	7,830	2,610	-6	8,433	2,811	-4

Table 2 (continued): Final recommendations for South Gloucestershire

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2008)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
34	Yate Central	2	5,913	2,957	6	6,018	3,009	3
35	Yate North	3	8,803	2,934	5	8,876	2,959	1
	Totals	70	194,952	-	-	204,752	-	-
	Averages	-	-	2,785	-	-	2,925	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by South Gloucestershire Council.

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

1 Introduction

1 This report contains our final recommendations for the electoral arrangements for South Gloucestershire.

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

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

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

4 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of South Gloucestershire. South Gloucestershire's last review was carried out by the Local Government Commission for England (LGCE), which reported to the Secretary of State in March 1998. An electoral change Order implementing the new electoral arrangements was made on 3 November 1998 and the first elections on the new arrangements took place in May 2003.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 3: Stages of the review

Stage	Stage starts	Description
One	3 August 2004	Submission of proposals to us
Two	30 November 2004	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	21 June 2005	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	13 September 2005	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

15 Stage One began on 3 August 2004, when we wrote to South Gloucestershire Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also wrote to Avon and Somerset Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Avon 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 South West Region and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited South Gloucestershire Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 29 November 2004.

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

17 Stage Three began on 21 June 2005 with the publication of the report *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for South Gloucestershire*, and ended on 12 September 2005.

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

Equal opportunities

19 In preparing this report the Boundary Committee has had regard to the general duty set out in section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 and the statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality (Commission for Racial Equality, May 2002), i.e. to have due regard to the need to:

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

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

20 The Boundary Committee has also had regard to:

- Section 11A(2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as inserted by section 62 of the Environment Act 1995). This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in a National Park, any relevant authority shall have regard to the Park's purposes. If there is a conflict between those purposes, a relevant authority shall attach greater weight to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Park.
- Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of the AONB.
- Section 17A of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act (as inserted by section 97 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 South Gloucestershire Unitary Authority was created in the last round of local government structural reviews and combines the now defunct Kingswood and Northavon councils. The south of the district comprises the northern fringes of Bristol, from which it is virtually indistinguishable, while the surrounding area is predominantly rural, with two towns of Yate and Thornbury. To the west the district is bounded by the River Severn, while the east borders the Cotswolds. The district contains 46 parishes, but the Kingswood area is unparished

22 The electorate of the district is 194,952 (December 2003). The Council presently has 70 members who are elected from 35. There are 10 single-, 15 two- and 10 three-member wards. The district average number of electors per councillor is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the district by the total number of councillors representing them on the council. At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,785 electors, which the Council forecasts will increase to 2,925 by the year 2008 if the present number of councillors is maintained.

23 During the last review South Gloucestershire Council predicted a 4.6% growth in electorate, from 183,260 in 1997 to 192,084 in 2002. By 2003, the electorate had actually grown by 6% from the 1997 figure to 194,952. The Council continues to predict substantial growth, chiefly in the urban 'north fringe' to the south of the district. It is predicting almost 5% growth in electorate over the next five years, from 194,952 in 2003 to 204,751 by 2008.

24 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. Due to the underestimations in electorate growth during the last electoral review, the number of electors per councillor in five of the 35 wards varies by more than 10% from the district average, two wards by more than 20% and one ward by more than 40%. 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 South Gloucestershire Council on 2 June 2004.

Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements in South Gloucestershire

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2008)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Almondsbury	1	3,046	3,046	9	3,608	3,608	23
2	Alveston	1	2,503	2,503	-10	2,521	2,521	-14
3	Bitton	1	2,736	2,736	-2	2,786	2,786	-5
4	Boyd Valley	2	5,635	2,818	1	5,777	2,889	-1
5	Bradley Stoke Baileys Court	1	3,188	3,188	14	3,188	3,188	9
6	Bradley Stoke Bowsland	2	6,123	3,062	10	6,123	3,062	5
7	Bradley Stoke Sherbourne	2	4,068	2,034	-27	4,698	2,349	-20
8	Charfield	1	2,678	2,678	-4	2,696	2,696	-8
9	Chipping Sodbury	2	5,199	2,600	-7	5,289	2,645	-10
10	Cotswold Edge	1	2,972	2,972	7	3,035	3,035	4
11	Dodington	2	5,385	2,693	-3	5,385	2,693	-8

Table 4 (continued): Existing electoral arrangements in South Gloucestershire

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2008)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
12	Downend	3	8,515	2,838	2	8,639	2,880	-2
13	Filton	3	7,933	2,644	-5	8,433	2,811	-4
14	Frampton Cotterell	2	5,091	2,546	-9	5,150	2,575	-12
15	Hanham	3	7,957	2,652	-5	8,151	2,717	-7
16	Kings Chase	3	8,270	2,757	-1	8,590	2,863	-2
17	Ladden Brook	1	2,887	2,887	4	2,948	2,948	1
18	Longwell Green	2	5,822	2,911	5	5,977	2,989	2
19	Oldland Common	2	5,282	2,641	-5	5,332	2,666	-9
20	Parkwall	2	6,191	3,096	11	6,270	3,135	7
21	Patchway	3	8,071	2,690	-3	9,651	3,217	10
22	Pilning & Severn Beach	1	2,775	2,775	0	2,802	2,802	-4

Table 4 (continued): Existing electoral arrangements in South Gloucestershire

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2008)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
23	Rodway	3	7,788	2,596	-7	7,788	2,596	-11
24	Severn	1	2,792	2,792	0	2,871	2,871	-2
25	Siston	3	11,877	3,959	42	12,907	4,302	47
26	Staple Hill	2	5,565	2,783	0	5,786	2,893	-1
27	Stoke Gifford	3	8,768	2,923	5	8,824	2,941	1
28	Thornbury North	2	5,490	2,745	-1	5,535	2,768	-5
29	Thornbury South	2	5,155	2,578	-7	5,274	2,637	-10
30	Westerleigh	1	2,684	2,684	-4	2,711	2,711	-7
31	Winterbourne	3	8,216	2,739	-2	10,931	3,644	25
32	Woodstock	3	8,541	2,847	2	9,144	3,048	4
33	Yate Central	2	5,316	2,658	-5	5,361	2,681	-8
34	Yate North	2	5,588	2,794	0	5,696	2,848	-3

Table 4 (continued): Existing electoral arrangements in South Gloucestershire

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2008)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
35	Yate West	2	4,845	2,423	-13	4,874	2,437	-17
	Totals	70	194,952	-	-	204,752	-	-
	Averages	-	-	2,785	-	-	2,925	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by South Gloucestershire 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 2003, electors in Bradley Stoke Sherbourne ward were relatively over-represented by 27%, while electors in Siston ward were significantly under-represented by 42%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 Draft recommendations

25 During Stage One 39 submissions were received, including district-wide schemes from the Council, the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council and the Conservative Group on the Council. We also received representations from the Labour Group on South Gloucestershire Council, four local MPs, seven local councillors and 14 town and parish councils, six local political groups and four local residents. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for South Gloucestershire*.

26 Our draft recommendations were based on a mixture of the Council and Conservative Group proposals, comments put forward by the Liberal Democrat Group and a number of our own amendments. All groups contended that the viability of their proposals depended on the adoption of its proposals in the Frampton Cotterell/Winterbourne area of the North Fringe. On balance, we considered that the Council and Conservative groups put forward stronger evidence than the Liberal Democrat Group in this area and therefore based our draft recommendations for this area on their proposals. We did consider the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals, but were unable to reflect them without causing a considerable knock-on effect across the area.

27 Given the community identity evidence and levels of electoral equality and our decision to adopt the Council and Conservative Group's proposals in the North Fringe, we also adopted their proposals in the Central Rural and Severn Vale areas, except in Pilning & Severn Beach, where we considered that the Liberal Democrat Group put forward stronger evidence for dividing this proposed ward into two single-member wards.

28 In the Eastern & Southern Rural area we adopted the Council's proposals without amendment. In the Yate, Chipping Sodbury & Dodington area we adopted the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals in their entirety. In the Kingswood North area we adopted the Council's Option One, subject to a minor amendment. In the Kingswood South area we adopted the Council's proposals, subject to an amendment to create a three-member Bitton & Oldland Common ward, as this secured a minor improvement in electoral equality.

- South Gloucestershire Council should be served by 70 councillors, the same as at present, representing 32 wards, three fewer than at present.
- The boundaries of 31 of the existing wards should be modified, while four wards should retain their existing boundaries.
- There should be new warding arrangements for Hanham Abbots, Almondsbury, Bradley Stoke, Dodington, Mangotsfield, Oldland, Patchway, Stoke Gifford, Thornbury and Yate town and parish councils.

29 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in four of the 32 wards varying by more than 10% from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 10% from the average by 2008.

4 Response to consultation

30 We received 110 representations during Stage Three, all of which may be inspected at both our offices and those of the South Gloucestershire Council. Representations may also be viewed on our website at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

South Gloucestershire Council

31 The Council expressed general support for our draft recommendations, but objected to our proposals in the north of the Bradley Stoke area, the Bitton and Oldland Common area and Charfield and Ladden Brook area and proposed alternative arrangements that it argued better reflect local communities.

South Gloucestershire Council's political groups

32 The Conservative Group on the Council expressed broad support for our proposals, but objected to them in a number of areas, including Bradley Stoke area, Bitton and Oldland Common area, Charfield and Ladden Brook. It also proposed amendments to the Kingswood and Rodway wards. The Liberal Democrat Group on the Council also expressed general support for our draft recommendations, but objected to our proposals for Charfield and Ladden Brook. It also proposed an amendment to the Yate area. The Labour Group on the Council expressed general support for our draft recommendations, but objected to them in the Bradley Stoke, Bitton & Oldland Common and Charfield & Ladden Brook areas.

Members of Parliament

33 We received one submission from a Member of Parliament. Doug Naysmith (Bristol North West) objected to our three-member Bradley Stoke North ward, expressing support for the alternative proposal put forward for a single- and two-member ward.

Councillors

34 In the Central Rural area, Councillors Gawler (Ladden Brook ward) and O'Neil (Charfield ward) both objected to our proposals to create a two-member Charfield & Ladden Brook ward. In the Kingswood South area Councillors Lovell (Parkwall ward), Councillors Coales, Perkins and Rooney (Woodstock ward, in a single submission) all objected to our proposals to abolish Cock Road Ridge parish ward. Councillor Calway (Longwell Green ward), Councillor McNab (Bitton Parish Council) all objected to our proposals to create a three-member Bitton & Oldland Common ward. Councillor Allinson (Oldland Common ward), Councillor Thomas (Bitton Parish Council), Councillor Thomas (Oldland Parish Council) expressed support for our proposed three-member Bitton & Oldland Common ward. Councillor Lee (Siston parish) expressed support for our draft recommendations.

35 In the North Fringe area, Councillor Williams (Bradley Stoke Bowsland ward) objected to our proposals for the Bradley Stoke area, with particular concerns over the Stean Bridge Estate. Councillor Ashe (Bradley Stoke Town Council) expressed general support for our draft recommendations.

Parish and town councils

36 We received 18 submissions from parish and town councils. Almondsbury Parish Council and Thornbury Town Council put forward comments on our proposals for the Severn Vale area. Pucklechurch Parish Council objected to our proposals for a two-member ward in the Eastern & Southern Rural area. In the Central Rural area, Frampton Cotterell Parish Council supported the draft recommendations, while Charfield, Cromhall, Falfield and Wickwar parish councils objected to our proposals for a two-member Charfield & Ladden Brook ward. In the Kingswood North area, Downend & Bromley Heath Parish Council reiterated its Stage One comments, while in the Kingswood South area, Bitton Parish Council expressed support for our draft recommendations for its area. Oldland Parish Council put forward alternative electoral arrangements for the parish area. In the North Fringe area, Patchway Town Council put forward a number of minor amendments. Bradley Stoke Town Council also put forward a number of amendments. Winterbourne and Stoke Gifford parish councils both supported the draft recommendations. Finally in the Yate, Chipping Sodbury and Dodington area, Dodington Parish Council expressed general support for our draft recommendations. Yate Town Council put forward a number of amendments to the proposals for the Yate area.

Political groups

37 In the Severn Vale area, Thornbury & Severn Vale Branch Labour Party expressed support for our draft recommendations in the Thornbury and Severn Vale area. In the Kingswood South area, Kingswood Liberal Democrats supported our proposal for a three-member Bitton & Oldland Common ward, while Wansdyke Conservatives and Bitton & District Labour Party objected to this proposal.

Other representations

38 A further 71 representations were received from local residents. In the Severn Vale area a local resident expressed support for our draft recommendations for Thornbury. In the Eastern & Southern Rural area a local resident objected to our proposals to create a rural two-member Boyd Valley ward. In the Kingswood South area, 24 local residents objected to our proposals to create a three-member Bitton & Oldland Common ward. Six local residents expressed support for our Bitton & Oldland Common ward. In the North Fringe area 36 local residents objected to our proposal to transfer the Stean Bridge Estate area of Bradley Stoke parish into a ward with Stoke Gifford parish. Two local residents expressed support for this proposal.

5 Analysis and final recommendations

39 We have now finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for South Gloucestershire.

40 As described earlier, the prime aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for South Gloucestershire is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended), i.e. the need to:

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

41 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.

42 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.

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

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

Electorate figures

45 As part of the previous review of South Gloucestershire, the Council forecast an increase in the electorate of 4.6% between 1997 and 2002. By 2003, the electorate had actually grown by 6% from the 1997 figure to 194,952.

46 The Council predicts that the electorate will continue to grow substantially, chiefly in the urban 'north fringe' to the south of the district. It is predicting almost 5% growth in electorate over the next five years, from 194,952 in 2003 to 204,752 by 2008.

47 The Council provided limited supporting evidence for this, stating that it had considered: notes on housing completions; expected house completions (to 2008); electors per household at census day (29 April 2001); young adults at census day; and migration.

48 During Stage One the Council amended its electorate figures in Winterbourne ward (polling district WIB) to reflect local development. We did not receive any other comments on the electorate figures.

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

Council size

50 South Gloucestershire Council presently has 70 members. At Stage One the Council proposed retaining the existing council size of 70 and was supported in this by the views of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups and by Roger Berry MP.

51 The Council explained the changing role of councillors under the new political management structure, arguing that councillors have lost their traditional role and continue to have a variety of new and demanding responsibilities. It emphasised the pressure of their representative role and argued that the current council size would enable them to fulfil this function. It outlined its current leader and cabinet model of executive arrangements. It also outlined the role of councillors, stating that '[they] are fully involved in the Council's constitutional structures and also participate in many outside bodies to which the Council makes appointments. Councillors also sit on school governing bodies, liaise with parish councils and get involved in community issues and local partnerships'. It also cited a recent Audit Commission report that stated that the Council's Corporate Governance was awarded a 'top overall performance assessment score of 4'.

52 Finally, it argued against any reduction in council size, stating '[it would] impose greater and unrealistic burdens on individual councillors, could weaken the current successful governance arrangements and also would be a disincentive to people being prepared to stand for election or re-election'.

53 These views were broadly supported and reflected in the comments of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups.

54 We gave careful consideration to the evidence received and noted that a council size of 70 members drew support from the Council, Conservative Group and Liberal Democrat Groups. We also noted that members have exacting demands placed on their time and that under the new constitution they will continue to carry out many roles, including the important role of 'community champions'. We concurred with the view that a reduction in council size would make this task harder and that retaining the existing council size would allow the Council to continue operating effectively.

55 We note that there are some references to workload, particularly in rural areas, and would point out that we cannot have consideration for issues of rural sparsity.

56 However, having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we concluded that the statutory criteria would best be met by the retention of the existing council of 70 members.

57 At Stage Three we received no other comments on council size and are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for a council of 70 members as final.

Electoral equality

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

59 The district average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the district, 194,952, by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, 70, under our final proposals. Therefore, the average number of electors per councillor under our final recommendations is 2,785.

60 As part of our final recommendations we propose moving away from electoral equality in favour of community identity in a number of areas. In the Central Rural area, while our decision to adopt two single-member Charfield and Ladden Brook wards worsens electoral equality, given the evidence received, we consider that this proposal better reflects local communities. We also propose worsening electoral equality in the Almondsbury and Piling & Severn Beach areas) to reflect local communities and the arrangement of parish wards in Almondsbury parish. We consider these proposals will provide stronger boundaries. We also propose moving away from electoral equality in the Kingswood South area, by adopting a single-member Bitton ward and two-member Oldland Common ward. The balance of community identity evidence in this area is close and our proposal marginally worsens electoral equality. However, we consider the arguments sufficient to persuade us to move away from electoral equality.

61 Finally, we propose a number of amendments in the Bradley Stoke and Yate areas. These would lead to a very marginal worsening in electoral equality, but we consider these justifiable given the community identity evidence received during Stage Three.

General analysis

62 In our draft recommendations we noted that for the purposes of this review, the Council based its proposals on seven generally discrete areas: Central Rural; Eastern & Southern Rural; Kingswood North; Kingswood South; North Fringe; Severn Vale; and Yate, Chipping Sodbury & Dodington. We also noted that the two district-wide schemes from the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups also broadly adopted these areas, although we acknowledge that the Liberal Democrat Group had fundamental objections to the Council's assumptions for the Frampton Cotterell/Winterbourne boundary (discussed in paragraph 77) in the North Fringe area. As a result the Liberal Democrat Group allocated a different number of councillors to the North Fringe area from the Council and Conservative Group.

63 However, despite this difference, all parties are broadly agreed on the division of the district into these areas. Therefore, for the purposes of this review, in relation to the district-wide submissions and all others, we discussed our draft recommendations with these areas in mind. We will continue to use these for our final recommendations.

64 In the North Fringe, Severn Vale and Central Rural areas, we based our draft recommendations on the Council and Conservative Group proposals subject to a few minor amendments to improve electoral equality or community identity. In the Eastern & Southern Rural area we adopted the Council's proposals. In the Yate, Chipping Sodbury & Dodington area adopted the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals in their entirety. In the Kingswood North area we adopted Council's Option One, subject to a minor amendment. In the Kingswood South area we adopted the Council's proposals, subject to an amendment to create a three-member Bitton & Oldland Common ward, as this secured a minor improvement in electoral equality.

65 At Stage Three we received some general support for our draft recommendations. There was also some significant objections and support for our proposals, particularly in the Bradley Stoke, Charfield and Ladden Brook and Bitton and Oldland Common areas.

66 We propose moving away from our draft recommendations in a number of places in light of the evidence received at Stage Three. In a number of instances, our final recommendations secure worse electoral equality than our draft, but the strength of the community identity argument has persuaded us to move away from our draft recommendations.

67 In the south of Bradley Stoke we note the significant opposition to our proposal to include the Stean Bridge Estate area of Bradley Stoke parish in a ward with Stoke Gifford. We received good community identity evidence illustrating the estate's links with Bradley Stoke. However, we also note that there was good support for our draft proposals. We note that this evidence for this area is somewhat contradictory. On balance, we do not consider there to be sufficient argument or evidence to persuade us to move away from our draft recommendations, given the knock-on effect that it would have across the area and also the minor worsening to electoral equality.

68 We also note the objections to our proposals to create a three-member Bradley Stoke North ward and the requests to revert to the Council's draft proposal for a single-member Bradley Stoke North and two-member Bradley Stoke Central & Stoke

Lodge ward. Adopting this amendment would marginally worsen electoral equality, however, we consider that, given the evidence received, it would better reflect local communities.

69 We also note the significant objections to our proposals to create a two-member Charfield & Ladden Brook ward. We note the evidence that the community identity links between the parishes in the north and south were good. We also note that reverting to the proposed single-member wards would worsen electoral equality. However, in the light of evidence received, we would concur that adopting the two single-member wards as part of our final recommendations would better reflect local communities.

70 In Yate we received support for our draft recommendations. However, Yate Town Council proposed a number of minor amendments to reflect communities and provide stronger boundaries. We note these proposals marginally worsen electoral equality, but concur with the Town Council's argument that its revision provide stronger boundaries and reflects communities. We therefore propose adopting them as part of our final recommendations. We also propose a minor amendment to Pilning & Severn Beach and Almondsbury wards in light of the evidence arguing that Berwick parish ward be transferred back to Almondsbury ward.

71 We also received significant objections to our proposals to combine the Council's draft proposal for a single-member Bitton and two-member Oldland Common wards to create a three-member Bitton & Oldland Common ward. Although adopting the single- and two-member ward would worsen electoral equality, we consider the argument for keeping these areas separate to be slightly stronger and consider that it would better reflect local communities. We therefore propose adopting it as part of our final recommendations.

Warding arrangements

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

- North Fringe area: Bradley Stoke Baileys Court; Bradley Stoke Bowsland; Bradley Stoke Sherbourne; Filton; Patchway; Stoke Gifford and Winterbourne wards (page 38)
- Severn Vale area: Almondsbury; Alveston; Pilning & Severn Beach; Severn; Thornbury North and Thornbury South wards (page 45)
- Central Rural area: Charfield; Frampton Cotterell and Ladden Brook wards (page 49)
- Yate, Chipping Sodbury and Dodington area: Chipping Sodbury; Dodington; Yate Central; Yate North and Yate West wards (page 53)
- Kingswood North area: Downend; Kings Chase; Rodway; Siston and Staple Hill wards (page 56)
- Kingswood South area: Bitton; Hanham; Longwell Green; Oldland Common; Parkwall and Woodstock wards (page 60)
- Eastern & Southern Rural area: Boyd Valley; Cotswold Edge and Westerleigh wards (page 66)

73 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9–13 and 14–17, respectively), and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

North Fringe area: Bradley Stoke Baileys Court; Bradley Stoke Bowsland; Bradley Stoke Sherbourne; Filton; Patchway; Stoke Gifford and Winterbourne wards

74 The North Fringe area comprises Bradley Stoke Baileys Court; Bradley Stoke Bowsland; Bradley Stoke Sherbourne; Filton; Patchway, Stoke Gifford and Winterbourne wards. Table 5 (below) outlines the constituent areas of each ward. Table 4 (pages 24–27) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and also the variances which they would be forecast to have by 2008 if the existing arrangements remained in place.

Table 5: Existing electoral arrangements

Name of ward	Constituent areas	Councillors
Bradley Stoke Baileys Court	Baileys Court parish ward of Bradley Stoke parish	1
Bradley Stoke Bowsland	Primrose Bridge parish ward and Woodlands parish ward of Bradley Stoke parish	2
Bradley Stoke Sherbourne	Lakeside parish ward and Manor Farm parish ward of Bradley Stoke parish	2
Filton	Filton parish	3
Patchway	Patchway parish	3
Stoke Gifford	North parish ward and South parish ward of Stoke Gifford parish	3
Winterbourne	Winterbourne parish; University parish ward of Stoke Gifford parish	3

75 At Stage One the Council put forward proposals for a two-member Bradley Stoke Central ward, single-member Bradley Stoke North ward, two-member Bradley Stoke South ward, three-member Filton ward, two-member Frenchay & Stoke Park ward, three-member Patchway ward, three-member Stoke Gifford ward and two-member Winterbourne ward. The Conservative Group put forward identical proposals to the Council. The Liberal Democrat Group put forward proposals for a three-member Bradley Stoke North ward, three-member Central Stokes ward, three-member Filton ward, three-member Patchway ward, three-member Stoke Gifford ward and two-member Winterbourne ward.

76 We identified two fundamental differences between the Council's and the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals, in Patchway and the Watley's End area of Winterbourne parish. While we acknowledged the other differences between the

proposals, we did not consider the arguments for these remaining areas to be as persuasive as those put forward in Patchway and Watley's End.

77 The Council, the Conservative Group and Winterbourne Parish Council argued that Frampton Cotterell and the Watley's End area of Winterbourne should not be joined, highlighting the Green Belt and access to different groups of shops. However, the Liberal Democrat Group argued that Frampton Cotterell should be in the North Fringe area, with Winterbourne and that Watley's End should be in a ward with Frampton Cotterell. However, as stated earlier, we did not consider the issue of Frampton Cotterell should be the deciding factor for the whole district. In the Patchway area, the Council acknowledged that Patchway Town Council objected to its proposals to split the parish between Patchway and Bradley Stoke North wards, but argued that the Stoke Lodge area is 'cut off' from the remainder of the parish and that the area had a different community identity. The Conservative Group expressed support for the Council's proposals for this area. The Liberal Democrat Group objected to the Council's proposal to transfer part of Almondsbury parish to its Patchway ward, arguing that area is separated from Patchway by the Cribbs Causeway retail area. It also argued that the Council had 'over-play[ed]' the importance of the A38 as a community boundary', but did acknowledge that parts of Stoke Lodge look towards Bradley Stoke for facilities. Patchway Town Council requested electoral arrangements as they had under Northavon District Council and objected to proposals to transfer the Stoke Lodge area into a ward with Bradley Stoke. Doug Naysmith MP expressed support for the Council's proposed Patchway ward.

78 We gave careful consideration to the evidence received and acknowledged that the electoral arrangements that we adopted for these two areas had considerable impact on the proposals for the rest of the North Fringe, the Central Rural and Severn Vale areas.

79 We considered that in terms of the North Fringe area itself, the differences between the Council and the Conservative Group's proposals and the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals were most evident and clearly argued.

80 From our tour of the area, we concurred with the Liberal Democrat Group that the division of Watley's End and Frampton Cotterell by the Green Belt is unclear. However, we also noted that while it argued that Watley's End and Frampton Cotterell share community facilities, it also stated that both areas share links with the Winterbourne area too, which supported the Council, Conservative Group and Winterbourne Parish Council's assertion that the Watley's End area looks south into the remainder of Winterbourne parish. On balance, we considered that the Council's proposal better reflected community identity, without the need to ward parishes and it secured marginally better electoral equality.

81 In Patchway ward, we also considered the evidence to somewhat contradictory, and noted that the Liberal Democrat Group contradicted itself by acknowledging that 'parts' of Stoke Lodge look towards Bradley Stoke for community facilities. Given this, the argument for transferring Stoke Lodge into a ward with Bradley Stoke, and the strong boundary that the A38 provides, we considered that the Council's proposals provided the best electoral arrangements for this area.

82 Adopting the Council's proposals for Patchway and Winterbourne wards had a knock-on effect to what we were able to consider in the remaining area of the North Fringe area. However, we still had regard for comments put forward in the Liberal Democrat Group's submission for this area.

83 The Council did not put forward any argument for its proposals for Bradley Stoke Central, Bradley Stoke North or Bradley Stoke South wards. However, the Conservative Group did put forward some good community identity argument, including rejection of any proposal to create a three-member Bradley Stoke North ward. It argued that its Bradley Stoke North ward is distinct from the remainder of Bradley Stoke and that its Bradley Stoke Central ward sought to keep the Stoke Lodge area in a single ward. It argued that its Bradley Stoke South ward comprises largely residential roads that share local community facilities. It argued that its Stoke Gifford ward is centred around Stoke Gifford village, which contains local community facilities, adding that the area has strong links to Little Stoke. It also argued that the transfer of the Stean Bridge Estate reflected that some electors in the area use Little Stoke primary school and also the post office. Finally, it stated the railway line in the south provided a strong boundary. It expressed support for the existing Filton ward and the Council's Stoke Park & Frenchay and Winterbourne wards.

84 The Liberal Democrat Group argued that Council had created an 'artificially small Patchway ward leaving scope for further development on the Northfield site'. It also stated that the Council's Bradley Stoke North and Bradley Stoke Central wards were divided by an 'artificial' boundary, and proposed combining these. However, it did support the retention of the existing Filton ward. Stoke Gifford Parish Council expressed support for the Council's proposals. Winterbourne Parish Council expressed support for the Council's Frenchay & Stoke Park ward.

85 We noted the Council's proposals for Bradley Stoke and considered there to be some good community identity argument. However, we shared the Liberal Democrat Groups concerns about the boundary between the Council's Bradley Stoke North and Bradley Stoke Central wards, in particular for the electors around Bowsland Way. While we acknowledged the Council's concerns about the creation of a three-member, on balance we considered the boundary issue to be more significant and therefore proposed combining the Council's Bradley Stoke North and Bradley Stoke Central wards. We also concurred with the Council's proposals for Stoke Gifford ward and noted the support that they received from the Conservative Group and Stoke Gifford Parish Council. We therefore adopted its Stoke Gifford ward as part of our draft recommendations.

86 In light of the support, good levels of electoral equality and strong boundaries we adopted the Council's Frenchay & Stoke Park and Winterbourne wards as part of our draft recommendations. We also retained the existing Filton ward.

87 At Stage Three the Council expressed concerns about our Stage One proposal to create a three-member Bradley Stoke North ward. It stated that 'there are concerns [...] that the Stoke Lodge community would be swamped by its larger Bradley Stoke neighbour', adding 'local people fear the alienation of the Stoke Lodge community'. It also requested that 'the area of land to the south of the railway and between the A38 and Stoke Gifford parish boundary [...] should be included in the Patchway [...] ward and not Bradley Stoke'. It added that the area 'can be seen as a separate area to the

Stoke Lodge estate. The A38 contains a rank of shops on each side, linked by a pedestrian subway’.

88 The Conservative Group expressed general support for our proposals for the North Fringe area, but in line with the Council, it objected to our proposals for a three-member Bradley Stoke North ward and the use of the A38 as boundary and put forward alternative proposals. It put forward good argument against this, but also good argument where it supported our proposals. It expressed general support for our Patchway ward stating ‘it is particularly important that the Patchway ward should encompass all of the retail and entertainment area at Cribs Causeway, the majority of the airfield and all of the communities intimately affected by them’. It also expressed support for the transfer of Stoke Lodge, stating it ‘is [...] the only way to sensibly reflect the changing nature of the area, for example the opening of Bradley Stoke Secondary School, Brook Way Community Centre, the shops and leisure facilities like Bradley Stoke Library, all of which are used by Stoke Lodge Residents’. It added there is a ‘growing relationship between these communities as demonstrated by the creation of the Bradley Stoke and Patchway Community Development Group’. However, it agreed with the Council’s and Town Council’s concerns about the small area to the east of the A38, stating ‘this small section identifies much more with the remainder of Patchway than Stoke Lodge’, adding that ‘it is significant that this part of Patchway is the only one with a street-level pedestrian crossing of the A38’.

89 The Conservative Group also expressed concerns about our three-member Bradley Stoke North ward, requesting that we reconsider the Stage One proposals for a single-member Bradley Stoke North ward and two-member Bradley Stoke Central ward. It argued that Bradley Stoke North ‘is different from the remainder of Bradley Stoke [and] it is dominated by the business parks, which make up much of its area’ and the associated issues including parking problems and heavy traffic. It added ‘Bradley Stoke North is a self-contained community [...] it is served by its own Post Office, shops and services located at Bradley Stoke Pavillions’. It also stated that the Committee’s concern at Stage One about Bowsland Way was ‘overstated’, adding ‘there is a direct link from this section to the rest of Bradley Stoke including schools and shops etc across Primrose Bridge’. Despite highlighting the links between Stoke Lodge and Bradley Stoke, the Conservative Group argued that it preferred the option of a two-member ward as ‘a three-member ward cannot fail to at least create a perception of being swamped and at worst risk the actuality of being marginalised and under-represented in a ward dominated by Bradley Stoke’.

90 The Conservative Group expressed support for our Bradley Stoke South ward arguing that it has strong boundaries. It also expressed support for our Stoke Gifford ward, stating that it uses ‘the exceptionally strong ward boundary of the main Bristol to London Railway line’, highlighting that there is only one crossing ‘which is the narrow bridge under the railway line at Hatchet Road/New Road’ . It stated ‘the new ward reflects the strong interrelationship, which exists between Stoke Gifford and Little Stoke, based on common facilities, schools and amenities’. It also stated that the ward ‘reflects the links between the oldest part of Bradley Stoke around Steanbridge’, adding ‘residents in Steanbridge look to Stoke Gifford for many of their facilities; the nearest post office is in North Road, Stoke Gifford and the nearest rank of shops is in Ratcliffe Drive’. It also cited links to St Michael’s Church and the local primary school and that the area is ‘equidistant from Bradley Stoke Secondary and Filton High, adding ‘however children in the area are much more likely to attend Filton High’ as they ‘would find it almost impossible to secure a place at [Bradley

Stoke Secondary] due to oversubscription and the allocation of places to those living nearer in either Bradley Stoke or Stoke Lodge’.

91 The Conservative Group also countered, point by point, a leaflet put forward by Councillor Williams. It strongly argued against the assertion that Gipsy Patch Lane is a boundary, stating ‘it does have signal-controlled pedestrian crossings at several points along it. Those communities, which live to the south of this road are reliant on Little Stoke for their shops, community facilities and school. Those living north of it use the allotments and open space south of it for their amenity’.

92 The Conservative Group supported our proposed Frenchay & Stoke Park arguing that it reflects the ‘many interrelationships between the different communities; Frenchay Primary School serving Stoke Park, Frenchay Church serving Stoke Park, all being very concerned with proposals for an M32 Park and Ride in this vicinity and also the protection of important local green spaces including the River Frome Valley, Purdown and the parkland around Stoke Park’. It also supported the proposed Winterbourne ward, reiterating its opposition to the Liberal Democrat Group’s Stage One proposal and providing strong community identity evidence for the draft recommendations.

93 Doug Naysmith MP put forward identical proposals to the Council and Conservative Group for our proposed Bradley Stoke North ward and the area of Patchway parish to the east of the A38.

94 The Liberal Democrat Group expressed general support for our proposals in the Bradley Stoke area. The Labour Group objected to the draft recommendations for a three-member Bradley Stoke North ward, expressing support for the Council’s proposed amendment. It also supported the Council’s amendment to the area to the east of the A38.

95 Councillor Williams (Bradley Stoke Bowsland ward) put forward strong objections to our draft recommendations for the south of Bradley Stoke and Stoke Gifford. He expressed particular objections to the proposals to transfer the Stean Bridge Estate to our Stoke Gifford ward, but did not put forward any specific alternative arrangements. He argued that the parish was created in 1992 to reflect the community of Bradley Stoke, adding that the draft recommendations ‘seeks to make all the hard work residents did in the early days of the town, a total waste of time’. He stated that Bradley Stoke ‘is now becoming a thriving town with shops, a leisure centre and swimming pool, 6 primary schools, a new secondary school and shortly, a new town centre’, adding that to remove the Stean Bridge Estate ‘cannot make a really big difference to [electoral equality], but makes a big difference to the identity of both the town and local residents’.

96 He also argued that our proposals may lead to the Stean Bridge Estate being transferred to Stoke Gifford during any subsequent parish review, adding that when the area was part of Stoke Gifford parish, prior to the creation of Bradley Stoke parish, ‘the representation we had from those councillors was non existent’. Councillor William’s did acknowledge that children from Bradley Stoke attend Little Stoke School, but that is because they are not allocated places in Bradley Stoke, against which residents regularly appeal. He also acknowledged that the Bailey’s Court Post Office was closed, but argued that rather than going to Little Stoke, most residents ‘either go north to the post office at the pavilions, or into Bristol where they

can tax their cars'. He also argued that we should consider the Winterbourne Road a 'strong barrier' in the way we accept the A38 in Patchway as a strong barrier.

97 Bradley Stoke Town Council stated that Stoke Lodge parish ward should be transferred back to Stoke Gifford ward, with Stoke Brook parish ward and Bakers Ground area being transferred to Bradley Stoke South ward. It also stated that Bradley Stoke North ward and Bradley Stoke South ward should return two and three members respectively. It did not put forward any community identity evidence in support of these proposals.

98 Patchway Town Council expressed continuing reservations about our proposal to transfer Stoke Lodge into a ward with Bradley Stoke, but supported the Council's request that this be in a two-member ward, rather than the three-member ward proposed as part of our draft recommendations. It argued that the ward name should be 'more neutral'. It also put forward proposals to transfer the area to the east of the A38 to the Patchway ward. It also requested an amendment to the parish wards (discussed in paragraph 241). Winterbourne Parish Council expressed support for our draft recommendations for its area.

99 Stoke Gifford Parish Council expressed support the Council's scheme which we adopted as part of our draft recommendations for Stoke Gifford ward. It rejected the proposals put forward by Councillor Williams 'as they would rip asunder our twin communities of Little Stoke and Stoke Gifford'. It argued that the area south of the railway line, Harry Stoke and Stoke Park, 'is dominated by issues of development [...] Stoke Park is a relatively new development and is still incomplete, Harry Stoke has seen significant new building and has been identified as a development site'. It added, 'the main part of Stoke Gifford is the village of Stoke Gifford and its twin Little Stoke [and] both communities are strongly linked together by shared interests; our Parish Council meets in Little Stoke Community Hall for example. Little Stoke provides the local allotments, Stoke Gifford provides Mead Park, all children attend Filton High, and residents use both the shops in Little Stoke and the larger rank of shops in Ratcliffe Drive'. It therefore argued against any proposal to split these areas. In addition to this, it argued that the Stean Bridge Estate 'was developed [...] in the Stoke Gifford ward and residents built up a strong relationship; using its shops, pubs, leisure facilities etc. This has continued and for people in this area the nearest Post Office is still in Stoke Gifford and many other facilities as well'.

100 We received 36 submissions from local residents who generally supported the comments put forward by Councillor Williams regarding the treatment of the Stean Bridge Estate area. One resident stated 'local councillors representing other parishes will have a conflict of interests when deciding to support something in one area that could have a detrimental effect in another'. Another resident stated 'our medical care, our religious needs, public houses or even shopping and fish and chips, [...] all revolves around Bradley Stoke. Anything that is unavailable within Bradley Stoke is acquired elsewhere but not from Stoke Gifford'. Another resident stated 'we use Bradley Stoke amenities almost exclusively, using the Leisure Centre for general activities, the Jubilee Centre for parties, the Library, and 99% of all our grocery shopping comes from the local Tesco. To us, Stoke Gifford is merely a pass through on our way to the M32 and the Winterbourne Road is a natural boundary separating the two communities'. A number of the residents also stated that their children attend schools and community centres in Bradley Stoke.

101 Two local residents expressed support for our proposed Stoke Gifford ward and the treatment of the Stean Bridge Estate area. One resident from the Stean Bridge Estate stated 'we use the local pubs and shops in Stoke Gifford and the local post office there. We have always looked to Stoke Gifford as our nearest centre'. A further two local residents objected to our proposal to create a three-member Bradley Stoke North ward and expressed support for the Council's alternative proposal.

102 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note the support and objections to our Stoke Gifford ward. The evidence for this area is somewhat contradictory. We acknowledge Councillor Williams' and local residents' view that the Stean Bridge Estate is part of Bradley Stoke and has community links with it. We note the concerns about representation at parish level by dividing the parish of Bradley Stoke between wards. However, we do not consider this sufficient reason to reject our draft recommendations and would point out that this situation is not unique across the rest of the district, or indeed other districts in the country. We also note that some respondents, in particular the Conservative Group, put forward strong evidence to argue that the Stean Bridge Estate has links to Stoke Gifford and that it would be seriously detrimental to the area to divide Stoke Gifford and Little Stoke between wards. We also note Stoke Gifford Parish Council's concerns about any proposal that would divide Stoke Gifford and Little Stoke or that would breach the boundary created by the London to Bristol railway line to the south.

103 We have already considered this issue in our draft recommendations and noted that it is not possible to retain the Stean Bridge Estate area in a ward with the remainder of Bradley Stoke parish without significantly worsening electoral equality or dividing Stoke Gifford and Little Stoke. While there has been some good additional evidence, this has been both for and against. We do not consider that the local residents and Councillor Williams' argument provides enough evidence to persuade us to move away from our draft recommendations, given the knock-on effect that it would have across the area and also the worsening to electoral equality. The objections to this proposal are specifically about the Stean Bridge Estate area and do not consider the impact of adopting his proposals on the wider area of Stoke Gifford and the remainder of Bradley Stoke, forcing us to move away from the strong boundary of the railway line and dividing the Little Stoke community. Therefore, on balance, we do not propose moving away from our draft recommendations in Stoke Gifford.

104 We also note the objections from the Council, Conservative Group, Labour Group and Doug Naysmith MP to our proposals to create a three-member Bradley Stoke North ward. We note that they all put forward identical proposals to the Council's draft proposal for a single-member Bradley Stoke North and two-member Bradley Stoke Central & Stoke Lodge ward. We note that while these respondents supported the inclusion of Stoke Lodge parish ward of Patchway parish in Bradley Stoke, acknowledging its links to Bradley Stoke and its separation from the remainder of Patchway by the A38, they argued that it would feel 'swamped' in a ward with a large part of Bradley Stoke and stated that it would better reflect communities if it was in a two-member ward. We also note that the Conservative Group argued that our proposal to combine these two wards in our draft recommendations was based on the mistaken assumption that the Bowsland Way area of the Council's proposed Bradley Stoke Central ward does not have access into Bradley Stoke. We note the evidence that it put forward to argue that the Primrose footbridge gives this area access into the Bradley Stoke Central area.

105 We note the issue of ‘swamping’, but do not consider this sufficient reason alone to move away from our draft recommendations. We would contend that the three councillors would be able to serve the needs of all electors, including those in Stoke Lodge. However, we also note the Conservative Group’s argument that Bradley Stoke North has a different character from the central area, including business parks and associated issues of traffic. We note that this amendment would very marginally worsen electoral equality, creating a two-member ward with 2% more electors than the average (by 2008) and a single-member Bradley Stoke North ward with 1% fewer electors. However, on balance, we consider that the Council’s proposals for a single-member Bradley Stoke North ward and two-member Bradley Stoke Central ward would better reflect local communities, and propose adopting it as part of our final recommendations. We also note that there were a number of concerns about the proposed ward name and to recognise the inclusion of the Stoke Lodge community we propose naming the ward Bradley Stoke Central & Stoke Lodge ward.

106 In addition to this, we note the issue of the area of Stoke Lodge to the east of the A38. While we sought to utilise the A38 as a strong barrier, we would concur with the evidence received that this small area does in fact have stronger links with Patchway ward. We also note that this area only contains 193 electors and actually secures a marginal improvement in electoral equality in Patchway ward to 5% fewer electors by 2008 (7% under the draft recommendations) and in Bradley Stoke Central & Stoke Lodge to 2% fewer electors. We therefore propose adopting this amendment as part of our final recommendations.

107 Finally, we note that our proposals for Filton, Frenchay & Stoke Park and Winterbourne wards received general, if limited, support. In view of the electoral equality that they achieve we propose confirming these as final.

108 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9–13 and 14–17, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Bradley Stoke Central & Stoke Lodge, Bradley Stoke North, Bradley Stoke South, Filton, Frampton Cotterell, Frenchay & Stoke Park, Patchway, Stoke Gifford and Winterbourne wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 3 accompanying this report.

Severn Vale area: Almondsbury; Alveston; Pilning & Severn Beach; Severn; Thornbury North and Thornbury South wards

109 The Severn Vale area comprises Almondsbury; Alveston; Pilning & Severn Beach; Severn; Thornbury North and Thornbury South wards. Table 6 (page 46) outlines the constituent areas of each ward. Table 4 (pages 24–27) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and also the variances which they would be forecast to have by 2008 if the existing arrangements remained in place.

Table 6: Existing electoral arrangements

Name of ward	Constituent areas	Councillors
Almondsbury	Almondsbury parish	1
Alveston	Alveston parish	1
Pilning & Severn Beach	Pilning & Severn Beach parish	1
Severn	Aust, Hill, Oldbury-upon-Severn, Olveston and Rockhampton parishes	1
Thornbury North	Falfield parish; North East parish ward and North West parish ward of Thornbury parish	2
Thornbury South	Tytherington parish; Central parish ward and South parish ward of Thornbury parish	2

110 At Stage One the Council put forward proposals for a two-member Almondsbury & Severn Beach, single-member Severn, two-member Thornbury North and a two-member Thornbury South & Alveston ward. It also put forward a 'fallback' Option Two for its two-member Almondsbury & Severn Beach ward, which it argued could create two single-member wards, Almondsbury ward and Pilning & Severn Beach ward. The Conservative Group expressed support for the Council's proposals.

111 The Council argued that its proposal for a two-member Almondsbury & Severn Beach ward created a ward that would 'share local road links and geographical characteristics'. It also put forward a 'fallback' option of a single-member Almondsbury ward 'centred on the village of Almondsbury and its associated rural area settlements' and a single-member Pilning & Severn Beach ward that would secure good electoral equality. In Thornbury the Council removed Falfield and Tytherington parishes and exchanged them for Alveston parish and a minor boundary amendment in the centre of Thornbury town. It argued that Falfield and Tytherington were separated from Thornbury by the A38 and M5 motorway and share better community links with their neighbouring rural parishes. They added that Alveston looks towards Thornbury for local facilities.

112 The Conservative Group supported the Council's proposals, arguing that the two-member Almondsbury & Severn Beach ward combined wards that have common issues, including flooding and agriculture, as well as the 'development at Severnside and Avonmouth'. It rejected any proposal to transfer the Hortham Hospital development site to a ward with Alveston, arguing that the area has good links to Almondsbury, including the local school. It expressed support for the Council's proposal to retain the existing Severn ward. The Conservative Group also supported the Council's proposals in the Thornbury area.

113 The Liberal Democrat Group objected to the Council's proposal to transfer Alveston parish into a ward with part of Thornbury parish and instead proposed single-member Alveston, Almondsbury and Pilning & Severn Beach wards. It proposed transferring '311 electors at Woodhouse Down to Alveston, but to include

the whole of the Hortham Hospital development in Almondsbury'. It proposed the retention of the existing two two-member wards in Thornbury, subject to a minor boundary amendment. It argued against the transfer of Alveston to a ward with Thornbury, stating that it is 'an independent and vital community'. It also argued for the inclusion of Tytherington with Thornbury arguing that it 'looks' to Thornbury for local services. The Liberal Democrat Group objected to the Council's proposal for a two-member Almondsbury & Severn Beach ward, arguing that the Council's proposals sought to combine very different communities.

114 Councillor Fox (Alveston ward) objected to the Council's proposal to combine Alveston with Thornbury. Councillor Fardell (Thornbury North ward) also objected to the Council's proposals to include Alveston parish in a ward with Thornbury parish. Councillor Tyzack (Pilning & Severn Beach ward) expressed support for the Liberal Democrat proposal. Thornbury Liberal Democrats objected to the Council's proposals to combine Alveston parish in a ward with part of Thornbury parish, stating it 'would artificially combine two communities which have always seen themselves as completely separate'. Pilning & Severn Beach Parish Council argued that the parish contains sufficient electors to justify a single councillor. Finally, Rockhampton Parish Council requested that the existing single-member Severn ward be retained.

115 At Stage One, we gave careful consideration to the representations received. We noted the strong objections to the Council's proposal to include Alveston parish in a ward with the southern part of Thornbury parish. However, we also noted that in rejecting its own suggestion of a two-member Almondsbury & Alveston ward, the Liberal Democrat Group acknowledged that Thornbury and Alveston share strong links with 'Alveston people playing a central part in many Thornbury groups'. In addition to this, we did not consider the evidence for linking Tytherington and Falfield parishes to Thornbury parish to be as strong and considered that their needs would be better reflected in a ward with parishes of a similar rural nature. We also had concerns about the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal to transfer the Woodhouse Down area of Almondsbury parish to a ward with Alveston parish, noting that the road links along the A38 between these areas actually run outside of the proposed ward. We considered that the proposals would leave the electors in the Hortham Hospital development cut off from their nearest neighbours at Woodhouse Down and also from the remainder of Almondsbury parish, which lies to the south of the M4 and M5.

116 We therefore adopted the Council's proposal for two two-member Thornbury South & Alveston and Thornbury North wards, subject to a minor boundary amendment. Given the support from all respondents and the excellent levels of electoral equality, we retained the existing Severn ward. Finally, we noted the minor worsening to electoral equality, but adopted the Liberal Democrat Groups proposal for two single-member Almondsbury and Pilning & Severn Beach wards as we concurred that these areas face different issues from each other.

117 At Stage Three, the Council requested that the Committee rename the proposed Berwick parish ward of Almondsbury parish, Hallen parish ward.

118 The Conservative Group expressed regret that the Committee rejected a two-member Almondsbury & Severn Beach ward, but recognised the objections to this. It expressed support for proposals to transfer the area of Almondsbury parish, to the south of the M5 to Patchway ward, as 'this area plays host to a large regional shopping and entertainment complex and new housing development'. It also

continued to object to any proposal to transfer part of Woodhouse Down from Almondsbury to Alveston, acknowledging our concern that the only access would be outside the ward along the A38. However, it did express concerns about our proposal to transfer Berwick parish ward to Pilning & Severn Beach ward, stating 'as a result of district ward changes [Almondsbury parish] would have five district councillors covering their parish [from three wards]'. It also cited community links between Berwick parish ward and Almondsbury, stating 'their nearest post office is for example located in Easter Compton and children in this area attend Almondsbury Primary School'. It did however acknowledge the impact on electoral equality.

119 The Conservative Group also expressed support for our Pilning & Severn Beach (subject to the comments above) and Severn wards. Finally, it expressed support for our proposals for the Thornbury area. It supported our Thornbury North ward, with particular reference to our proposal to transfer Falfield parish to Central Rural area, stating 'Falfield has strong community links with its rural neighbours beyond being simply rural', citing a number of school links. It also expressed strong support for our Thornbury & Alveston ward and the proposal to transfer Tytherington parish to the Central Rural area. It stated 'we believe there is strong community interdependence between Alveston and Thornbury. Thornbury is the main shopping centre for Alveston, it provides local community hospital, library, leisure centre, golf club and community groups. Alveston in turn provides school places for Thornbury children'.

120 The Liberal Democrat and Labour groups expressed support for the Town Council's proposals in Thornbury. Councillor Wiggins also expressed support for our draft recommendations for Thornbury.

121 Thornbury Town Council expressed support for the existing electoral arrangements 'in that they offer a balance of representation both within the parish of Thornbury and of our two rural parish neighbours both of whom look to Thornbury for many of their facilities'. However, in the event that we did move away from our draft recommendations, it also put forward a proposal to amend the parish warding arrangements. This does not affect ward boundaries and is discussed further in the 'Parish electoral arrangements' section on page 69.

122 Almondsbury Parish Council expressed some concerns about our proposals to transfer the Cribbs Causeway area to Patchway ward, arguing that the area still has links with the parish. However, it acknowledged that this is necessary given the need to secure electoral equality. It also expressed concern about the proposal to transfer Berwick parish ward to Pilning & Severn Beach ward, arguing that it 'has traditional links with Easter Compton and Almondsbury in particular on a social basis and through the closest primary school in Almondsbury', adding that it has no links with Pilning and Severn Beach. Finally, it also requested that the Henbury parish ward be renamed Compton parish ward.

123 The Thornbury & Severnvale Branch Labour Party expressed support for our proposals for this area.

124 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note Thornbury Town Council's concerns about our proposals for Thornbury, but also note the support they receive. Given this and our proposals in the Central Rural area for single-member Charfield and Ladden Brook wards we proposed confirming our draft

recommendations for this area as final. In addition to this, given the support for our Severn ward, we also propose confirming this as final.

125 We note the Conservative Group and Almondsbury Parish Council’s concerns about the treatment of Berwick parish ward. We acknowledge the links that it has with Easter Compton and Almondsbury. However, we also note that transferring this area would worsen electoral equality, giving Almondsbury ward 8% more electors than the average and Pilning & Severn Beach 4% fewer. While this would worsen electoral equality, we also note the comments about dividing Almondsbury parish between three district wards and would concur that, where the other statutory criteria are not affected, including whole parishes in the same district ward provides effective and convenient local government. Therefore, given the community identity argument and concerns about effective and convenient local government we consider the worsening of electoral equality acceptable and propose adopting this amendment, along with amendments to the parish electoral arrangements discussed in paragraphs 254–255.

126 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9–13 and 14–17, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Almondsbury, Pilning & Severn Beach, Severn Thornbury North and Thornbury South & Alveston wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2 accompanying this report.

Central Rural area: Charfield, Frampton Cotterell and Ladden Brook wards

127 The Central Rural area comprises Charfield, Frampton Cotterell and Ladden Brook wards. Table 7 (below) outlines the constituent areas of each ward. Table 4 (pages 24–27) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and also the variances which they would be forecast to have by 2008 if the existing arrangements remained in place.

Table 7: Existing electoral arrangements

Name of ward	Constituent areas	Councillors
Charfield	Charfield, Cromhall and Tortworth parishes	1
Frampton Cotterell	Frampton Cotterell parish	2
Ladden Brook	Iron Acton, Rangeworthy and Wickwar parishes	1

128 At Stage One the Council put forward proposals for a two-member Frampton Cotterell ward and a two-member Charfield & Ladden Brook ward. It also put forward a ‘fallback’ Option Two for its two-member Charfield & Ladden Brook ward, which it argued could create two single-member wards, Charfield and Ladden Brook wards. The Conservative Group put forward identical proposals to the Council’s favoured option for the Central Rural area.

129 The Liberal Democrat Group argued for the inclusion of Frampton Cotterell in the North Fringe area. However, as outlined earlier, we concurred with the Council's proposals that Frampton Cotterell should be considered as part of the Central Rural area, and as such this is how it was considered during our deliberations. The Liberal Democrat Group proposed retaining the existing electoral arrangements for this area. However, in the event of the rejection of its proposals it also put forward a number of amendments to the Council's favoured proposal.

130 Under both of its options, the Council excluded Iron Acton East parish ward from Frampton Cotterell to improve electoral equality. The Council favoured its two single-member Charfield and Ladden Brook wards, arguing that it would secure good electoral equality and combine parishes linked by communities. The Council proposed transferring the Iron Acton West parish ward to its new Frampton Cotterell, arguing that the areas are linked by the B4058. It rejected a request to retain the whole of Iron Acton in Ladden Brook ward given the worsening of electoral equality.

131 The Conservative Group put forward identical proposals to the Council's two-member Charfield & Ladden Brook ward, highlighting links between the constituent parishes and supported the move away from the existing arrangements that link Falfield and Tytherington parishes to Thornbury parish. It also argued for the inclusion of Iron Acton West parish ward in a ward with Frampton Cotterell as it reflects local 'ties' and also cited the proximity of the two villages along the B4058.

132 As a fallback, from its favoured proposal, the Liberal Democrat Group expressed support for two single-member wards. A single-member Charfield ward comprising Charfield, Falfield, Tortworth and Tytherington parish and single-member Ladden Brook ward comprising Cromhall, Rangeworthy and Wickwar parishes and the East parish ward of Iron Acton parish. It argued that this proposal would prevent the creation of a ward that 'looked to both Thornbury and Yate at the same time'.

133 Councillor Gawler (Ladden Brook ward) objected to both of the Council's proposals and argued for the retention of the existing electoral arrangements. He also objected to the proposal to transfer Iron Acton parish ward of Iron Acton parish to a ward with Frampton Cotterell, stating that 'this is not sensible as there are one and a half miles of green fields between them'.

134 At Stage One we gave careful consideration to the evidence received. We noted the Council's and Conservative Group's proposals for a two-member Charfield & Ladden Brook ward secured good levels of electoral equality. We also noted that the Council's Option Two 'fallback' proposal secured significantly worse electoral equality than the two-member proposal and was also supported by limited evidence. On balance, we did not consider that the Council provided sufficient evidence of community identity to persuade us to adopt the two single-member wards given the limited community identity argument and in the light of its Option One proposal, which secures better electoral equality.

135 We noted the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals for revised single-member Charfield and Ladden Brook wards. However, as argued earlier, we considered that the Falfield and Tytherington would be better represented in a ward with parishes of a similar rural nature. In addition to this, we saw no justification for a ward containing Tytherington and Charfield parishes, but excluding Cromhall parish, which provides links between the two. This proposal secured worse levels of electoral equality and

therefore we did not adopt it. We also considered Councillor Gawler's proposals, but did not consider we could adopt them given the poor electoral equality, particularly when measured against the Council's proposed two-member ward.

136 At Stage three, the Council, Conservative Group, Liberal Democrat Groups, four parish councils and two local councillors objected to our proposal to create a two-member Charfield & Ladden Brook ward.

137 The Council stated that it had moved away from its Stage One support for a two-member ward following further consultation with local parishes and is 'of the view that large two member rural wards should be avoided if at all possible'. In response to our request for further views about placing the whole of Iron Acton parish in Frampton Cotterell ward it stated 'This proposal is not possible with a single-member Ladden Brook ward', adding this will 'leave Ladden Brook with a variance of -17%'.

138 The Conservative Group stated 'a single-member Ladden Brook [...] does have merit. The villages are linked by a series of roads, the main road of Tytherington leads either to Rangeworthy or on to Wickwar', adding that 'Tytherington, Rangeworthy and Engine Common all straddle the road between Thornbury and Yate. Wickwar, Rangeworthy and Engine Common all fall into the orbit of Yate for their facilities. It stated that 'a single-member Charfield ward would have much stronger credentials'. It added 'Tortworth provides the local school for children in Falfield. Charfield as the largest village provides important facilities for all these villages, in particular Charfield post office'. This is particularly true for Cromhall and Tortworth, which are very small villages, which rely on Charfield for shops and community facilities'.

139 The Conservative Group also rejected the Liberal Democrat Group's Stage One proposal for alternative single-member wards. It expressed support for our Frampton Cotterell ward, stating 'transferring the Iron Acton parish ward into Frampton Cotterell makes strong sense in achieving good electoral equality and reflecting community identity. Frampton Cotterell, like Iron Acton, has significant rural hinterland including many farms', adding 'they have excellent communications along the B4085 and through the rural lanes between them [...] Frampton Cotterell offers a range of local services and shops for Iron Acton residents'.

140 The Liberal Democrat Group moved away from its Stage One position and expressed support for the two single-member Charfield and Ladden Brook wards now favoured by the Council and Conservative Group. It noted that these proposals worsen electoral equality but stated that it 'consider[s] the arguments of community identity are sufficiently strong to justify this'. It highlighted school links, stating 'Wickwar, Rangeworthy, Engine Common fall within the area of prime responsibility for the secondary schools in Yate/Chipping Sodbury', adding 'the northern parishes of Falfield, Tortworth, Charfield and Cromhall share the same secondary provision'. It argued that the pattern of GP provision is 'reflective of the secondary school catchments'. It also cited the provision of a number of other factors, including Libraries, Leisure Centres, Heritage Centre, newspapers, shops, post offices and clubs. Based on its own consultation with local people, it concluded that the two single-member wards favoured by the respondents would provide the best electoral arrangements.

141 The Liberal Democrat Group also requested the transfer of the 68 electors around Wooton Road area into Ladden Brook ward. It argued that this would create an Iron Acton Village ward with boundaries that 'more closely reflect the Iron Acton Village community'. It argued that the Iron Acton bypass creates a strong boundary as it only has two crossing points 'without pavements and therefore represents a real dividing line'.

142 The Labour Group stated that it had supported the two-member Charfield & Ladden Brook ward, but recognised that the opposition to it would make it hard to implement.

143 Councillor Gawler also objected to our two-member Charfield & Ladden Brook ward and requested that we consider the two single-member wards put forward by the Council. He also put forward an identical amendment to the Liberal Democrat proposal to transfer 68 electors from the Wooton Road area into Ladden Brook ward. He argued that these are '4 miles from the middle of Frampton whilst being less than half a mile from the middle of Rangeworthy. It would create an anomaly for these electors to have to vote in the Frampton Cotterell ward, when on the ground a lot of them are much nearer, and take part in the activities and clubs of Rangeworthy'. Councillor O'Neil also requested that we revert to two single-member Charfield and Ladden Brook wards, stating that this 'would be more beneficial to the communities in the Charfield ward who have close links and ties and fall into the same catchment areas for schools, surgeries and transport'.

144 Charfield Parish Council objected to our two-member Charfield & Ladden Brook ward and requested a single-member Charfield ward. It stated that 'Charfield, Cromhall and Tortworth have historic and continuing links to each other', adding 'Charfield and Cromhall have strong community links such as joint Women's Institute, Luncheon Club, Friendship Club and Scouts'. Finally, it stated 'any connection with Iron Acton is tenuous'. Cromhall Parish Council also supported a single-member Charfield ward, stating 'Cromhall would prefer to be linked with Falfield, Tytherington, Tortworth and Charfield – an area which shares transport, educational and church links'. Falfield Parish Council also supported in a single-member Charfield ward, arguing that it was in this ward prior to the previous boundary review. It stated that it maintains links, including Falfield children attending school in Tortworth. Wickwar Parish Council requested that it be part of a single-member Ladden Brook ward, arguing that 'we certainly do not share common links [with the Charfield area], such as geography, transportation and rural issues'. Finally, Frampton Cotterell Parish Council expressed support for our draft recommendations for its area.

145 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note the significant objections to our two-member Charfield & Ladden Brook ward. We note some evidence to suggest that links between the north and south of this area are not strong, but that links between the parishes in the Charfield area are good, including schools and community facilities. We also note the Conservative Group's argument that the proposed single-member Ladden Brook ward links parishes that run along the road between Thornbury and Yate.

146 As stated in our draft recommendations, adopting two single-member wards would worsen electoral equality, creating a Charfield ward with 6% more electors than the average and a Ladden Brook ward with 1% fewer electors than the average. However, in the light of the evidence received, we would concur that adopting the two

single-member wards as part of our final recommendations would better reflect communities.

147 We also note the Liberal Democrat Group and Councillor Gawler’s proposal for a small amendment to transfer the electors on Wooton Road into Ladden Brook ward, arguing that they have better access to Rangeworthy, to the north, than Frampton Cotterell. We also note that this proposal does not significantly effect electoral equality. However, we do not consider that there is sufficient evidence that this amendment reflects local communities and note that while the area does not have strong links to Frampton Cotterell, it does have links to Iron Acton. We therefore do not propose adopting this amendment and confirm our draft Frampton Cotterell ward as final.

148 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9–13 and 14–17, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Charfield, Ladden Brook and Frampton Cotterell wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Yate, Chipping Sodbury and Dodington area: Chipping Sodbury; Dodington; Yate Central; Yate North and Yate West wards

149 The Yate, Chipping Sodbury and Dodington area comprises Chipping Sodbury, Dodington, Yate Central, Yate North and Yate West wards. Table 8 (below) outlines the constituent areas of each ward. Table 4 (pages 24–27) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and also the variances which they would be forecast to have by 2008 if the existing arrangements remained in place.

Table 8: Existing electoral arrangements

Name of ward	Constituent areas	Councillors
Chipping Sodbury	North East parish ward of Dodington parish; North East parish ward and South West parish ward of Sodbury parish	2
Dodington	North West parish ward of Dodington parish; South parish ward of Yate parish	2
Yate Central	South East parish ward and South West parish ward of Yate parish	2
Yate North	East parish ward and North parish ward of Yate parish	2
Yate West	North West parish ward and West parish ward of Yate parish	2

150 At Stage One the Council’s Option One put forward a single-member Chipping Sodbury ward and two-member Dodington ward. In the Yate parish area, it did not

put forward any electoral arrangements, but allocated the area six councillors. Its Option Two proposal gave the area a two-member Chipping Sodbury ward and two-member Dodington ward. It also created a two-member Yate Central ward and three-member Yate North ward. It argued that a single-member Chipping Sodbury would reflect fact that the area faces separate issues from Yate. It stated that its Dodington ward retained the 'built-up area of north Dodington together'. It stated that its Option Two 'fallback' proposal created a Chipping Sodbury ward focused on the whole Chipping Sodbury and a Dodington ward 'for a continuing "Dodington" identity', while its two-member Yate Central focuses on 'town centre issues and issues relating to residential areas in and adjoining a town centre', adding that its Yate North ward 'creates a ward covering the northern residential area of Yate'.

151 The Conservative Group put forward identical proposals for Chipping Sodbury and Dodington wards to the Council's Option One. However, it also put forward specific proposals for the Yate area. It proposed a single-member Sodbury West & the Ridge ward, three-member Yate North ward and two-member Yate South ward. It stated that its two-member Yate South ward 'would utilize [...] four of Yate's major roads in a compact identifiable community', while its three-member Yate North ward 'would encompass the Yate Town Centre, the main Yate superstores, Yate Leisure Centre and the majority of housing in Yate.

152 The Liberal Democrat Group put forward proposals for a two-member Chipping Sodbury ward and two-member Dodington ward. It also put forward proposals for a two-member Yate Central ward and three-member Yate North ward. It objected to the proposals put forward by the Council and Conservative Group and put forward proposals which also reflected the views of the Joint Parishes Consultative Committee. It argued that the Council's Chipping Sodbury ward drew 'an arbitrary line through the High Street/Rounceval Street area', arguing that this would not reflect local communities. Its Dodington ward sought to combine 'those parts of [Yate parish] which tend to share schooling, retail facilities and community facilities' with the urban part of Dodington parish. It stated that its Yate Central ward put Station Road and issues central to the town centre as its focus'. Its Yate North ward contains the 'northern suburbs of Yate [which] is entirely residential', adding that 'this mirrors' its Dodington ward.

153 Councillors Mead (Chipping Sodbury ward) and Lawrence (Yate North ward) also objected to proposal the Council and Conservative Group's proposal to divide the Chipping Sodbury area at the High Street. The Joint Parishes Consultative Committee put forward identical proposals to the Liberal Democrat Group. Yate Town Council expressed full support for the proposals put forward by the Joint Parishes Consultative Committee and the Liberal Democrat Group. Sodbury Town Council put forward identical proposals to the Joint Parishes Consultative Committee and Liberal Democrat Group.

154 When formulating our draft recommendations, we noted that it is not possible to adopt a combination of the Council/Conservative Group proposals and the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals as adopting one element of a scheme had a significant knock-on effect to our ability to create boundaries that secure good electoral equality and reflect local communities in the surrounding area. We also noted the significant levels of support for the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals for this area from local parishes and councillors. We concurred with the Liberal Democrat Group's concerns about dividing Chipping Sodbury in the High Street area. While we acknowledged

that this division was proposed to facilitate a single ward containing the three urban parish wards of Dodington parish, we did not consider this justifiable when it necessitates the division of the Chipping Sodbury High Street. From our tour of the area, we considered that this divide was arbitrary, dividing the shopping area. We also noted a direct contradiction between the evidence of the Liberal Democrat Groups and Conservatives regarding the Ridge area of Sodbury parish. On balance, we considered that the Liberal Democrat Group had provided stronger evidence of its links with its proposed Chipping Sodbury ward. While we had some concerns about the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal to include part of Dodington parish in its Chipping Sodbury ward, however, we note the local support that this received.

155 The evidence in the remaining areas was less compelling. However, given the differences between the Liberal Democrat Group and Council and Conservative Groups proposals, we considered that the Liberal Democrat Groups proposals provided the best balance between strong boundaries and community identity. We therefore adopted its proposals for the remaining area.

156 At Stage Three, the Council expressed support for Yate Town Council's proposed amendment to our draft recommendations. The Conservative Group expressed regret that its Stage One proposals had not been endorsed, but acknowledge our argument and therefore expressed support for the draft recommendations. The Liberal Democrat Group also expressed support for Yate Town Council's modifications to our draft recommendations. It also requested that we consider a more 'neutral' name for our Dodington ward, arguing that the area contains both parts of Dodington and Yate parishes. It suggested Abbotswood ward.

157 Yate Town Council expressed general support for our draft recommendations, but proposed a number of amendments to better reflect communities. It proposed transferring the 500 electors from our Yate Central ward in YNB polling district to Yate North ward. It argued that these electors have strong links to the north 'being built as part of the same residential phase, tending to look north to the local one stop shops/cluster rather than to the town centre'. It added 'the focal point for residents in YWA [in our proposed North ward] is Wellington Road shops, surgery, dentist, pub and park. These are also the focal points for the residents in this part of YNW. Since being built these have formed one community'. It also proposed transferring 317 electors in the Home Orchard area of YWB polling district to Yate North ward. It stated 'it reunites Home Orchard with the rest of YWB and uses the river as a dividing line' which separates this area from the north area, adding the area 'south of the river is dominated by the school, scout hut, church, youth centre, heritage centre and two pubs'.

158 To offset the transfer of these areas, it proposed transferring 861 electors from the Ridge Estate area of YNC polling district into Yate Central ward. It stated 'they are heavily associated with the impact of town centre highways and industrial development adjoining the residential part of YNC'. It also highlighted that this area has no access into Yate North ward, accessing south into Yate Central ward.

159 It also expressed support for the southern boundary of our Yate Central ward, stating 'the dividing line then becomes the spine footpath/open space gap through the development, which operates as a social watershed in terms of the directions which people look'. It also stated that the proposed name Dodington ward was confusing as a large part of the ward draws electors from Yate parish. It stated that the 'focal point for the communities is an area known as "Abbotswood". This is an

area of community facilities that straddles Rodford Way. The shops, post office, pub, and church youth club and community buildings for Abbotswood are north of Rodford Way'. It therefore proposed calling the ward Abbotswood ward.

160 It also proposed a number of changes to its parish arrangements and these are discussed in the 'Parish electoral arrangements' section, page 69.

161 Dodington Parish Council expressed support for our draft recommendations and in particular, the name of our Dodington ward.

162 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note the general support for our draft recommendations. However, we also note Yate Town Council's amendments to these proposals and the support this received. We note these proposals marginally worsen electoral equality. Yate North would have 1% more electors by 2008 (2% more under the draft recommendations) and Yate Central would have 3% more electors (2% more under the draft recommendations). However, we concur with the town council's argument that its revisions provides stronger boundaries and reflects local communities. We concur that the Ridge area does not have links to the north of Yate and that the river provides a strong boundary between the north area and town centre. Although Yate Town Council's proposals marginally worsen electoral equality, we consider that this is outweighed by the improvements in community identity. We therefore propose adopting these amendments as part of our final recommendations. Yate Town Council also put forward amendments to its parish wards. These reflect the changes it proposed to the district wards and are discussed in the 'Parish electoral arrangements section', in paragraphs 249–252.

163 Finally, we note the comments about the proposed name of Dodington ward. We note that the Dodington Parish Council support this name, while a number of other respondents have requested a more neutral name. We note Yate Town Council's suggestion that it be call Abbotswood ward. On balance, we do not consider that any party has put forward strong evidence. We do not have strong views on ward names and in light of the conflicting evidence, propose retaining the name Dodington ward.

164 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9–13 and 14–17, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Chipping Sodbury, Dodington, Yate Central and Yate North wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 4 accompanying this report.

Kingswood North area: Downend; Kings Chase; Rodway; Siston and Staple Hill wards

165 The Kingswood North area comprises Downend, Kings Chase, Rodway, Siston and Staple Hill wards. Table 12 (page 57) outlines the constituent areas of each ward. Table 4 (pages 24–27) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and also the variances which they would be forecast to have by 2008 if the existing arrangements remained in place.

Table 12: Existing electoral arrangements

Name of ward	Constituent areas	Councillors
Downend	Bromley Heath East parish ward, Bromley Heath West parish ward, Downend East parish ward and Downend West parish ward of Downend & Bromley Heath parish	3
Kings Chase	(unparished)	3
Rodway	(unparished)	3
Siston	Leap Brook parish ward of Downend & Bromley Heath parish; Mangotsfield Rural parish; Siston parish	3
Staple Hill	(unparished)	2

166 At Stage One the Council put forward two options in this area, with both the Conservative Group and the Liberal Democrat Group expressing support for its Option Two. Option Two was also supported by Labour South West. Under both options, all respondents agreed that Downend and Staple Hill wards should remain unchanged. Option One and Option Two were almost identical, except for their proposals in three areas around Morley Avenue, Lees Hill and Fireworks Hill.

167 Under its Option One, the Council put forward plans for an Emersons Green ward as 'Emersons Green is a new and recognisably distinct community still developing in the Mangotsfield Rural parish'. It sought to address the electoral inequality in the existing Rodway ward by transferring Springfield parish ward of Mangotsfield Rural parish, arguing that these areas have the 'same community identity characteristics'. It stated that its Siston ward 'gives Siston parish and its developing and expanding communities a local identity'. As stated above, the existing Staple Hill, Kings Chase and Downend wards all have good levels of electoral equality and the Council therefore recommended no change.

168 The Council's Option Two also proposed no change for the existing Staple Hill, Kings Chase and Downend wards. In its Option Two, Emersons Green ward would be the same as Option One, but excluded part of Pomphrey parish ward of Mangotsfield Rural parish to the south of Pomphrey Hill, which it proposed transferring to its Rodway ward. It proposed this to address access issues around Morley Road, but acknowledged the lack of electors for this area by proposing a parish ward that utilised a 'narrow lane to the rear of Colliers Break (Mangotsfield Rural parish)'. Its Option Two Rodway ward was the same as its Option One ward, but additionally included the Morley Road area of Pomphrey parish ward of Mangotsfield Rural parish. It also proposed a minor revision to the boundary between Rodway and Kings Chase wards, but provided no evidence to support this. Finally, it proposed a minor amendment to its Option One Siston ward to transfer the unparished area around Fireworks Close of the existing Kings Chase ward to its Siston ward.

169 The Council stated that its Option Two was a ‘fallback option because [...] it will reduce the ability of the new Siston ward to accommodate likely increased levels of residential development’.

170 As stated above, the Conservative Group expressed support for the Council’s Option Two in this area, expressing support for the existing Downend, Siston and Staple Hill wards. It argued that Emerson’s Green & Blackhorse ward would encompass a number of the different areas that are all going through substantial residential development. It also supported the Option Two proposal for Rodway ward. However, it did propose a minor amendment in the south to transfer the Lees Hill area into Kingsway ward.

171 The Liberal Democrat Group also expressed support for the Council’s Option Two proposal for this area, arguing that it secures good electoral equality while representing local communities.

172 Downend & Bromley Heath Parish Council objected to the Council’s proposals to include Leap Brook parish ward of Downend & Bromley Heath parish in Emersons Green ward, arguing that all the parish wards should be contained in the ward. Labour South West expressed support for the Council’s Option One. A local resident argued in favour of a single-member Siston ward. Two local residents put forward comments about the Morley Road area that effectively reflected the Council’s Option Two proposals to transfer this area to its Rodway Hill ward.

173 We gave careful consideration to the evidence received. We noted the support for the retention of the existing Downend and Staple Hill wards, arguing that they both secure good electoral equality and represent established communities. We also noted Downend & Bromley Heath Parish Council’s concerns. However, we also noted that its proposals would create a Downend ward would with 10% more electors than the district average and Emersons Green ward would have 9% fewer electors. Therefore, in light of the evidence, we proposed retaining the existing Downend and Staple Hill wards.

174 In the remaining area we noted that the major difference between the Council’s Option One and Option Two proposals were in the treatment of the Morley Road area. In addition, there are concerns over the Warmley and Lees Hill areas. We acknowledged these concerns and concurred with the view that while the Morley Road area is part of Mangotsfield Rural parish, it clearly has strong links into the neighbouring Rodway ward. We also noted that the Option Two proposal to link this area with Springfield parish ward to overcome the fact that the Morley Road area does not contain sufficient electors to justify the creation of a parish ward. However, also we noted that this link utilised a tree-lined pedestrian path, which the Council confirmed does not offer vehicular access. As a result we had serious reservations about the effectiveness of this pedestrian link and concluded that this proposal effectively joins two detached areas. The Electoral Commission’s *Guidance* states, ‘we take the view that the use of detached wards, other than to recognise the particular circumstances of, for example, offshore islands, is undesirable, and that the BCFE should not normally recommend them’. While we acknowledged the efforts to overcome what is a parish ward anomaly, we did not consider there to be sufficient community argument to adopt this proposal.

175 We noted that adopting Option One's Emersons Green ward has a knock-on effect to the Rodway ward. We examined the issues raised for the Lees Hill area, but noted that as a result of adopting Option One for the remainder of Rodway ward, this would actually worsen electoral equality for Rodway and Kings Chase wards. We did not consider there to be sufficient community evidence to justify these worse levels of electoral equality.

176 In the Warmley area we considered that the Council put forward contradictory evidence, arguing that Option One avoids including an unparished area in a ward with Siston, while Option Two reflects the fact that the unparished area shares community facilities with Siston. We also noted that the Council was seeking to leave Siston ward with too few electors to ensure electoral equality beyond the five-year forecast period, which we are unable to consider. We also noted the strong support from a number of other respondents for Option Two. On balance, we concurred with the view that the utilising the A4174 Ring Road creates a far stronger boundary that reflects local communities. Adopting just this aspect of Option Two in the Kingswood North Area marginally worsened electoral equality in Kings Chase ward (-5%), while improving it in Siston ward (3%). While we acknowledged that these levels of electoral equality are worse than those put forward for the Lees Hill amendment, we considered the evidence for this amendment to be substantially stronger. We therefore adopted the Council's Option One proposal for this area, subject to the amendment to the Kings Chase and Siston boundary identified above.

177 At Stage Three the Council did not put forward any comments on the Kingswood North area. The Conservative Group expressed support for Downend and Staple Hill wards, stating they 'have excellent electoral equality, long-standing boundaries reflecting well established communities'. It also supported our proposed Emersons Green and Siston wards.

178 The Conservative Group also expressed regret that we did not adopt its stage one proposals for the Rodway Hill area, but acknowledged our concerns about creating a parish ward with insufficient electors. It therefore put forward a number of minor amendments to Rodway and Kings Chase wards. It proposed transferring 55 electors in Champion Road from Kings Way to Rodway ward. It argued that the draft recommendations arbitrarily divided this road, stating that 'the nearest rank of shops for Champion Road residents is in Station Road', adding that 'children living in Champion Road attend Deerswood Primary School [and] residents [...] look north into Rodway for their services and interests, not south into Kings Chase'. In addition to this, it proposed transferring the 'southern tail of Lees Hill, Tynedale Road, Barrington Close and Sherbourne Close into Kings Chase with the beneficial effect of reducing the variance significantly in this ward and uniting the New Cheltenham Community'. It stated 'Lees hill is an extremely steep hill [...] for those living at the southern end [...] the most accessible local shops are those on New Cheltenham Road', adding 'residents in Barrington Close, Tynedale Road, Lees Court and this section of Lees Hill all use the shops on New Cheltenham Road because otherwise they are faced with climbing the very steep incline'. It also highlighted that children in these roads 'look to [...] Falconride School, which is in New Cheltenham'.

179 The Conservative Group argued that these two amendments offset each other, actually improving electoral equality in Kings Chase ward from 5% fewer electors (by 2008) under the draft recommendations to 3% fewer under its proposals, and not worsening it in Rodway ward.

180 The Labour Group expressed support for the draft recommendations, but requested that Emersons Green ward be renamed Emersons Green & Blackhorse ward as Blackhorse is a distinct community within the ward.

181 Downend & Bromley Heath Parish Council reiterated its Stage One position, requesting that the whole parish be placed in a single ward. However, it did not offer any additional evidence. Councillor Lee (Siston ward) expressed support for our proposals for a modified Siston ward.

182 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note the general support that our proposals for this area received. We note the comments of Downend & Bromley Heath Parish Council, but given the lack of new evidence and viable alternative options, we do not propose adopting its proposals. We also note the support that our Siston, Emersons Green and Staple Hill wards received and therefore propose confirming them as final.

183 Finally, we note the general support that our Kings Chase and Rodway ward received. However, we also note the comments put forward by the Conservative Group. We would concur that in parts, the boundary between these wards does divide communities. Therefore, given the improvement in electoral equality and the strong community identity evidence that it provided, we proposed adopting its minor amendments as part of our final recommendations.

184 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9–13 and 14–17, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Downend, Emerson's Green, Kings Chase, Siston, Staple Hill and Rodway wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1, Map 3, Map 4 and Map 6 accompanying this report.

Kingswood South area: Bitton; Hanham; Longwell Green; Oldland Common; Parkwall and Woodstock wards

185 The Kingswood South area comprises Bitton, Hanham, Longwell Green, Oldland Common, Parkwall and Woodstock wards. Table 13 (below) outlines the constituent areas of each ward. Table 4 (pages 24–27) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and also the variances which they would be forecast to have by 2008 if the existing arrangements remained in place.

Table 13: Existing electoral arrangements

Name of ward	Constituent areas	Councillors
Bitton	Willsbridge parish ward of Oldland parish; South parish ward of Bitton parish	1
Hanham	Hanham parish; West parish ward of Hanham Abbots parish	3
Longwell Green	East ward of Hanham Abbots parish; Barrs Court parish ward and Longwell Green parish ward of Oldland parish	2

Table 13 (continued): Existing electoral arrangements

Name of ward	Constituent areas	Councillors
Oldland Common	North Common parish ward and Oldland Common parish ward of Bitton parish	2
Parkwall	Cadbury Heath parish ward and Wraxall parish ward of Oldland parish	2
Woodstock	Cock Road Ridge parish ward of Oldland parish; an unparished area	3

186 At Stage One the Council put forward a single option for a single-member Bitton, three-member Hanham, two-member Longwell Green, two-member Oldland Common, two-member Parkwall and three-member Woodstock wards. Of these, Bitton would have 5% fewer electors than the district average, while the remainder would have no variances of more than 2% from the district average. Its proposals were identical to the Conservative Group's proposals and were supported by Bitton & District Labour Party and Bitton Parish Council. The Liberal Democrat Group put forward broadly similar proposals, except in Bitton and Oldland Common wards which it proposed combining into a three-member ward. It argued that this would avoid Bitton parish being divided between two wards.

187 The Council put forward a minor amendment to the existing Woodstock ward, to provide a stronger boundary. It also proposed amendments to the existing Longwell Green, Oldland Common and Parkwall wards. It proposed transferring the electors in Orchard Boulevard area of the existing Parkwall ward and the electors in the California Road area of the existing Longwell Green ward to a modified Oldland ward. Its Parkwall ward was the same as the existing ward, but less the electors in the Orchard Road area and less the electors in the St Stephen's Drive area. Its Longwell Green ward comprised the existing ward, less the electors in the California Road area, but including those in the St Stephen's Drive area. Finally, it proposed the retention of the existing Bitton ward, arguing that it has good electoral equality and shares community facilities with the 'A431 Bath Road being the main transport route through the urban and rural parts of the area'. It stated that it had rejected the Liberal Democrat Groups proposal to combine it with Oldland Common, arguing that the areas have 'distinct local identities'.

188 The Conservative Group expressed support for the Council's proposals for this area, arguing that 'Woodstock and Hanham [wards] have extremely powerful boundaries'. It also expressed support for the Council's Parkwall ward, arguing that it reflected local communities that share local facilities. It also supported the Council's efforts to address the issues in the St Stephen's Drive area. It supported the Council's proposal to transfer the Orchard Boulevard area to Oldland Common ward, arguing that it has not links with Barrs Court , but does link to Oldland Common. Finally, it expressed support for the Council's proposal to retain Oldland Common and Bitton as separate wards, arguing that Oldland Common ward has always represented the 'urban part of Bitton parish'. It also argued that Bitton Parish Council 'identified that the rural Bitton part of the parish is radically different from the urban Oldland and North Common parts'.

189 The Liberal Democrat Group only put forward comments for the Oldland Common and Bitton wards, arguing that they should be combined to create a three-member ward. It stated 'currently the parishes of Oldland and Bitton contain a mix of urban and rural communities', adding 'the current warding has both Oldland and Bitton parishes split between [...] wards'. It argued that this situation would remain with the Willsbridge area of Oldland parish in Bitton ward. It stated that its proposals would resolve this, as well as improving electoral equality.

190 Dan Norris MP expressed support for the Council's proposals for Oldland Common ward and endorsed the comments of Bitton & District Labour Party. Bitton & District Labour Party also expressed support for the Council's proposals for Oldland Common ward and the proposals to transfer the areas of Parkwall and Longwell Green wards to Oldland Common ward. Bitton Parish Council argued that the existing Oldland Common and Bitton wards 'seem [to be] within the acceptable variances of the average number of electors for the area'.

191 We gave careful consideration to the evidence received. In general we considered that the Council's proposals provided good electoral arrangements that secured good electoral equality and provided strong boundaries. We noted the support that they received from the Conservative Group. However we noted that under the existing arrangements, Cock Road Ridge parish ward of Oldland Common is in Woodstock ward. While we would concur that this clearly reflects local communities, we noted that Cock Road Ridge parish ward only contains 226 electors, in a parish of over 10,000 electors. We did not consider that Cock Road Ridge parish ward contains a sufficient proportion of the parish's electorate to secure effective and convenient local government. We therefore transferred Cock Road Ridge parish ward from Woodstock ward back to Parkwall ward. As with the anomalies identified in Siston and Mangotsfield Rural parishes, we noted that this anomaly would be best addressed by a parish review, but that this cannot be considered as part of this review.

192 We also noted the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal to combine Oldland Common and Bitton wards. This proposal secured a minor improvement in electoral equality in comparison with the Council's proposals. In addition to this, we did not consider that the evidence is sufficiently strong to split these different communities between two wards. Therefore, on balance and in view of the improvement in electoral equality, we adopted the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal.

193 At Stage Three we received significant support and objections for our proposed three-member Bitton & Oldland Common ward. We also received a mixture of support and objections for the remainder of the area.

194 The Council objected to our Bitton & Oldland Common ward, stating 'the different geographical nature of the two wards suits two separate wards. Bitton is a rural area on the urban fringe of Kingswood that includes Oldland Common'. It also objected to our proposal to abolish Cock Road Ridge parish ward and transfer the area to Parkwall ward, stating 'Woodstock and Parkwall wards have very different housing and different focus for their community identity. The ridge that runs along the ring road and the ring road itself form strong barriers'. It also argued that this proposal worsens electoral equality.

195 The Conservative Group also objected to our proposals for a three-member Bitton & Oldland Common ward. It stated 'the proposal is highly detrimental to community identity because it [...] seeks to weld together two fundamentally disparate communities, ie one of the most urban of South Gloucestershire wards with one of the most rural'. It argued when South Gloucestershire Council was created it was considered that Bitton had links along the A431 towards Longwell Green, but not to Oldland Common, and that this was reflected in the warding arrangements. It also argued that during the PER, it was recognised that these links had not weakened, but that it was recognised that the area would be best served by creating a single-member ward 'to give focused representation to a rural ward made up of small villages and hamlets'.

196 Arguing for a single-member Bitton ward, the Conservative Group stated 'Bitton ward currently comprises a wide range of diverse villages and hamlets; Beach, Bitton, Cherry Gardens, Swineford, Upton Cheney, Willsbridge and also many smaller communities'. It argued that in the rural part of Oldland ward 'there is virtually no one at all living within the empty fields', unlike the rural area of Bitton ward. It argued that St Mary's Church in Bitton 'attracts people from Cherry Gardens, Willsbridge, Upton Cheney as well as Bitton itself' and that 'The Bitton Football and Recreation Club is a particularly important part of the local community. It is located in the very centre of the ward on the Bath Road at the bottom of Cherry Garden Road [and] provides a whole raft of important community services including the football club itself, a cricket club and informal sports and the social club for Bitton, Cherry Gardens and Willsbridge. The Club unites these rural communities'. It also argued that Bitton has its own primary schools. It also stated 'people living in the area [do not] identify with Kingswood, or Bristol, as those in Oldland Common and North Common do [...] they look to Bath as our nearest City, not Bristol'.

197 Finally, the Conservative Group drew comparisons for Bitton with a number of other areas within South Gloucestershire. It argued that Bitton and Siston are similar cases and that both are 'rural wards made up of various villages at the edge of Kingswood'. It also cited the Committee's decision not to merge the Almondsbury and Pilning & Severn Beach wards, stating that 'those objections can only be magnified in seeking to merge an urban and rural ward'. Finally, it stated that the 5% variance of a single-member Bitton ward was comparable to variances in the Kingswood area, except that the variances in urban areas were usually easier to address and since we accepted it here, seeking a marginal improvement in a rural area by merging wards was not acceptable.

198 The Liberal Democrat Group argued that creating a three-member Bitton & Oldland Common ward was similar to the creation of a Hanham ward 'where the urban and urban fringe areas of Hanham and Hanham Abbots have been united, successfully, in a three-member ward'. It also cited the improvement in electoral equality. It stated that Bitton parish is a mixture of urban development and rural communities, but that the rural communities do not contain sufficient electors to justify a single councillor and that as a result an area of Oldland parish 'has been tagged on', adding that this area 'is itself built up, not rural'. It stated that given the ward size, the 'rural communities are never going to be the majority voice in [...] a single-member ward'.

199 The Liberal Democrat Group argued that 'the rural areas represent 14% of [Bitton] parish, there has been a long and successful history of the parish ensuring

the rural voice is heard and needs met', adding that it did not believe councillors in a three-member ward would be unable to represent the rural area. It also stated that the Committee's draft recommendations 'removes the anomaly of having two wards, both of which represent bits of Oldland Common and bits of Bitton parish, ensuring the whole of Bitton parish is represented by the same people'.

200 It also argued that splitting the area 'resulted in a situation in which electors in Cherry Gardens and Willsbridge had all the facilities upon which they rely in Oldland Common, yet had no say in electing a councillor for Oldland Common', adding that 'this caused confusion'. It stated that its proposal would 'reunite St Anne's Church with the community from which its parishioners derive'. It also argued that the area of Oldland Common and Willsbridge and Cherry Gardens 'form a single joint area of prime responsibility feeding into the four primary schools within the ward'. It also argued that the boundary between Cherry Gardens and Oldland End was arbitrary. It stated 'we have investigated where people shop, drink, worship, the clubs they join etc. on all these criteria the communities of the urban two thirds of Bitton ward and the Oldland Common ward are indistinguishable. They are highly interwoven, with choice of pub, club and other facility depending not on where you live, but your interests'. Finally, it stated that 'when looking at access public sector services such as surgeries, library and sports facilities, there is no easy distinction in terms of who uses which facility. Surgeries lie right on the border between Bitton and Oldland wards and are used by residents from both areas without distinction'.

201 Councillor Thomas (Bitton ward) expressed support for a three-member Bitton & Oldland Common ward, arguing that the existing arrangement with part of Oldland Common parish in Bitton ward creates confusion for local people. He argued that the people transferred to Bitton ward as part of the last review look towards Oldland Common for local services. Councillor Allinson (Oldland Common ward) expressed support for our draft recommendations stating 'we have a strong sense of community identity, which has suffered from the confusion of living within the parish boundaries of Bitton and yet be in Oldland Common ward', adding that councillors would be able to represent the interests of both areas. Councillor Thomas (Oldland Common parish) argued that the draft recommendations overcome the confusion of placing part of Oldland Common parish in a ward with Bitton parish, adding that 'there are strong community links with many Oldland Common residents using shops in both Bitton and Oldland Common'. Councillor Lord also expressed support for a three-member Bitton & Oldland Common ward, stating that as a resident of Oldland Common he is represented by a councillor from Bitton. He also stated that 'the facilities for the area ignore the ward boundaries and there is a sense of identity across the wards'.

202 Bitton Parish Council also expressed support for our draft recommendations. It argued that while Bitton parish area has distinct identities, the wards of Bitton and Oldland Common do not. It also argued that the draft recommendations avoided the need to divide Oldland Common. Finally, it stated that it rejects any argument that the rural part of Bitton would be dominated by the urban part, stating that under a single-member ward, the urban part would still be dominant. Kingswood Liberal Democrats expressed support for a three-member Bitton & Oldland Common ward. Five local residents also supported our draft recommendations arguing that it would end the confusion of part of Oldland Common being in a Bitton ward, adding general comments about the areas sharing local services and facilities.

203 Bitton & District Labour Party argued against our draft recommendations, stating that Oldland Common is a 'dense urban style ward' while Bitton is 'by contrast a collection of settlements'. It added that Bitton ward has two primary schools, while Oldland Common has three, adding that 'many children in the Bitton ward area travel to Bath and Keynsham for their secondary education'. Wansdyke Conservatives objected to our draft recommendations, stating 'Bitton is a rural area made up of small villages which are quite separate from the urban sprawl of Bristol', adding that 'Bitton will get "lost" within the new three seat ward'.

204 Councillor McNab (Bitton Parish Council) objected to our draft recommendations for a three-member Bitton & Oldland Common ward, with particular reference to the comments put forward by Bitton Parish Council. She argued that as a Willsbridge resident, she doesn't 'really feel part of the Oldland Common area [...] I buy my fresh produce from the local Bitton farm shop, buy petrol from Willsbridge garage, my newspapers and groceries from the Spar shop in Bitton', adding that for 'my main shopping I either go to Longwell Green or Keynsham'. Finally, she stated that the areas face very different issues.

205 Twenty-three members of the public also objected to our draft recommendations and the proposal to create a three-member Bitton & Oldland Common ward, putting forward similar objections to those described above. One argued that they are distinct areas, one rural, the other urban and that they face different issues. They also highlighted that Bitton ward has its own primary schools and that for secondary education many pupils travel to Bath or Keynsham. Another objected to the 'joining of what is basically an industrialised residential area with severe traffic problems, limited parking facilities, such as Oldland Common, with a village, which is in essence, a semi-rural and light residential village'. Another stated 'the residents of Bitton and Willsbridge/Cherry Gardens are adequately served by a shop, a post office, and a pub and St Mary's Church forms the hub of the community. They do not make use of any of the facilities at Oldland Common'. Another argued that the situation in this area is similar to the situation in Siston, with a rural area neighbouring an area of urban sprawl and argued that they should be treated in the same way.

206 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note the support and objections for our draft recommendations. The balance of evidence is very close, indeed, much of it is contradictory. We would concur with the view that the Bitton Village and the other rural villages have good links with Willsbridge and Cherry Gardens areas, however, from the evidence, we would also concur that the Willsbridge and Cherry Gardens areas have links into the Oldland Common area to the north. These links include local schools, shops, churches and other community facilities.

207 While we note the arguments that Bitton is a rural ward and Oldland Common an urban ward, we are not wholly convinced by this, as the Willsbridge and Cherry Gardens area of Bitton ward are semi-urban. However, we would concur it also incorporates a large number of villages, whereas Oldland is predominantly urban. We also note that the rural villages and Bitton have good links along the A431 Bath Road. In relation to this, we note the Liberal Democrat Group's comments about Hanham ward, but would argue that the rural area of Bitton is significantly more rural than the rural Hanham Abbots area, which the Liberal Democrat Group themselves describe as 'urban fringe', rather than rural. We also note the Conservative Group's

argument that rural Bitton ward should be treated in a similar manner to the Siston ward. Therefore, on balance we would concur that Bitton ward does have a more rural outlook, while Oldland Common is very much urban.

208 We also note that moving away from our draft recommendations would worsen electoral equality in this area, creating a single-member Bitton ward (5% fewer electors by 2008) and two-member Oldland Common ward (2% more electors), as opposed to our three-member Bitton & Oldland Common ward with 1% fewer electors by 2008. However, these worsened levels of electoral equality are comparable with other areas in the district, when measured against the community identity argument.

209 As stated above, the issues in this area are finely balanced. However, we consider that the community identity argument in favour of a single-member Bitton and two-member Oldland Common ward outweigh the marginal worsening in electoral equality. We therefore propose moving away from our draft recommendations in this area.

210 We also note the objections to our proposal to transfer the Cock Road Ridge parish ward of Oldland parish to Oldland ward. These are discussed in detail in paragraphs 234–240.

211 In the remainder of this area we received general support for our Longwell Green and Hanham wards and propose confirming our draft recommendations as final.

212 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9–13 and 14–17, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Bitton, Hanham, Longwell Green, Oldland Common, Parkwall and Woodstock wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 6 accompanying this report.

Eastern & Southern Rural area: Boyd Valley; Cotswold Edge and Westerleigh wards

213 The Eastern & Southern Rural area comprises Boyd Valley, Cotswold Edge and Westerleigh wards. Table 14 (page 66–67) outlines the constituent areas of each ward. Table 4 (pages 24–27) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and also the variances which they would be forecast to have by 2008 if the existing arrangements remained in place.

Table 14: Existing electoral arrangements

Name of ward	Constituent areas	Councillors
Boyd Valley	Cold Ashton, Doynton, Dyrham & Hinton, Marshfield, Pucklechurch and Wick & Abson parishes	2
Cotswold Edge	Acton Turville, Badminton, Hawkesbury, Horton, Little Sodbury and Tormarton parishes; South parish ward of Dodington parish; Old Sodbury parish ward of Sodbury parish	1

Table 14 (continued): Existing electoral arrangements

Name of ward	Constituent areas	Councillors
Westerleigh	Westerleigh parish	1

214 At Stage One the Council put forward proposals for single-member Cotswold Edge and Westerleigh wards and proposed retaining the existing two-member Boyd Valley ward. The Conservative Group expressed support for the Council's proposals for this area. The Liberal Democrat Group put forward alternative proposals for this area. It put forward proposals for single-member Pucklechurch, Westerleigh and Wick & Marshfield wards. It also expressed support for the Council's proposed Cotswold Edge ward.

215 The Council proposed addressing the existing poor electoral equality by transferring Dodington South parish ward of Dodington parish from Cotswold Edge ward to Westerleigh ward, arguing that it 'would cover the rural area to the south of Yate and north of the M4 motorway. It also recommended the retention of the existing Boyd Valley ward, arguing that 'the geographical configuration of towns and villages in Boyd Valley make it very difficult to separate it into two single-member wards'. Finally, it rejected the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal 'for two wards – Pucklechurch and Marshfield and Wick', as they were 'reliant on creating a parish ward in Doynton parish with only 35 electors'.

216 The Conservative Group on the Council expressed support for the Council's proposals. It supported the Council's proposal to transfer Dodington South parish ward of Dodington parish from Cotswold Edge ward to a revised Westerleigh ward. It also supported Council's Westerleigh and Boyd Valley wards.

217 The Liberal Democrat Group supported the Council's proposal to remove Dodington South parish ward of Dodington ward from Cotswold Edge ward, acknowledging that the existing ward contains too many electors. However, it objected to the Council's proposals to transfer Dodington South parish ward to Westerleigh ward and proposed transferring it to Pucklechurch ward. It also objected to the Council's proposal to retain the two-member Boyd Valley ward, arguing that it was unpopular with the parishes. It therefore proposed a single-member Pucklechurch ward comprising Pucklechurch, Dryham & Hinton, part of Doynton parish (to the north of the A420) and Dodington South parish ward of Dodington parish and a single-member Wick & Marshfield ward comprising Cold Ashton, Marshfield and Wick & Marshfield wards and the Tracey Park area of Doynton parish. It argued that 'Pucklechurch has always sat uneasily with the A420 communities [...] looking far more towards Yate to the north'. It also argued that Dodington South parish ward 'would comfortably fit [...] with Pucklechurch, Dryham & Hinton'.

218 Finally, it proposed dividing Doynton parish to transfer the north part to Pucklechurch ward and the Tracey Park area to its single-member Wick & Marshfield ward. It proposed a Tracey Park parish ward, with 47 electors, to provide a link along the A420 between Cold Ashton and Wick & Marshfield parishes for its Wick & Marshfield ward. It argued that the Doynton Village area to the north of the A420 'is very linked to Pucklechurch socially, in terms of primary schooling [and] public transport', while 'the outlying community around Tracey Park links much more to Wick on a similar basis'.

219 Marshfield Parish Council objected to the Council's proposals for a two-member Boyd Valley ward and put forward proposals for an alternative two-member ward comprising the existing Cotswold Edge ward and Marshfield, Dryham & Hinton, Cold Ashton and Doynton parishes. Tomarton Parish Council expressed support for Marshfield Parish Council's proposals. Pucklechurch Parish Council also objected to the proposals for a two-member Boyd Valley ward.

220 We gave careful consideration to the evidence received. We noted the proposals put forward by the Council and the support that they received from the Conservative Group. We also noted the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals. We noted that the Council, Conservative Group and Liberal Democrat Group all agree with the composition of Cotswold Edge ward. We also note that this proposal would secure acceptable levels of electoral equality.

221 We gave consideration to the alternative proposals put forward by Marshfield and Tomarton parish councils, but noted that they would secure worse electoral equality. We also noted their comments about rural areas, however, our *Guidance* does not allow for considerations of rural sparsity. In addition to this, while the knock-on effect of its proposals could be accommodated in the Westerleigh parish area by adopting the Liberal Democrat Group's Westerleigh ward, the knock-on effect in the Pucklechurch and Wick & Abson parish area cannot be contained. Therefore, we did not propose to adopt Marshfield Parish Council's proposal for a two-member ward.

222 We also considered the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals to create two single-member wards and retain the existing Westerleigh ward. We noted its argument, but considered that that Dodington South parish ward has much stronger links into Westerleigh along the B4465, than south to Pucklechurch. We considered the Council's proposal to transfer Dodington South parish ward to Westerleigh ward better reflects community identity. In addition to this we also noted that the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals secure worse electoral equality for its two single-member Pucklechurch and Wick & Marshfield wards. Finally, we did not consider that its proposal to create a Tracey Park parish ward with only 47 electors provided effective and convenient local government.

223 On balance, we did not consider that the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals provided sufficiently good electoral equality or represented community identity in comparison with the Council's proposals. We therefore adopted the Council's two-member Boyd Valley as part of our draft recommendations.

224 At Stage Three the Conservative Group expressed general support for our draft recommendations in this area. Pucklechurch Parish Council and a local resident objected to the creation of a two-member rural ward, but did not offer any evidence or alternatives.

225 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note the limited support and also the objections. However, we note that the objections do not offer any additional evidence or alternative options. It should be noted that we explored the option of single-member wards for this area at draft, but were unable to come up with proposals that secured good electoral equality or avoided the creation of unworkable parish ward arrangements. Therefore, given the evidence received, we propose confirming our draft recommendations for this area as final.

226 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9–13 and 14–17, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Boyd Valley, Cotswold Edge and Westerleigh wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 5 accompanying this report.

Conclusions

227 Table 15 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements based on 2003 and 2008 electorate figures.

Table 15: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	Current arrangements		Final recommendations	
	2003	2008	2003	2008
Number of councillors	70	70	70	70
Number of wards	35	35	35	35
Average number of electors per councillor	2,785	2,925	2,785	2,925
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	5	7	4	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	2	3	1	0

228 As shown in Table 15, our final recommendations for South Gloucestershire Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from five to four. By 2008 no wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10%. We propose to retain the existing council size of 70 members.

Final recommendation

South Gloucestershire Council should comprise 70 councillors serving 35 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

229 As part of an FER the Committee can make recommendations for new electoral arrangements for parishes. Where there is no impact on the district council’s electoral arrangements, the Committee will generally be content to put forward for consideration proposals from parish and town councils for changes to parish electoral

arrangements in FERs. However, the Boundary Committee will usually wish to see a degree of consensus between the district council and the parish council concerned. Proposals should be supported by evidence, illustrating why changes to parish electoral arrangements are required. The Boundary Committee cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of a FER.

230 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.

231 The parish of Hanham Abbots is currently served by 13 councillors, representing two wards: East (returning six councillors) and West (returning seven). In its Stage One submission, the South Gloucestershire Council proposed to revise the electoral arrangements for the parish, in consultation with the Parish Council. It proposed that the number of councillors representing each ward be amended in order to reflect the electorate size in each ward. It proposed a four-member East ward and nine-member West ward.

232 Our proposed draft recommendations for the district warding arrangements of Hanham Abbots resulted in no change to the parish ward boundaries in this parish and we were content to put forward the South Gloucestershire Council and Parish Council's proposals for consultation.

233 At Stage Three, we received no further comments and therefore propose confirming our draft recommendations as final.

Final recommendation

Hanham Abbots Parish Council should comprise 13 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: East (returning four councillors), and West (returning nine).

234 The parish of Oldland is currently served by 19 councillors, representing six wards: Barrs Court (returning three councillors), Cadbury Heath (returning seven councillors), Cock Road Ridge (returning one councillor), Longwell Green (returning four councillors), Willsbridge (returning one councillor) and Wraxall (returning three councillors).

235 During Stage One, South Gloucestershire Council and Oldland Parish Council proposed revised warding arrangements for Oldland parish. They proposed reducing the number of councillors from 19 to 15, and re-allocating those councillors among the wards in the parish. As detailed above, we are content to adopt proposals for revised parish electoral arrangements which come from the Parish and District Councils concerned, and we therefore recommended a reduction of parish councillors from 19 to 15.

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

236 However, as detailed previously in this report, we made amendments in our draft recommendations to the district ward boundaries proposed by the South Gloucestershire Council, and this in turn impacts on the parish ward boundaries. We considered that the existing Cock Road Ridge parish ward is too small in relative terms to justify the allocation of a parish councillor when considering the size of the parish. We did not consider that this would provide effective and convenient local government and therefore combined this ward with parts of Cadbury Heath and Wraxall parish wards. We also proposed amendments to the other parish wards as a consequence of our draft recommendations for the district wards in the area and allocated parish councillors on the basis of the size of electorate represented in each ward.

237 At Stage Three we noted the strong objections to our proposal to abolish the Cock Road Ridge parish ward. The Council stated 'Woodstock and Parkwall wards have very different housing and different focus for their community identity. The ridge that runs along the ring road and the ring road itself form strong barriers'. The Conservative Group put forward similar argument, stating 'Cock Road [...] is completely interlinked with the rest of the Woodstock community, the nearest shops and amenities are in Westons Way and the nearest school is Courtney primary school. Residents living along this road would have no need to go to Parkwall'. It also argued that a stronger reason is 'the powerful boundary provided not just by the Ring Road, but by the ridge itself'.

238 We also note that Council and Oldland Parish Council put forward alternative electoral arrangements for the remainder of the parish, including a revised two-member Wraxhall parish comprising PAC polling district, less the Stoneleigh Drive and Stephens Drive areas and a revised five-member Cadbury Heath parish ward comprising PAA and PAB polling districts, less the area transferred to Orchard parish ward. There was no community identity argument for these amendments.

239 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received and note the strong opposition to our proposal to abolish Cock Road Ridge parish ward. We note the evidence received. As we stated in our draft recommendations, we acknowledge that this area clearly has strong links with Woodstock. However, we consider that the existing Cock Road Ridge parish ward is too small in relative terms to justify the allocation of a parish councillor; Cock Road Ridge parish ward only contains 226 electors, in a parish with over 10,000 electors and would be allocated one of the parishes 15 councillors. We do not consider that this would provide effective and convenient local government. As stated in the draft recommendations, this would be best addressed by a review of the external boundaries of Oldland parish, but cannot be considered as part of this review. South Gloucestershire Council can conduct a parish review following the conclusion of this further electoral review and make recommendations to the Secretary of State.

240 We also note the alternative proposals for Wraxhall and Cadbury Heath parish wards. However, we note that there was no community identity evidence for why these proposals should be adopted. We therefore propose confirming our draft recommendations for this area as final.

Final recommendation

Oldland Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, four less than at present, representing six wards: Barrs Court (returning two councillors), Cadbury Heath (returning three councillors), Longwell Green (returning three councillors), Orchard (returning one councillor), Willsbridge (returning one councillor) and Wraxall (returning five councillors). The parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on the large maps at the back of the report.

241 The parish of Patchway is currently served by 15 councillors, representing three wards: Callicroft (returning six councillors), Coniston (returning five) and Stoke Lodge (returning four).

242 During Stage One, Patchway Town Council proposed transferring some electors between the town wards of Callicroft and Stoke Lodge, and to have all three town council wards represented by five town councillors. However, as a consequence of our revised district warding arrangements for this parish, we proposed that Patchway is represented by three wards, to reflect our proposed boundaries. We allocated town councillors on the basis of the size of electorate represented in each ward. We acknowledged that our proposals did not reflect the Town Council's favoured proposals and requested comments from local people during Stage Three.

243 At Stage Three, the Council requested that 'the area of land to the south of the railway and between the A38 and Stoke Gifford parish boundary [...] should be included in the Patchway [...] ward and not Bradley Stoke'. It added the area 'can be seen as a separate area to the Stoke Lodge estate. The A38 contains a rank of shops on each side, linked by a pedestrian subway'. We note that the Conservative Group also supported this amendment, stating 'this small section identifies much more with the remainder of Patchway than Stoke Lodge', adding that 'it is significant that this part of Patchway is the only one with a street-level pedestrian crossing of the A38'. Patchway Town Council also supported this proposal. It also requested an amendment to Callicroft and Coniston parish wards, to reflect the different areas. It proposed transferring Birch Close, Larch Way, Sycamore Drive, Cedar Close and Baytree Close to Coniston ward.

244 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. As stated above, we concur that the area to the east of the A38 has stronger links with Patchway and therefore propose adopting this amendment as part of our final recommendations. We also note the amendment to Coniston and Callicroft ward and note that this provides a strong boundary and therefore propose adopting this too. These proposals do not affect the number of councillors allocated to each parish ward.

Final recommendation

Patchway Town Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Callicroft (returning seven councillors), Coniston (returning five councillors) and Stoke Lodge (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on the large maps at the back of the report.

245 The parish of Stoke Gifford is currently served by 12 councillors, representing three wards: North (returning five councillors), South (returning six councillors) and

University (returning one councillor). Under our draft recommendations, we proposed changes to the electoral arrangements of the parish, in order to reflect our proposals for district wards in the area, and allocated parish councillors on the basis of the size of electorate represented in each ward. We are now confirming these proposals as final.

Final recommendation

Stoke Gifford Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Central (returning one councillor), North (returning three councillors), South (returning five councillors) and University (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on the large maps at the back of the report.

246 The parish of Thornbury is currently served by 16 councillors, representing four wards: Central, North East, North West and South (each returning four councillors). In our draft recommendations we proposed changes to the electoral arrangements of the parish, in order to reflect our proposals for district wards in the area, and have allocated parish councillors on the basis of the size of electorate in each ward.

247 At Stage Three, Thornbury Town Council argued that our draft recommendations provided an ‘unbalanced representative arrangement for the Town Council’ and therefore put forward alternative arrangements (Table 17, page 74). It proposed transferring all of Oakleaze Road and the roads off this and St David’s Road into its Central West parish ward. It also proposed revising the boundary between Central East and South parish wards to create two three-member wards. It proposed transferring ‘the more recent housing development off Avon Way, the Link Road’ to Central East parish ward. It argued that these proposals would provide better electoral equality, stronger boundaries and more balanced wards. It also proposed that Central West parish ward be called Central parish ward and that Central East parish ward be called East parish ward.

248 We note the proposals put forward by Thornbury Town Council and acknowledge that they provide stronger boundaries and also unite similar housing types. Finally, we note that this proposal does not impact on district wards and therefore propose adopting it as part of our final recommendations. We also proposed adopting its proposed names.

Table 16: Existing parish arrangements

Parish ward	2003 electorate	2008 electorate	Current number of councillors
Central	2,340	2,381	4
North East	2,957	2,980	4
North West	2,128	2,146	4
South	2,316	2,356	4

Table 17: Thornbury Town Council’s proposed parish arrangements

Parish ward	2003 electorate	2008 electorate	Proposed number of councillors
East	1,610	1,640	3
Central	1,729	1,750	3
North East	2,432	2,455	4
North West	2,128	2,146	3
South	1,842	1,872	3

Final recommendation

Thornbury Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: East (returning three councillors), Central (returning three councillors), North East (returning four councillors), North West (returning three councillors) and South (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on the large maps at the back of the report.

249 The parish of Yate is currently served by 22 councillors representing seven wards: East, North West and South West (each returning three councillors), North, South East and West (each returning four councillors) and South (returning one councillor). Under our draft recommendations we proposed changes to the electoral arrangements of the parish, in order to reflect our proposals for district wards in the area, and have allocated town councillors on the basis of the size of electorate represented in each ward.

250 At Stage Three, Yate Town Council put forward revised arrangements for ward boundaries (discussed above) and parish ward arrangements (Table 19, page 75). It also put forward proposals for revised parish council size for these wards and proposed reducing the parish council to 17 members. It argued that the increase in council size had occurred to try and secure better electoral equality, but that this was no longer necessary. It stated ‘the lower the number of councillors the lower the administrative cost of the council to taxpayers in terms of committee size and paperwork’. It added ‘the town council believes the area will be better served by a smaller number of slightly larger wards. We do not believe the modern estates, which form the core of our town, are readily divisible into small electorally equal blocks, and that the creating of artificial divisions is unhelpful’.

251 It expressed support for the South parish ward, put forward as part of the draft recommendations. It proposed a South Central ward comprising the part of Yate Central South ward currently within YCA and YCC polling districts, minus Stanshawes Drive and the Station Master’s House which are transferred to YCB. It proposed a Central ward comprising the ‘rest of Yate Central ward, YCB, the small part of YCC, and the areas north of Kennedy Way, YNC and the balance of YNC’. It proposed a West ward comprising ‘the whole of YWA, YWB minus “Goosegreen” [...] and the “Templars Field”’. Finally, it proposed a North ward comprising ‘YNA, the Goosegreen area of YWA and that part of YNB to the north of the river and east of Church Road. These proposals are outlined in detail on the maps at the back of this report.

252 We note these proposals and concur that they provide wards with strong boundaries. We also support the Town Council's proposed reduction in council size.

Table 18: Existing parish arrangements

Parish ward	2003 electorate	2008 electorate	Current number of councillors
East	2,110	2,150	3
North	3,478	3,545	4
North West	2,045	2,049	3
South	982	982	1
South East	3,433	3,462	4
South West	1,883	1,901	3
West	2,800	2,825	4

Table 19: Yate Town Council's proposed parish arrangements

Parish ward	2003 electorate	2008 electorate	Proposed number of councillors
Central	2,663	2,711	3
North	3,978	4,055	4
South	2,020	2,029	2
South Central	3,205	3,225	3
West	4,865	4,894	5

Final recommendation

Yate Town Council should comprise 17 councillors, five fewer than present, representing five wards: Central (returning three councillors), North (returning four councillors), South (returning two councillors), South Central (returning three councillors) and West (returning five councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large maps at the back of the report.

253 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule 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 Almondsbury, Bradley Stoke, Dodington and Mangotsfield to reflect the proposed district wards.

254 The parish of Almondsbury is currently served by 13 councillors, representing two wards: Almondsbury (returning seven councillors) and Henbury (returning six). Under our draft recommendations, we proposed changes to the electoral arrangements of the parish, in order to reflect our proposals for district wards in the area, and allocated parish councillors on the basis of the size of electorate represented in each ward.

255 At Stage Three, the Council requested that Berwick parish ward be renamed Hallen parish ward. We note from Almondsbury Parish Council's proposal that they already refer to Hallen parish ward. We therefore propose adopting this as part of our final recommendations. We received no other comments and are therefore confirming the remainder of our draft recommendations as final.

Final recommendation

Almondsbury Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Almondsbury (returning eight councillors), Hallen (returning one councillor), Compton (returning two councillors) and Cribbs Causeway (returning two councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large maps at the back of the report.

256 The parish of Bradley Stoke is currently served by 15 councillors, representing five wards: Baileys Court, Lakeside, Manor Farm, Primrose Bridge and Woodlands (each returning three councillors). Under our draft recommendations we proposed changes to the electoral arrangements of the parish, in order to reflect our proposals for district wards in the area, and have allocated parish councillors on the basis of the size of electorate represented in each ward.

257 At Stage Three we received no further comments regarding parish electoral arrangements and therefore propose confirming our draft recommendations as final.

Final recommendation

Bradley Stoke Town Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing seven wards: Baileys Court (returning two councillors), Lakeside (returning two councillors), Manor Farm (returning one councillor), Meadowbank (returning two councillors), Primrose Bridge (returning four councillors), Stoke Brook (returning one councillor) and Woodlands (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large maps at the back of the report.

258 The parish of Dodington is currently served by 15 councillors, representing three wards: North East (returning four councillors), North West (returning eight councillors) and South (returning three councillors). Under our draft recommendations, we proposed changes to the electoral arrangements of the parish, in order to reflect our proposals for district wards in the area, and allocated parish councillors on the basis of the size of electorate represented in each ward.

259 At State Three we received no further comments regarding parish electoral arrangements and therefore propose confirming our draft recommendations as final.

Final recommendation

Dodington Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: North East (returning four councillors), North West (returning eight councillors) and South (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large maps at the back of the report.

260 The parish of Mangotsfield Rural is currently served by 16 councillors, representing five wards: Badminton (returning four councillors) and Blackhorse, Emersons Green, Pomphrey and Springfield (each returning three councillors). Under our draft recommendations, we proposed changes to the electoral arrangements of the parish, in order to reflect our proposals for district wards in the area, and allocated parish councillors on the basis of the size of electorate represented in each ward.

261 At Stage Three we received no further comments regarding parish electoral arrangements and therefore propose confirming our draft recommendations as final.

Final recommendation

Mangotsfield Rural Parish Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Badminton (returning four councillors), Blackhorse (returning three councillors), Emersons Green (returning three councillors), Pomphrey (returning three councillors) and Springfield (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large maps at the back of the report.

6 What happens next?

262 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in South Gloucestershire and submitted our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation.³

263 It is now up to the Electoral Commission to decide whether or not to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 27 June 2006, and the Electoral Commission will normally consider all written representation made to them by that date.

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

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

Fax: 020 7271 0667

Email: implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk

This email address should only be used for this purpose.

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

7 Mapping

Final recommendations for South Gloucestershire

265 The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for South Gloucestershire:

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for South Gloucestershire, including constituent parishes.
- **Sheet 2, Map 2** illustrates the proposed boundaries in Thornbury.
- **Sheet 3, Map 3** illustrates the proposed wards for Bradley Stoke, Patchway and Stoke Gifford area.
- **Sheet 4, Map 4** illustrates the proposed wards in the Yate, Chipping Sodbury and Dodington area.
- **Sheet 5, Map 5** illustrates the proposed Cotswold Edge ward.
- **Sheet 6, Map 6** illustrates the proposed wards in the Kingswood area.

Appendix A

Glossary and abbreviations

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

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

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

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

Appendix B

Code of practice on written consultation

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

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

Table B1: The Boundary Committee for England's compliance with Code criteria

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