

Final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for Swindon Borough Council

Electoral review

September 2011

Translations and other formats

For information on obtaining this publication in another language or in a large-print or Braille version please contact the Local Government Boundary Commission for England:

Tel: 020 7664 8534

Email: publications@lgbce.org.uk

The mapping in this report is reproduced from OS mapping by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.

Licence Number: GD 100049926 2011

Contents

Summary	1
1 Introduction	3
2 Analysis and final recommendations	5
Submissions received	6
Electorate figures	6
Council size	6
Electoral fairness	7
General analysis	7
Electoral arrangements	8
Rural Swindon	8
Central and south area of Swindon town	10
West area of Swindon town	11
North area of Swindon town	12
Conclusions	15
Parish electoral arrangements	16
3 What happens next?	19
4 Mapping	20
Appendices	
A Glossary and abbreviations	21
B Code of practice on written consultation	24
C Table C1: Final recommendations for Swindon	26

Summary

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body which conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. The broad purpose of an electoral review is to decide on the appropriate electoral arrangements – the number of councillors and the names, number and boundaries of wards or divisions – for a specific local authority. We are conducting an electoral review of Swindon to ensure that the authority has appropriate electoral arrangements that reflect its functions and political management structure. The review aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same.

This review was conducted as follows:

Stage	Stage starts	Description
Council Size	20 July 2010	Submission of proposals for council size to the LGBCE
One	28 September 2010	Submission of proposals of warding arrangements to the LGBCE
Two	21 December 2010	LGBCE's analysis and deliberation
Three	29 March 2011	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	20 June 2011	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Draft recommendations

The Commission proposed a council size of 57 members comprising a pattern of 19 three-member wards. The draft recommendations were based on aspects of both the Conservative and Labour group proposals. However, in a number of areas, the Commission adopted its own proposals to ensure good electoral equality and provide clearly identifiable ward boundaries. The draft recommendations would provide good levels of electoral equality.

Submissions received

During Stage Three, the Commission received 78 submissions including representations from the Conservative Group on the Council and the Swindon Liberal Democrat Group. The Swindon Labour Party re-submitted its Stage One proposals for reconsideration. In addition, the Commission received submissions from 14 borough councillors, nine parish councils, five community groups and 48 residents. Swindon Borough Council did not submit any proposals at Stage Three. All submissions can be viewed on our website: www.lgbce.org.uk

Analysis and final recommendations

Electorate figures

Swindon Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2016, a date five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations. These forecasts projected an increase in the electorate of approximately 5% over this period. The Commission is content that the forecasts are the most accurate available at this time and we are therefore content to accept the Council's electorate forecasts as the basis for our final recommendations.

General analysis

Throughout the review process, the primary consideration has been to achieve good electoral equality, while seeking to reflect community identities and securing effective and convenient local government. Having considered the submissions received during Stage Three, we have sought to reflect community identities and improve levels of electoral fairness. Our final recommendations take account of submissions received during Stage Three. We have moved away from the draft recommendations in several areas, particularly in rural, central and north Swindon, in order to reflect the persuasive evidence of community identities received.

Our final recommendations for Swindon are that the Council should have 57 members, with 18 three-member wards, one two-member ward and one single-member ward. No ward would have an electoral variance of greater than 10% by 2016.

What happens next?

We have now completed our review of electoral arrangements for Swindon Borough Council. A draft Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in Parliament. The draft Order will provide for new electoral arrangements for the Council to be implemented at the next elections in 2012.

We are grateful to all those organisations and individuals who have contributed to the review through expressing their views and advice. The full report is available to download at www.lgbce.org.uk

1 Introduction

1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body which conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. This electoral review is being conducted following our decision to review Swindon Borough Council's electoral arrangements to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the authority.

2 The submissions received during Stage One of this review informed our *Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Swindon Borough Council*, which were published on 29 March 2011. We then undertook a further period of consultation which ended on 20 June 2011.

What is an electoral review?

3 The main aim of an electoral review is to try to ensure 'electoral equality', which means that all councillors in a single authority represent approximately the same number of electors. Our objective is to make recommendations that will improve electoral equality, while also trying to reflect communities in the area and provide for effective and convenient local government.

4 Our three main considerations – equalising the number of electors each councillor represents; reflecting community identity; and providing for effective and convenient local government – are set out in legislation¹ and our task is to strike the best balance between them when making our recommendations. Our powers, as well as the guidance we have provided for electoral reviews and further information on the review process, can be found on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Why are we conducting a review in Swindon?

5 We decided to conduct this review because, based on the December 2009 electorate figures, 36% of wards in Swindon have electoral variances of over 10% from the average. In addition, Abbey Meads ward has 68% more electors per councillor than the borough average.

How will our recommendations affect you?

6 Our recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve on the council. They will also determine which electoral ward you vote in, which other communities are in that ward and, in some instances, which parish or town council wards you vote in. Your electoral ward name may change, as may the names of parish or town council wards in the area. If you live in a parish, the name or boundaries of that parish will not change.

¹ Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

What is the Local Government Boundary Commission for England?

7 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Members of the Commission are:

Max Caller CBE (Chair)
Professor Colin Mellors (Deputy Chair)
Dr Peter Knight CBE DL
Sir Tony Redmond
Dr Colin Sinclair CBE
Professor Paul Wiles CB

Chief Executive: Alan Cogbill
Director of Reviews: Archie Gall

2 Analysis and final recommendations

8 We have now finalised our recommendations for the electoral arrangements for Swindon.

9 As described earlier, our prime aim when recommending new electoral arrangements for Swindon is to achieve a level of electoral fairness – that is, each elector’s vote being worth the same as another’s. In doing so we must have regard to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009² with the need to:

- secure effective and convenient local government
- provide for equality of representation
- reflect the identities and interests of local communities, in particular
 - the desirability of arriving at boundaries that are easily identifiable
 - the desirability of fixing boundaries so as not to break any local ties

10 Legislation also requires that our recommendations are not based solely on the existing number of electors in an area, but reflect estimated changes in the number and distribution of electors likely to take place over a five-year period from the end of the review. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for the wards we put forward.

11 The achievement of absolute electoral fairness is unlikely to be attainable and there must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach is to keep variances in the number of electors each councillor represents to a minimum. We therefore recommend strongly that, in formulating proposals for us to consider, local authorities and other interested parties should also try to keep variances to a minimum, making adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. We aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral fairness over a five-year period.

12 Our recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of Swindon or the external boundaries or names of parish or town councils, or result in changes to postcodes. Nor is there any evidence that our recommendations will have an adverse effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. Our proposals do not take account of parliamentary constituency boundaries and we are not, therefore, able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

13 Under the 2009 Act, where a council elects by thirds or halves (as opposed to the whole council being elected every four years), there is a presumption that the authority will have a uniform pattern of three-member and two-member wards respectively. We will only move away from this presumption where we receive compelling evidence to do so and where it can be demonstrated that an alternative warding pattern will better reflect our statutory criteria.

² Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Submissions received

14 Prior to and during the initial stages of the review, members and officers of the Commission visited Swindon and met with officers, members and parish councils. We received 13 representations during our initial consultation on council size, 27 representations during Stage One and 78 during Stage Three, all of which may be inspected at both our offices and those of the Swindon Borough Council. All representations received can also be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

15 We take the evidence received during consultation very seriously and the submissions received were carefully considered before we formulated our final recommendations. We have also visited the area and toured the areas of contention with officers and a cross-party group of councillors. Officers from the Commission have also been assisted by officers at Swindon Borough Council who have provided relevant information throughout the review.

Electorate figures

16 As part of this review, Swindon Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2016, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 5% over the period from 2010 to 2016. Although this figure is somewhat high, we note that since the last review in 1998 the electorate in Swindon has grown by approximately 15% and we acknowledge that growth in the area is set to remain high.

17 We acknowledge that electorate projections are not an exact science but we consider those provided by the Council to be the best forecasts presently available and have based our final recommendations on them.

Council size

18 The Local Government Commission for England (LGCE) completed a Periodic Electoral Review of Swindon in 1998 which recommended a council size of 59 members elected from 22 borough wards.

19 During the initial stage of the review, we received 13 representations on council size. The Council proposed the retention of the existing 59-member council. The Labour Group on Swindon Borough Council advocated between 60 and 62 members, while the Liberal Democrat Group put forward two proposals, for 42 and 69 members.

20 We considered the evidence received and noted that the Council had put forward some evidence to support the retention of the existing 59 members. However, given that the council elects by thirds, it had not proposed a council size that would enable a uniform pattern of three-member wards across the borough. Having considered the evidence, we considered that the council size should be reduced to 57 members.

21 During Stage Three we received little in the way of additional substantive evidence on the proposed council size.

22 Based on the evidence received we have decided to confirm a council size of 57 elected members for Swindon as part of our final recommendations. We are of the

view that a council size of 57 members would provide for effective and convenient local government in the context of the Borough Council's internal political management structure and will facilitate the representational role of councillors.

Electoral fairness

23 As discussed in the introduction to this report, the prime aim of an electoral review is to achieve electoral fairness within a local authority.

24 Electoral fairness, 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. It is expected that our recommendations will provide for electoral fairness, reflect communities in the area, and provide for effective and convenient local government.

25 In seeking to achieve electoral fairness, we work out the average number of electors per councillor. The borough average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the borough (157,145 in 2010 and 164,862 by December 2016) by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, 57 under our final recommendations. Therefore, the average number of electors per councillor under our final recommendations is 2,757 in 2010 and 2,892 by 2016.

26 Under our final recommendations, all of our proposed 20 wards will have electoral variances of less than 10% from the average for the district by 2016. We are therefore satisfied that we have achieved good levels of electoral fairness under our final recommendations for Swindon.

General analysis

27 As indicated above, our draft recommendations were based on aspects of both the Conservative and Labour group proposals with modifications in a number of areas to ensure good electoral equality and provide clearly identifiable ward boundaries.

28 During Stage Three, we received 78 submissions including representations from the Conservative Group and the Swindon Liberal Democrat Group. The Swindon Labour Party re-submitted its Stage One proposals for reconsideration. In addition, we received submissions from 14 borough councillors, nine parish councils, five community groups and 48 residents. Swindon Borough Council did not submit any proposals at Stage Three.

29 Most submissions received at Stage Three related to specific wards or areas within Swindon. Of those submissions, most objections were raised over our proposals in the north of the borough. However, other objections were related to our draft recommendations for other parts of the borough, including rural Swindon and the centre and west of the town.

30 As mentioned in paragraph 13, where a local authority elects by thirds, as in the case of Swindon, there is a presumption in favour of three-member wards. We considered sufficient evidence was received during Stage Three to depart from this presumption in the rural south of the borough.

31 Our final recommendations are for a pattern of 18 three-member wards, one two-member ward, and one single-member ward. We consider our recommendations to provide good electoral equality while providing a good reflection of community identities and interests where we have received such evidence of such matters during consultation.

32 A summary of our proposed electoral arrangements is set out in Table C1 (on pages 26–28) and Map 1.

Electoral arrangements

33 This section of the report details the submissions we have received, our consideration of them, and our final recommendations for each area of Swindon. The following areas of the authority are considered in turn:

- Rural Swindon (pages 8–10)
- Central and south area of Swindon town (pages 10–11)
- West area of Swindon town (pages 11–12)
- North area of Swindon town (pages 12–15)

34 Details of the final recommendations are set out in Table C1 on pages 26-28, and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Rural Swindon

35 The rural area of Swindon comprises the area to the north, east and south of Swindon town, includes the market town of Highworth, and is entirely parished. Our draft recommendations for rural Swindon were for the three three-member wards of Blunsdon & Highworth, Lawn & Ridgeway and Wroughton & Wichelstowe, with variances of 2% more, 7% fewer and 3% more electors per councillor respectively than the borough average by 2016.

Blunsdon & Highworth

36 The draft recommendations for this ward were based on the Stage One Conservative Group proposal. The proposed ward would comprise the parishes of Castle Eaton, Hannington, Highworth, Inglesham and Stanton Fitzwarren and part of Blunsdon St Andrew parish.

37 During Stage Three we received eight submissions concerning the proposed three-member Blunsdon & Highworth ward. Councillor Dart (Blunsdon ward) re-submitted an initial Stage One proposal arguing for a single-member Blunsdon ward. While we noted the concern at creating a three-member ward in this semi-rural part of the borough, we are not persuaded that sufficient evidence has been received to move away from a three-member warding pattern for Blunsdon & Highworth. Moreover, we note that this proposal has received no further support locally.

38 Six submissions, including those from the Swindon Liberal Democrat Group, South Marston Parish Council and Stratton St Margaret Parish Council, requested that South Marston Parish be incorporated into Blunsdon & Highworth ward to its north. However, this would result in an electoral variance for Blunsdon & Highworth ward of 16% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2016.

Furthermore, as described in paragraph 77, the evidence relating to the rural nature of South Marston is not supported by the high level of proposed housing development and the industrial nature of the parish which was observed when we toured the area.

39 Submissions from the Swindon Liberal Democrat Group, Blunsdon St Andrew Parish Council and a local resident suggested that the western boundary of Blunsdon & Highworth ward be amended to make use of the new A419 Blunsdon bypass instead of the existing Ermin Street. We consider this would establish a much stronger western boundary for the ward and better reflect community identities.

40 We therefore confirm as final our recommendation for a three-member Blunsdon & Highworth ward, with the amended western boundary, which will have 4% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2016.

Ridgeway, Chiseldon & Lawn and Wroughton & Wichelstowe

41 Our draft recommendations provided for a three-member Lawn & Ridgeway ward, which comprised Bishopstone, Chiseldon, Liddington and Wanborough parishes and the urban area of Lawn. Seven submissions were received during Stage Three objecting to our draft recommendations for this area. Five submissions objected to linking the rural villages with the urban Lawn area of Swindon town. Councillor Bennett (Ridgeway ward) and Liddington Parish Council proposed a single-member Ridgeway ward, citing the sparsely populated nature of the villages comprising this area of rural Swindon and its lack of cohesive community links with the more urban Lawn area.

42 On our tour of the area, we noted the lack of linkages between the rural villages and Lawn, exacerbated by the topography of the area which includes the Ridgeway itself. We also noted that most community facilities for the south east area of rural Swindon are located in Wanborough.

43 While to adopt all or part of the alternative proposals put forward would necessitate a move away from a uniform pattern of three-member wards for the area, we are of the view that sufficient evidence has been received to justify the establishment of a single-member ward in this area, comprising the parishes of Bishopstone, Liddington and Wanborough, and that part of Chiseldon parish to the east of the A419. The topography and geography of this area observed on our tour indicates that a single-member ward would better reflect the statutory criteria. The area is characterised by downland and a ridge, and contains small villages with only indirect transport links to the town.

44 We have therefore decided to move away from our draft recommendations and propose a single-member Ridgeway ward that would have 10% fewer electors per councillor than the average for the borough by 2016.

45 Three submissions from the Swindon Conservative Group, Councillor Shaw (Wroughton & Chiseldon ward) and Wroughton Parish Council were received in support of the proposed Wroughton & Wichelstowe ward. No objections to the draft recommendations in this area were received. We therefore confirm as final our recommendation for a three-member Wroughton & Wichelstowe ward with 3% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2016.

46 A submission from Chiseldon Parish Council expressed a preference to remain in the existing Wroughton & Chiseldon ward and objected to being linked with the urban area of Lawn. However, incorporating Chiseldon with Wroughton & Wichelstowe would result in an electoral variance of 33% more electors per councillor than the average for the borough by 2016 and have a consequential effect on electoral variances in the adjacent urban areas of Swindon.

47 It would be possible to create two single-member wards for Chiseldon and Lawn respectively. However, if housing development planned for Chiseldon were not to take place it would result in a ward with an electoral imbalance of 28% fewer electors than the borough average by 2016. Conversely, we consider that, if the proposed development does proceed, it will more comprehensively link Chiseldon with urban Swindon during the five-year period after the review. We have therefore decided to move away from our draft recommendations and recommend a two-member Chiseldon & Lawn ward which will have 6% fewer electors per councillor than the average for the borough by 2016.

Central and south area of Swindon town

48 This area comprises the urban area of Swindon to the south of the main railway line and includes the town centre. Our draft recommendations for the central and south area of Swindon were for the six three-member wards of Central, Covingham & Liden, Eastcott, Old Town, Park South & Dorcan and Walcot & Park North. These proposed wards would have electoral variances of 3% more, 3% fewer, 4% fewer, 1% fewer, 5% fewer and 2% more electors per councillor respectively than the borough average by 2016.

Central, Eastcott and Old Town

49 Three submissions were received regarding the draft recommendations for Central and Eastcott wards, which were based on the Stage One Labour Party proposals. The Swindon Conservative Group was broadly supportive of the proposals but submissions from the Swindon Liberal Democrat Group and a joint proposal by Councillors Wood (Eastcott ward) and Wright (Central ward) suggested moving the whole of Curtis Street into Central ward. We consider that this change reflects evidence of community identity and provides a stronger boundary between Central and Eastcott wards. We confirm as final our draft recommendations for the three-member Central and Eastcott wards, subject to this minor amendment. These wards will have 4% more electors and 5% fewer electors per councillor respectively than the borough average by 2016.

50 Two submissions were received regarding the draft proposal for Old Town ward. Both the Swindon Conservative Group and Liberal Democrat Group were broadly supportive of the draft recommendations.

51 With the removal of the Old Town Square from the ward, the Liberal Democrat Group suggested renaming the ward Okus & Croft. However, the name Old Town is a well known name for the wider area contained in the proposed ward and we recommend retaining this name. We therefore confirm as final our draft recommendations for Old Town ward, which will have 1% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2016.

Covingham & Dorcan, Liden, Eldene & Park South and Walcot & Park North

52 Nine submissions were received relating to our draft recommendations for this area, which were based on the Stage One Labour Party proposal. Stratton St Margaret Parish Council supported the draft recommendations. Six submissions objected to the split of the Liden estate between wards and two submissions objected to the split of the Park estate. However, no alternative warding pattern was put forward that would satisfy the requirement to achieve good electoral equality. We noted the constrained nature of these communities, bordered by the town centre to the west, rural Swindon to the south and the A419 to the east. Given the nature of the area, we were unable to devise an alternative warding scheme that would satisfy our statutory criteria to ensure good electoral equality, reflect community identity and ensure effective and convenient local government.

53 The Swindon Conservative Group suggested two name changes to better reflect the make-up of communities in this part of Swindon. Covingham & Liden should become Covingham & Dorcan whilst Park South & Dorcan should become Liden, Eldene & Park South.

54 Subject to adopting the proposed ward name changes, we confirm as final our draft recommendations for this area. Under our final recommendations Covingham & Dorcan, Liden, Eldene & Park South and Walcot & Park North wards will have electoral variances of 3% fewer, 5% fewer and 2% more electors per councillor respectively than the borough average by 2016.

West area of Swindon town

55 The area comprises the part of the town to the west of the town centre and north of the main railway line. Our draft recommendations for the west area of Swindon were for the three three-member wards of Lydiard & Freshbrook, Shaw and Western with variances of 2% fewer, 9% fewer and 9% fewer electors per councillor respectively than the borough average by 2016.

Lydiard & Freshbrook, Mannington & Western and Shaw

56 Two submissions were broadly supportive of the draft recommendations for the west area of Swindon, including that of the Swindon Conservative Group and Councillor Dickinson (Freshbrook & Grange Park ward). We received 12 submissions, including from the Western Branch Labour Party, Councillor Small (Western ward) and 10 local residents, objecting to the draft recommendations for Western ward, and in particular joining the Even Swindon and Toothill areas in this ward.

57 Despite the submission of good evidence to suggest that Even Swindon and Toothill do not share strong community or transportation links, few alternative warding patterns were suggested for the area. Two submissions, including that of the Western Branch Labour Party, requested the retention of the existing boundaries for Western ward. However, we note that the existing Western ward has poor community links as the ward is dissected by the branch railway line separating Even Swindon and Rodbourne and pedestrian access is extremely limited. Moreover, adopting such a proposal would require a complete re-warding of urban Swindon to the north.

58 Councillor Small (Western ward) requested reconsideration of the Stage One Labour Group proposal for west Swindon. However, as noted at Stage One, we were unable to take the Stage One Labour Party proposal into consideration in the western area as its proposed Sparcells & Haydon End ward would not in our view have reflected community identities and interests and it would not have been possible to traverse the ward without leaving Swindon and crossing into Wiltshire.

59 One submission from a local resident objected to the division of the Westlea area but again no alternative warding pattern was proposed. Submissions from the Swindon Borough Conservative Group and Councillor Dickinson (Freshbrook & Grange Park ward) suggested minor amendments. These included moving the Tattershall area into Lydiard & Freshbrook and moving Stamford Close and Edington Close into Western ward using Beaumaris Road as a revised boundary. The evidence for making these amendments was limited. We felt that Tattershall looked as much to Western as Lydiard & Freshbrook, whilst Pevensey Way is a stronger boundary than Beaumaris Road. The Conservative proposal also suggested renaming Western ward as Mannington & Western to better reflect local communities and distinguish the proposed ward from the existing Western ward. We have decided to adopt the proposed name change as part of our final recommendations. Councillor Dickinson proposed the alternative ward name of Freshbrook & Grange Park. However, we have decided to retain Lydiard & Freshbrook as a ward name to reflect the significance of Lydiard Park as detailed in the Conservative Group's Stage One proposals.

60 With the proposed name change for Western ward, we confirm our draft recommendations as final for the wards of Lydiard & Freshbrook, Shaw and Mannington & Western. These wards will have electoral variances of 2% fewer, 9% fewer and 9% fewer electors per councillor respectively than the borough average by 2016.

North area of Swindon town

61 The area comprises the part of Swindon to the north of the town centre and incorporates Haydon Wick, Stratton St Margaret and part of Blunsdon St Andrew parish councils. Our draft recommendations for the northern area of Swindon were for the seven three-member wards of Haydon Wick, Pinehurst, Priory Vale, Rodbourne Cheney, St Andrews, St Margaret & South Marston and Upper Stratton. Under our draft recommendations, the proposed wards would have electoral variances of 2% more, 8% more, 3% more, 9% more, 2% fewer, 9% more and an equal number of electors per councillor respectively than the borough average by 2016.

Priory Vale and St Andrews

62 Four submissions were received regarding our draft recommendations for Priory Vale and St Andrews wards. The Swindon Conservative Group was broadly supportive of the draft recommendations.

63 Councillors Renard, Barnett and Ellis (Haydon Wick ward) submitted a joint proposal suggesting moving the communities south of Haydon Brook from Priory Vale ward into Haydon Wick ward. They argued that the brook is a natural barrier and communities south of the brook look towards Haydon Wick. However, moving

such a large number of electors would have a significant impact on warding arrangements in adjoining areas and result in an electoral variance of 12% more electors per councillor than the borough average in Haydon Wick by 2016.

64 The Swindon Liberal Democrat Group and Haydon Wick Parish Council suggested realigning the boundary between Haydon Wick and Priory Vale along Thamesdown Drive and moving the Redhouse development into St Andrews ward. This links the Redhouse community with associated development to its north. Haydon Wick Parish Council suggested moving Baxter Close from St Andrews ward into Haydon Wick ward where its primary access lays and where the Parish Council hopes to regularise existing parish boundaries by way of a community governance review.

65 We consider that these proposed changes would better reflect communities in this area. We have therefore decided to adopt these amendments as part of our final recommendations. We recommend the two three-member wards of Priory Vale and St Andrews which would have an equal number of electors per councillor and 1% fewer electors per councillor respectively than the borough average by 2016.

Haydon Wick and Rodbourne Cheney

66 Twenty-five submissions were received regarding the draft recommendations for Haydon Wick and Rodbourne Cheney wards. The Swindon Conservative Group submission was broadly supportive of the proposals. Haydon View Community Association requested moving the properties around Haydon View Road and Sunningdale Road into Haydon Wick ward. However, little evidence was put forward to support such a move and our view is that it would leave this community isolated from the adjoining Pinehurst area whilst being separated from Haydon Wick by the cemetery.

67 Twenty-three submissions, including four local councillors, Haydon View Community Association, Rodbourne Cheney Residents Association, Rodbourne Cheney Primary School and 16 local resident's, objected to the boundary around the Whitworth Road and Broadway areas of the proposed Haydon Wick ward. The submissions stated that this area is actually a core part of Rodbourne Cheney and should form part of Rodbourne Cheney ward. Numerous examples of community facilities and strong evidence of community ties were put forward in the submissions. The submissions requested the retention of the northern boundary of the existing Moredon ward, maintaining links between Moredon and community facilities in Rodbourne Cheney.

68 Four of the submissions, including that of Rodbourne Cheney Resident's Association, argued for the area to the far west of our proposed Rodbourne Cheney ward, including Bryony Way and Wood Hall Park, to be moved into Haydon Wick ward, pointing to the similarity of properties and community links between the two areas.

69 Given the strength of the evidence received, combined with information gathered during our tour of the borough, we are persuaded that these proposals should be incorporated within our final recommendations. We are satisfied that the proposals would better reflect community identities while minimising electoral variances in this area. We have therefore decided to move away from our draft recommendations and have adopted the alternative warding arrangements put

forward at Stage Three for this area. Under our final recommendations Haydon Wick and Rodbourne Cheney wards would have 6% more and 5% more electors per councillor respectively than the borough average by 2016.

70 The Swindon Labour Party requested moving the area around Cunningham Road from Rodbourne Cheney into Haydon Wick, to concentrate the Pinehurst community from three to two wards. However, the adopted changes for Haydon Wick and Rodbourne Cheney already achieve this objective whilst retaining good levels of electoral equality.

Gorse Hill & Pinehurst and Penhill & Upper Stratton

71 Twenty submissions were received regarding our draft recommendations for Pinehurst and Upper Stratton wards. Eighteen submissions, including the Swindon Liberal Democrat Group and Councillors Harrison (Penhill ward) and Moffatt (Western ward), objected to the north–south split of the two wards along the A4311 Cricklade Road which joins Pinehurst with the Penhill area whilst dividing the community of Gorse Hill. Many submissions were concerned that Pinehurst and Penhill, as two of the most deprived areas of Swindon, deserved separate representation whilst several submissions referred to the fact that community facilities for Gorse Hill residents would be wholly within Upper Stratton ward.

72 As an alternative, Councillor Moffatt (Western ward) requested reconsideration of the Stage One Labour Party proposal. However, this was not possible due to the concerns outlined in paragraph 57.

73 The Liberal Democrat Group submitted an alternative warding pattern which required the separation of South Marston into rural Swindon to achieve electoral equality. However, paragraph 37 details why this cannot be achieved without introducing significant levels of electoral inequality.

74 However, we were persuaded by the strength of evidence submitted, particularly with regards to the division of Gorse Hill. It was apparent during our tour of Swindon that Cricklade Road unites rather than divides the community in Gorse Hill and was not an appropriate ward boundary. We are persuaded that orientating the boundary east to west rather than north to south would better reflect communities in this area and better facilitate effective and convenient local government.

75 We have therefore decided to move away from our draft recommendations and adopt a revised warding pattern based on the Liberal Democrat proposal. This provides for a ward boundary that has an east to west orientation between Penhill and Pinehurst. The revised ward boundary would run south of the playing fields and along the rear of properties of Dores Road and Green Road. This boundary unites Gorse Hill and Pinehurst into a single ward whilst linking Penhill with Upper Stratton.

76 Under our final recommendations the three-member wards of Gorse Hill & Pinehurst and Penhill & Upper Stratton would have 3% more electors and 5% more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2016.

St Margaret & South Marston

77 Seven submissions were received with regard to our draft recommendations for St Margaret & South Marston ward. Six submissions, including the Swindon Liberal

Democrat Group, South Marston Parish Council and Stratton St Margaret Parish Council objected to the more rural South Marston parish being combined with the more urban Stratton St Margaret. However, the Swindon Conservative Group was broadly supportive and considered the warding pattern to make sense given the high levels of residential development taking place in South Marston.

78 Having toured the area, we were struck by the level of industry in South Marston and felt that there were natural links between South Marston and Stratton St Margaret. Furthermore, as stated in paragraph 38, placing South Marston Parish in Blunsdon & Highworth ward would result in an unacceptably high variance of 16% by 2016, due to anticipated levels of development. Looking south, there are no direct road links with the rural Ridgway parishes.

79 Given these constraints and the high levels of anticipated development, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations for a three-member St Margaret & South Marston ward as final. Under our final recommendations the proposed ward would have 9% more electors per councillor than the average for the borough by 2016.

Conclusions

80 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Table C1 on pages 26–28, and illustrated on a number of large maps we have produced. The outline map which accompanies this report shows our final recommendations for the whole authority. It also shows a number of boxes for which we have produced more detailed maps. These maps are also available to be viewed on our website.

81 Table 1 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements based on 2010 and 2016 electorate figures.

Table 1: Summary of electoral arrangements

	Final recommendations	
	2010	2016
Number of councillors	57	57
Number of electoral wards	20	20
Average number of electors per councillor	2,757	2,892
Number of electoral wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	6	0
Number of electoral wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

Final recommendation

Swindon Borough Council should comprise 57 councillors serving 20 wards, as detailed and named in Table C1 and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

82 As part of an electoral review, we are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

83 Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make changes to parish electoral arrangements where these are as a direct consequence of our recommendations for principal authority warding arrangements. However, Swindon Borough Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements.

84 To meet our obligations under the 2009 Act, we propose consequential parish warding arrangements for the parish of Haydon Wick, Blunsdon St Andrew, Stratton St Margaret and Chiseldon.

85 Haydon Wick Parish Council is currently divided into three parish wards: Haydon End, represented by four members; Haydon Wick, represented by 13 members; and Ray, represented by one member. As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we are proposing revised parish electoral arrangements for Haydon Wick parish to reflect our proposed borough warding arrangements in this area.

Final recommendation

Haydon Wick Parish Council should comprise 18 councillors, as at present, representing four parish wards: Haydon Wick, returning eight members; Haydon End, returning eight members; Ray, returning one member; and Redhouse, returning one member. The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Sheet 2, Map 2.

86 Blunsdon St Andrew Parish Council is currently divided into four parish wards: Abbey Meads and Blunsdon wards represented by nine and six councillors respectively, and Baxter and Kingsdown wards which each return a single member. As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Blunsdon St Andrew parish to reflect our proposed ward arrangements in this area.

Final recommendation

Blunsdon St Andrew Parish Council should comprise 17 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Abbey Meads, returning 12 members; Baxter, returning one member; Blunsdon, returning three members; and Kingsdown, returning one member. The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Sheet 2, Map 2.

87 Stratton St Margaret Parish Council is currently divided into four parish wards: Coleview, represented by four members; Lower Coleview & Nythe, represented by four members; St Margaret, represented by seven members; and St Philip, represented by eight members. As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we are proposing revised parish electoral arrangements for Stratton St Margaret parish to reflect our proposed ward arrangements in this area.

Final recommendation

Stratton St Margaret Parish Council should comprise 23 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Coleview, represented by three members; Lower Coleview & Nythe, represented by five members; St Margaret, represented by seven members; St Philip, represented by seven members; and Merton, represented by one member. The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Sheet 2, Map 2 and Sheet 4, Map 4.

88 Chiseldon Parish Council is currently divided into two parish wards: Chiseldon, represented by 14 members; and Badbury, represented by a single member. As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we are proposing revised parish electoral arrangements for Chiseldon parish to reflect our proposed ward arrangements in this area.

Final recommendation

Chiseldon Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Chiseldon, represented by 14 members; and Badbury, represented by one member. The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Sheet 4, Map 4.

3 What happens next?

89 We have now completed our review of electoral arrangements for Swindon Borough Council. The changes we have proposed must be approved by Parliament. An Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in Parliament. The draft Order will provide for new electoral arrangements for the council to be implemented at the local elections in 2012.

4 Mapping

Final recommendations for Swindon

90 The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for Swindon Borough Council:

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for Swindon Borough Council.
- **Sheet 2, Map 2** illustrates the proposed wards in the north area of Swindon.
- **Sheet 3, Map 3** illustrates the proposed wards in the west area of Swindon.
- **Sheet 4, Map 4** illustrates the proposed wards in the central and east area of Swindon.

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
Constituent areas	The geographical areas that make up any one ward, expressed in parishes or existing wards, or parts of either
Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve a council
Electoral Change Order (or Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Division	A specific area of a county, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the county council
Electoral fairness	When one elector's vote is worth the same as another's
Electoral imbalance	Where there is a difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the local authority
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in elections. For the purposes of this report, we refer specifically to the electorate for local government elections

Multi-member ward or division	A ward or division represented by more than one councillor and usually not more than three councillors
National Park	The 13 National Parks in England and Wales were designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 and can be found at www.nationalparks.gov.uk
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 or ward than the average
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single local authority 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 electors in the parish which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries. See also 'Town Council'
Parish (or Town) Council electoral arrangements	The total number of councillors on any one parish or town council; 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 and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enabled local authorities in England to modernise their decision making process. Councils could choose from two broad categories; a directly elected mayor and cabinet or a cabinet with a leader
Town Council	A parish council which has been given ceremonial 'town' status. More information on achieving such status can be found at www.nalc.gov.uk
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward or ward than the average
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward or ward varies in percentage terms from the average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district or borough council

Appendix B

Code of practice on written consultation

The Cabinet Office's *Code of Practice on Consultation* (2008)

(<http://www.bis.gov.uk/files/file47158.pdf>) 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 Local Government Boundary Commission for England, are encouraged to follow the Code.

The Code of Practice applies to consultation documents published after 1 November 2008, which should reproduce the criteria, give explanations of any departures, and confirm that the criteria have otherwise been followed.

Table B1: The Local Government Boundary Commission for England's compliance with Code criteria

Criteria	Compliance/departure
Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process for a policy (including legislation) or service from the start, so that it has the best prospect of improving the proposals concerned, and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage.	We comply with this requirement.
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose.	We comply with this requirement.
A consultation document should be as simple and concise as possible. It should include a summary, in two pages at most, of the main questions it seeks views on. It should make it as easy as possible for readers to respond, make contact or complain.	We comply with this requirement.
Documents should be made widely available, with the fullest use of electronic means (though not to the exclusion of others), and effectively drawn to the attention of all interested groups and individuals.	We comply with this requirement.
Sufficient time should be allowed for considered responses from all groups with an interest. Twelve weeks should be the standard minimum period for a consultation.	We consult at the start of the review and on our draft recommendations. Our consultation stages are a minimum total of 16 weeks.

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.

Appendix C

Table C1: Final recommendations for Swindon Borough Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2010)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2016)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Blunsdon & Highworth	3	8,635	2,878	4	9,033	3,011	4
2	Central	3	8,600	2,867	4	9,045	3,015	4
3	Chiseldon & Lawn	2	4,747	2,374	-14	5,446	2,723	-6
4	Covingham & Dorcan	3	8,880	2,960	7	8,459	2,820	-3
5	Eastcott	3	7,831	2,610	-5	8,233	2,744	-5
6	Gorse Hill & Pinehurst	3	9,072	3,024	10	8,971	2,990	3
7	Haydon Wick	3	9,337	3,112	13	9,182	3,061	6
8	Liden, Eldene & Park South	3	8,691	2,897	5	8,278	2,759	-5
9	Lydiard & Freshbrook	3	8,870	2,957	7	8,517	2,839	-2

Table C1 (cont): Final recommendations for Swindon Borough Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2010)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2016)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
10	Mannington & Western	3	7,779	2,593	-6	7,912	2,637	-9
11	Old Town	3	6,368	2,123	-23	8,590	2,863	-1
12	Penhill & Upper Stratton	3	9,188	3,063	11	9,109	3,036	5
13	Priory Vale	3	7,892	2,631	-5	8,692	2,897	0
14	Ridgeway	1	2,581	2,581	-6	2,594	2,594	-10
15	Rodbourne Cheney	3	8,679	2,893	5	9,133	3,044	5
16	Shaw	3	8,218	2,739	-1	7,917	2,639	-9
17	St Andrews	3	7,282	2,427	-12	8,556	2,852	-1
18	St Margaret & South Marston	3	9,106	3,035	10	9,470	3,157	9

Table C1 (cont): Final recommendations for Swindon Borough Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2010)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2016)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
19	Walcot & Park North	3	9,104	3,035	10	8,823	2,941	2
20	Wroughton & Wichelstowe	3	6,285	2,095	-24	8,902	2,697	3
	Total	57	157,145	-	-	164,862	-	-
	Average	-	-	2,757	-	-	2,892	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Swindon Borough Council.

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