

# Final recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Wakefield

Report to The Electoral Commission

*July 2003*

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Report no. 342

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# What is The Boundary Committee for England?

The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of The Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. The functions of the Local Government Commission for England were transferred to The Electoral Commission and its Boundary Committee on 1 April 2002 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001 (SI 2001 no. 3692). The Order also transferred to The Electoral Commission the functions of the Secretary of State in relation to taking decisions on recommendations for changes to local authority electoral arrangements and implementing them.

Members of the Committee are:

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

Archie Gall (Director)

We are required by law to review the electoral arrangements of every principal local authority in England. Our aim is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, the number of councillors and ward names. We can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils.

This report sets out our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council.



# Summary

We began a review of Wakefield's electoral arrangements on 8 May 2002. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 11 February 2003, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation. We now submit final recommendations to The Electoral Commission.

- **This report summarises the representations that we received during consultation on our draft recommendations, and contains our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission.**

We found that the existing arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Wakefield:

- **in five of the 21 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10% from the average for the district and one ward varies by more than 20%;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10% from the average in eight wards and by more than 20% in three wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 262-263) are that:

- **Wakefield Metropolitan District Council should have 63 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 21 wards, as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 20 of the existing wards should be modified, and one ward should retain its existing boundaries.**

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

- **In 19 of the proposed 21 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10% from the district average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in 19 wards expected to vary by no more than 10% from the average for the district in 2006.**

Recommendations are also made for changes to parish council electoral arrangements which provide for:

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Featherstone and Normanton.**

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 9 September 2003. The information in the representations will be available for public access once the Order has been made.

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Table 1: Final recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Large map reference
1	Ackworth, North Elmsall & Upton	3	The parishes of Ackworth, Badsworth, Hessle & Hill Top, Huntwick with Foulby & Nostell, North Elmsall, Thorpe Audlin, Upton and West Hardwick	Maps 2, 3, 5 and 6
2	Airedale & Ferry Fryston (unparished)	3	Part of Castleford Ferry Fryston ward, part of Castleford Glasshoughton ward, part of Knottingley ward	Maps 2 and 3
3	Altofts & Whitwood (part-parished)	3	Part of Featherstone parish (the proposed Ackton Pasture parish ward); part of Normanton parish (the proposed Altofts parish ward); part of Castleford Glasshoughton ward; part of Castleford Whitwood ward	Maps 1 and 2
4	Castleford Central & Glasshoughton (unparished)	3	Part of Castleford Ferry Fryston ward; part of Castleford Glasshoughton ward; part of Castleford Whitwood ward	Maps 2 and 3
5	Crofton, Ryhill & Walton	3	The parishes of Chevet, Crofton, Havercroft with Cold Hiendley, Notton, Ryhill, Walton and Winterset	Maps 1, 2 and 5
6	Featherstone	3	Part of Featherstone parish (the proposed Central, East, North-West and South parish wards); Sharlston parish	Maps 2, 3 and 5
7	Hemsworth	3	The parishes of South Hiendley and Hemsworth	Maps 5 and 6
8	Horbury & South Ossett (unparished)	3	Part of Horbury ward; part of Ossett ward	Maps 1 and 4
9	Knottingley (unparished)	3	Part of Castleford Ferry Fryston ward; part of Knottingley ward	Map 3
10	Normanton	3	Part of Featherstone parish (the proposed Western Gales Way parish ward); part of Normanton parish (the proposed Normanton, Normanton Common and Woodhouse parish wards); the parishes of Newland with Woodhouse Moor and Warmfield cum Heath; part of Castleford Whitwood ward	Maps 1 and 2
11	Ossett (unparished)	3	Part of Horbury ward; part of Ossett ward; part of Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward	Map 1
12	Pontefract North (unparished)	3	Part of Knottingley ward; part of Pontefract North ward	Maps 2 and 3
13	Pontefract South (part-parished)	3	Part of Knottingley ward; part of Pontefract North ward; part of Pontefract South ward; the parishes of Darrington and East Hardwick	Maps 2, 3 and 6
14	South Elmsall & South Kirkby	3	The parishes of South Elmsall and South Kirkby & Moorthorpe	Map 6
15	Stanley & Outwood East (unparished)	3	Part of Stanley & Altofts ward; part of Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward; part of Wakefield East ward	Maps 1 and 2
16	Wakefield East (unparished)	3	Part of Stanley & Altofts ward; part of Wakefield Central ward; part of Wakefield East ward	Map 1
17	Wakefield North (unparished)	3	Part of Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward; part of Wakefield Central ward; part of Wakefield East ward; part of Wakefield North ward	Map 1
18	Wakefield Rural	3	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Craggstone, Sitlington, West Bretton and Woolley	Maps 1, 4 and 5

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Large map reference</b>
19	Wakefield South (unparished)	3	Part of Wakefield Central ward; part of Wakefield East ward; part of Wakefield South ward	Maps 1, 4 and 5
20	Wakefield West (unparished)	3	Part of Ossett ward; part of Wakefield Central ward; part of Wakefield North ward; part of Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward	Map 1
21	Wrenthorpe & Outwood West (unparished)	3	Part of Ossett ward; part of Stanley & Altofts ward; part of Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward; part of Wakefield North ward	Map 1

*Notes:*

- 1) *There are two separate unparished areas in the north-west and north-east of the district, comprising 12 wards and part of two further wards as indicated above.*
- 2) *The wards on the above table are illustrated on Map 2 and the large maps.*

Table 2: Final recommendations for Wakefield

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Ackworth, North Elmsall & Upton	3	12,317	4,106	3	12,256	4,085	2
2	Airedale & Ferry Fryston	3	11,767	3,922	-1	11,638	3,879	-3
3	Altofts & Whitwood	3	11,244	3,748	-6	11,915	3,972	-1
4	Castleford Central & Glasshoughton	3	11,620	3,873	-3	11,719	3,906	-3
5	Crofton, Ryhill & Walton	3	12,017	4,006	1	12,073	4,024	0
6	Featherstone	3	13,054	4,351	9	12,938	4,313	7
7	Hemsworth	3	11,724	3,908	-2	11,774	3,925	-2
8	Horbury & South Ossett	3	12,201	4,067	2	12,221	4,074	1
9	Knottingley	3	10,755	3,585	-10	10,605	3,535	-12
10	Normanton	3	11,719	3,906	-2	12,278	4,093	2
11	Ossett	3	12,650	4,217	6	12,840	4,280	6
12	Pontefract North	3	11,910	3,970	0	12,048	4,016	0
13	Pontefract South	3	12,313	4,104	3	12,109	4,036	0
14	South Elmsall & South Kirkby	3	13,287	4,429	11	13,867	4,622	15
15	Stanley & Outwood East	3	11,715	3,905	-2	11,793	3,931	-2
16	Wakefield East	3	12,053	4,018	1	12,405	4,135	3
17	Wakefield North	3	10,684	3,561	-11	11,186	3,729	-7
18	Wakefield Rural	3	13,008	4,336	9	12,978	4,326	8
19	Wakefield South	3	11,287	3,762	-5	11,286	3,762	-6
20	Wakefield West	3	11,652	3,884	-2	11,752	3,917	-3
21	Wrenthorpe & Outwood West	3	11,793	3,931	-1	11,533	3,844	-4
<b>Totals</b>		<b>63</b>	<b>250,770</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>253,214</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,980</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>4,019</b>	<b>-</b>

*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. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.*



# 1 Introduction

1 This report contains our final recommendations for the electoral arrangements for the city of Wakefield. We are reviewing the five metropolitan districts in West Yorkshire as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. The programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to finish in 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Wakefield. Wakefield's last review was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which reported to the Secretary of State in September 1979 (Report no. 349).

3 In making final recommendations to The Electoral Commission, we have had regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 no. 3692), i.e. the need to:
  - reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
  - secure effective and convenient local government; and
  - achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.
- the general duty set out in section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1996 and the statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality (Commission for Racial Equality, May 2002), i.e. to have due regard to:
  - eliminate unlawful racial discrimination;
  - promote equality of opportunity; and
  - promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of Wakefield was conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Periodic Electoral Reviews*. This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review.

5 Our task is to make recommendations 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 parish and town councils in the district.

6 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as possible, equal representation across the district as a whole. 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.

7 We are not prescriptive on council size. However, we believe that any proposals relating to council size, whether these are for an increase, a reduction or no change, should be supported by evidence and argumentation. Given the stage now reached in the introduction of new political management structures under the provisions of the local Government Act 2000, it is important that whatever council size interested parties may propose to us they can demonstrate that their proposals have been fully thought through, and have been developed in the context of a review of internal political management and the role of councillors in the new structure. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified. In particular, we do not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of the council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

8 Under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 there is no limit to the number of councillors which can be returned from each metropolitan city ward. However, the figure must be divisible by three. In practice, all metropolitan city wards currently return three councillors. Where

our recommendation is for multi-member wards, 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 lead to an unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate and we have not, to date, prescribed any wards with more than three councillors.

9 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 8 May 2002, when we wrote to the City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified West Yorkshire Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Yorkshire Local Councils Association, parish and town councils in the district, Members of Parliament with constituencies in the district, Members of the European Parliament for the Yorkshire & Humber region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 27 August 2002. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

10 Stage Three began on 11 February 2003 with the publication of the report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Wakefield*, and ended on 7 April 2003. During this period comments were sought from the public and any other interested parties on the preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four the draft recommendations were reconsidered in the light of the Stage Three consultation and we now publish the final recommendations.

## 2 Current electoral arrangements

11 The City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council is situated in the south-east of West Yorkshire, bordered by the metropolitan authorities of Leeds to the north, Kirklees to the west, Barnsley to the south and Doncaster to the south-east, and by the district of Selby in North Yorkshire to the east. The district contains 30 parishes, but the city of Wakefield and the towns of Castleford, Horbury, Knottingley, Ossett, Outwood, Pontefract, Stanley and Wrenthorpe are unparished.

12 In the following report, we have referred to the City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council authority area as a 'district' to distinguish it from the city of Wakefield, which comprises 17.5% of the district's total electorate.

13 The electorate of the district is 250,770 (December 2001). The Council presently has 63 members who are elected from 21 wards, 11 of which are predominantly urban, while the remaining wards combine urban, semi-rural and rural areas. All wards are three-member wards.

14 At present, each councillor represents an average of 3,980 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 4,019 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in five of the 21 wards varies by more than 10% from the district average and in one ward by more than 20%. The worst imbalance is in Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward, where each councillor represents 27% more electors than the district average.

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

*Map 1: Existing wards in Wakefield*



Table 3: Existing electoral arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Castleford Ferry Fryston	3	9,657	3,219	-19	9,523	3,174	-21
2	Castleford Glasshoughton	3	10,781	3,594	-10	10,888	3,629	-10
3	Castleford Whitwood	3	10,031	3,344	-16	10,063	3,354	-17
4	Crofton & Ackworth	3	12,333	4,111	3	12,346	4,115	2
5	Featherstone	3	11,178	3,726	-6	11,718	3,906	-3
6	Hemsworth	3	10,933	3,644	-8	11,097	3,699	-8
7	Horbury	3	12,201	4,067	2	12,221	4,074	1
8	Knottingley	3	10,759	3,586	-10	10,609	3,536	-12
9	Normanton & Sharlston	3	12,858	4,286	8	13,397	4,466	11
10	Ossett	3	12,670	4,223	6	12,860	4,287	7
11	Pontefract North	3	13,224	4,408	11	13,384	4,461	11
12	Pontefract South	3	10,995	3,665	-8	10,769	3,590	-11
13	South Elmsall	3	11,662	3,887	-2	12,068	4,023	0
14	South Kirkby	3	10,884	3,628	-9	10,940	3,647	-9
15	Stanley & Altofts	3	14,108	4,703	18	14,544	4,848	21
16	Stanley & Wrenthorpe	3	15,158	5,053	27	15,098	5,033	25
17	Wakefield Central	3	11,549	3,850	-3	11,666	3,889	-3
18	Wakefield East	3	12,846	4,282	8	12,848	4,283	7
19	Wakefield North	3	11,413	3,804	-4	11,691	3,897	-3
20	Wakefield Rural	3	13,008	4,336	9	12,978	4,326	8
21	Wakefield South	3	12,522	4,174	5	12,506	4,169	4
<b>Totals</b>		<b>63</b>	<b>250,770</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>253,214</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,980</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>4,019</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Wakefield Metropolitan District Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Castleford Ferry Fryston ward were relatively over-represented by 19%, while electors in Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward were relatively under-represented by 27%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.



### 3 Draft recommendations

16 During Stage One 37 representations were received, including a district-wide scheme from the District Council and a joint district-wide scheme from the District Council Conservative Group and local Conservative constituency associations. We also received representations from Wakefield Liberal Democrats, Normanton Constituency Labour Party, Yvette Cooper MP, Bill O'Brien MP, Jon Trickett MP, eight parish and town councils and 22 local political parties, local community groups and local residents. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions that were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Wakefield*.

17 Our draft recommendations were based on the District Council's proposal to retain the existing council size of 63. We broadly adopted the District Council's proposals in the north of the district (excepting the city of Wakefield), subject to amendments to improve electoral equality and reflect ground detail. However, in the south of the district we put forward our own warding pattern, which to some extent reflected proposals by the District Council, the Conservatives, Hemsworth Town Council and Wakefield Liberal Democrats. As a result of our proposals for the south of the district, we also proposed a number of amendments to the District Council's proposals in Wakefield city:

- the City of Wakefield District Council should be served by 63 councillors, as at present;
- the boundaries of 20 of the existing wards should be modified, while one ward should retain its existing boundaries;
- there should be new warding arrangements for the towns of Featherstone and Normanton and the parish of Crofton.

#### *Draft recommendation*

The City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council should comprise 63 councillors, serving 21 wards.

18 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 20 of the 21 wards varying by no more than 10% from the district average. Two wards (Knottingley ward and South Elmsall & South Kirkby ward) would vary by more than 10% from the average in 2006.



## 4 Responses to consultation

19 During the consultation on the draft recommendations report, 27 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of the District Council.

### City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council

20 The City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council ('the District Council') supported those elements of the draft recommendations which reflected its Stage One proposals and the majority of the draft recommendations for the Castleford area. However, it opposed the recommendations for the city of Wakefield, considering that they would not reflect community identities and interests, and proposed instead that the BCFE generally revert to the warding pattern that it put forward at Stage One. In particular, the District Council considered that the Agbrigg and Belle Vue areas should not be divided between Wakefield East and Wakefield South wards.

21 In the town of Ossett to the north-west, the District Council opposed an amendment put forward by The Boundary Committee between Horbury and Ossett wards to improve electoral equality. It also proposed several minor amendments affecting a small number of electors in the Castleford and Wakefield areas.

### City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council Conservative Group

22 The District Council Conservative Group ('the Conservatives') included a number of comments in the District Council's response, but also wrote separately to the Boundary Committee. At Stage Three, unlike Stage One, the Conservative constituency associations were not named as co-authors.

23 The Conservatives asked that further consideration be given to its preferred council size of 60. In Wakefield city, they supported the draft recommendation to include the Lawefield Lane and Portobello areas in Wakefield North and Wakefield South wards respectively. However, the Conservatives also supported the District Council's alternative proposals for Ossett and Horbury wards and the Agbrigg area of Wakefield city. They reiterated their Stage One proposal that Wentbridge village be wholly included in Pontefract South ward.

### Wakefield District Liberal Democrats

24 The Liberal Democrats broadly supported the draft recommendations with one exception. They proposed that the existing boundary between Horbury and Ossett wards in the town of Ossett be retained.

### Wakefield Constituency Labour Party

25 Wakefield Constituency Labour Party opposed the draft recommendations in Wakefield city and supported the District Council's Stage One proposals for this area.

### Members of Parliament

26 Bill O'Brien MP (Normanton constituency) asked that further consideration be given to his preferred council size of 66. He also opposed the proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward, comprising the Altofts area of Normanton town and the western part of Castleford town.

27 Yvette Cooper MP (Pontefract & Castleford constituency) supported the draft recommendations in her constituency area subject to several minor amendments proposed by the District Council affecting no electors.

## Parish councils

28 Representations were received from seven parish and town councils. Hemsworth Town Council and Ackworth, Badsworth and Woolley parish councils all supported the draft recommendations in their respective areas. Upton & North Elmsall Parish Council opposed the proposed Ackworth, North Elmsall & Upton ward, while Crofton Parish Council opposed the inclusion of part of the parish in Featherstone ward. East Hardwick Parish Council proposed the inclusion of part of Ackworth parish in Pontefract South ward.

## Other representations

29 A further 14 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from local community groups, councillors and residents. Councillor Metcalfe (Ossett) Councillor Walker (Ossett) and nine local residents supported the cross-party proposal to retain part of the existing boundary between Horbury and Ossett wards in the town of Ossett. Councillors Metcalfe and Walker enclosed letters and a petition in support of this amendment totalling 61 signatories from the affected area.

30 Councillor Burns-Willamson (Castleford Glasshoughton) and Councillor Groves (Castleford Ferry Fryston ward) both supported the draft recommendations in the Castleford area subject to several minor amendments proposed by the District Council. A Normanton town councillor and a local resident supported Bill O'Brien MP's proposed council size of 66; together with another local resident they opposed the proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward.

31 North Wakefield Community Group supported the draft recommendation to include all of the Northgate North area in Wakefield East ward, while a local resident opposed the boundary between Wakefield North and Wakefield West wards. Upton & North Elmsall History Group supported the proposed Ackworth, North Elmsall & Upton ward.

## 5 Analysis and final recommendations

32 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Wakefield is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended): the need to secure effective and convenient local government; reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and secure the matters referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (equality of representation). Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

33 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 within the next five years. We also must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

34 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which results in exactly the same number of electors per councillor in every ward of an authority. There must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach, in the context of the statutory criteria, is that such flexibility must be kept to a minimum.

35 We accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be minimised, the aim of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should make electoral equality their starting point, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate must also be considered and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

### Electorate forecasts

36 Since 1975 there has been a 14% increase in the electorate of Wakefield district. The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 1% from 250,770 to 253,214 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expected most of the growth to be in Featherstone, Normanton & Sharlston, South Elmsall and Stanley & Altofts wards, but also predicted a decline in six wards, most notably Castleford Ferry Fryston, Knottingley and Pontefract South. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the District Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

37 At Stage One Normanton Environment Society Together (NEST) considered that population movement, uneven development and the use of an ‘aspirational’ rather than a ‘descriptive’ unitary development plan would each affect the accuracy of the District Council’s forecasts. We noted these comments and acknowledged that forecasting electorates is a difficult and inexact science. However, having considered the District Council’s figures, we accepted that they were the best estimates that could reasonably be made at that time.

38 During Stage Three the District Council noted the view of several district councillors that the 2006 forecast for Horbury should be increased, due to the expansion of planned residential development in the Storrs Hill area. However, having revisited its five-year projections, the District Council remained satisfied that its original projections remained the best estimates for change in electorate. We received no further comments on the Council’s electorate forecasts

during Stage Three, and we remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates currently available.

## Council size

39 The City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council presently has 63 members. In May 2002, a new constitution setting out a leader and cabinet committee system of political management came into effect. At Stage One, we received 16 submissions concerning council size, including proposals for 60-member, 63-member and 66-member councils. However, we decided that we required further argumentation and evidence as to how each would secure effective and convenient local government for Wakefield. Accordingly, we requested additional information from each respondent and received eight responses.

40 The District Council proposed to retain the existing 63-member council. It stated that 'being freed from the time-consuming committee structure,' as a result of the new political management structures 'has given members more time to focus on the communities they represent.' The District Council cited in this context the creation of Area Panels for the district and the increased role of community groups. It also considered that there had been a substantial increase in the representative role of councillors on external bodies. Finally, it expressed concern that reducing the number of councillors 'would lead to an unnatural division of communities and a loss of direct access to members, who in more rural areas would represent areas of many square miles.' The District Council undertook an extensive consultation exercise on its proposals, involving parish and town councils, community groups and residents' associations and the general public. Yvette Cooper MP (Castleford & Pontefract) and the RCG Tenants & Residents Association (Girnhill Lane & Priory Road), a Featherstone community group, also supported the retention of a 63-member council.

41 The Conservatives proposed a council size of 60 members, a reduction of three, considering that 'all organisations, whether modernising or restructuring, take the opportunity to "down-size".' In their view, the new leader and cabinet committee system had 'reduced considerably the amount of time consumed by the decision-making process,' enabling increased delegation of work from members to officers and research staff. The Conservatives also expressed scepticism concerning the take-up by members of posts on external organisations and its effect on their workload. They therefore concluded that a reduction in council size would 'reduce internal difficulties in the management of the Council' without adversely affecting the existing committee structure or resulting in 'appreciable change to the level of access to members.' A Normanton town councillor also supported the adoption of a 60-member council.

42 A council size of 66 members, an increase of three, was proposed by Normanton Constituency Labour Party, Bill O'Brien MP (Normanton) and nine district residents. Bill O'Brien MP considered that 'the work of the local councillor is ever increasing, with demands by the communities for more and better services,' and he expressed concern that larger wards would make it more difficult for electors to identify with their councillors. He therefore argued that a 66-member council would provide 'the optimum councillor/elector ratio' and would be of average size for a metropolitan authority. Supporters of a 66-member council also suggested that this council size would enable a warding pattern in the north of the district that would improve electoral equality and better reflect community identities and interests in the village of Altofts in Normanton parish. This warding pattern would also allocate the same number of wards to the parliamentary constituency of Normanton as to the neighbouring seat of Castleford & Pontefract.

43 Having given careful consideration to the evidence received, we adopted the District Council's proposal to retain the existing 63-member council in our draft recommendations. We noted that both the District Council and the Conservatives had considered the effect of the new leader and cabinet committee system of political management on the role of members. Both the



District Council and the Conservatives agreed that the modernisation of the council had led to a reduction in the policy-making and scrutinising duties of non-executive members.

44 However, we did not consider that the Conservatives had provided substantive evidence that there had been a reduction in overall workload as a result of the modernisation process, whereas the District Council and the RCG Tenants & Residents Association provided a number of appropriate examples of the increasing work of councillors in local communities and on external bodies, resulting in no change to their overall workload. We stated that, unlike the Conservatives, we did not consider that modernisation necessarily implies a reduction in the number of councillors. We were not convinced on the basis of the evidence provided by the Conservatives that a reduction in council size would enable the council to function more effectively, or would resolve perceived difficulties in its internal management.

45 While we noted that Normanton Constituency Labour Party's proposal for a 66-member council had obtained some local support, we were not convinced on the basis of the evidence received that it would best meet the needs of the authority as a whole under the new leader and cabinet committee model. We stated that we considered in the first instance the number of councillors required to best provide effective and convenient local government, rather than the issues relating to individual wards. We also stated that we take no account of existing parliamentary constituency boundaries in recommending new district wards, since the (Parliamentary) Boundary Commission will take new district ward boundaries into account in its ongoing Fifth General Review of Parliamentary Constituencies.

46 During Stage Three, the District Council, Yvette Cooper MP and Councillor Burns-Williamson (Castleford Glasshoughton) supported the proposal to retain the existing council size of 63. The District Council undertook local consultation on its response to the draft recommendations, involving parish and town councils, community groups and residents' associations. However, the Conservatives expressed disappointment that their proposed 60-member council had not been adopted and asked the Boundary Committee to reconsider its draft recommendations. They considered that 'the level of service received by the electorate,' would not be affected, 'with the only recognisable change being a reduction in the cost of the democratic function of the district.'

47 Bill O'Brien MP reiterated proposals for a council size of 66, supported by a Normanton town councillor and a local resident. As at Stage One, it was argued that a 66-member council would facilitate a better warding pattern for the north of the district, and would provide a more equitable allocation of councillors for the town of Castleford without requiring the inclusion of part of the town in the proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward. Bill O'Brien MP also stated that the 'vast majority' of his constituents supported the 66-member warding option for the north of the district.

48 He did not concur with the view expressed by the District Council at Stage One, that time made available to members as a result of the introduction of the leader and cabinet committee system had been channelled into work with local communities. To support this view, Bill O'Brien MP cited the opinions of several district councillors in the local consultation undertaken by the District Council at that stage of the review. These councillors had suggested that a 66-member council would address difficulties arising from their workload and representative role in local communities. Bill O'Brien MP also provided copies of correspondence on community issues between his office and the District Council (both members and officers). He stated, 'The purpose of including the enclosed correspondence ... is to try and explain the frustration in getting things done by constituents which does not hold for Better Local Government' (sic). The local resident who wrote in support of a 66-member council noted that that 'the work of councillors in towns or cities is becoming more and more intense, and with regionalisation coming it could become even harder'.

49 Both Bill O'Brien MP and the resident criticised the process that had resulted in the draft recommendation to retain the existing council size of 63. Bill O'Brien MP considered that the District Council had been at an advantage in putting forward proposals to the Committee

because of the superior resources available to it. Both respondents considered that any changes proposed by the Boundary Committee should be subject to referendum. Bill O'Brien MP also noted paragraph 7.4 of the Committee's *Guidance and Procedural Advice*. This paragraph states that the Committee attaches 'considerable importance to obtaining locally derived proposals which are enduring, have been subject to local consultation, and on which there is a measure of local agreement.' Bill O'Brien stated that the consultation conducted by the District Council had not been adequate because it had not taken opposition to a 63-member council into consideration.

50 We have given careful consideration to the views received at Stage Three. We would emphasise that we give equal consideration to all representations received as part of any review of this type, regardless of their origin. We therefore took no preconceived view on the most appropriate council size for Wakefield, but rather made our draft recommendation based upon the evidence that had been made available to us. We emphasise the importance of consultation by local interested parties (such as the District Council) as a means to building a local consensus. However, we recognise that that agreement cannot always be reached, and in this instance we have received proposals for three different council sizes.

51 We note that the adoption of a 60-member or 66-member council would require substantial change to the proposed 63-member warding pattern set out in the draft recommendations which received some support to ensure good electoral equality across Wakefield district. Consequently, we would not seek to move away from our proposals without a substantial case being made in favour of change. There is no provision in legislation for The Boundary Committee to carry out a referendum on its proposals. Our *Guidance* also states that a well-argued representation containing detailed evidence is likely to carry more weight than sheer numbers of responses on any aspect of the draft recommendations. We note Bill O'Brien MP's comment regarding the difference in resources available to the District Council and other interested parties, but are unable to take this issue into consideration as part of this review.

52 Having re-examined our draft recommendation to retain the existing council size of 63 in the light of further evidence received, we do not consider that a convincing case has been made in favour of change. We were not persuaded that the Conservatives had provided further substantive evidence in support of a 60-member council. We note that they referred to the financial savings that could be made through a reduction of three members. However, there is no provision in legislation for us to make recommendations for council size based on such considerations. We remain of the view it has not been demonstrated to our satisfaction how a council of 60 would function more effectively.

53 We examined the evidence provided by Bill O'Brien MP and other respondents in support of a 66-member council. As noted in the draft recommendations report, when determining council size we consider in the first instance the number of councillors that would best provide effective and convenient local government for the district as a whole. Within this context, we also seek to recommend a council size that will provide the correct (or most accurate) allocation of councillors for each part of the district.

54 However, in our view it is not practical to make a recommendation on council size based *primarily* on a judgement as to which warding pattern would best reflect community identities and interests in a specific area of the district (such as Altofts). It is unlikely that any council size would provide an ideal reflection of community identities in every ward, bearing in mind our other criterion of achieving good electoral equality and taking into account the configurations of urban and rural electorates with which we work. We acknowledge that this problem is particularly acute in a metropolitan authority such as Wakefield, in which we are required to recommend a wholly uniform pattern of three-member wards. As discussed in the section of this report on the proposed warding arrangements for Castleford, we are also not persuaded that a 66-member council would necessarily provide for good electoral equality in the town without the inclusion of other areas of the district.

55 We note that the evidence provided by Bill O'Brien MP in support of his view that members were not able to represent local communities effectively on the existing council size of 63 took two primary forms: copies of correspondence between his office and the District Council; and dissenting views from the District Council's Stage One local consultation. However, we are not convinced that an increase in council size can be justified based on the specific cases drawn from this correspondence. Indeed, we note that members do not appear to be directly involved in a number of the cases, with correspondence being instead directed to officers of the council.

56 We acknowledge that, as part of the District Council's local consultation at Stage One, several district councillors commented that a 66-member council would improve the effectiveness of the representative function of members. However, we note that these councillors did not write separately to the Boundary Committee at either Stages One or Three. We were therefore unable to take their views directly into consideration. These comments notwithstanding, we noted in our draft recommendations report that broad support for a 63-member council had been expressed during the District Council's local consultation. We note the comments of a local resident concerning the growing demands on the role of the councillor in urban areas and the prospect of a regional assembly for the Yorkshire & the Humber region. However we have received no evidence of how an increase in council size would address these concerns.

57 We have received no further comments on the proposed council size of 63, and have decided to confirm our draft recommendation as final.

## Electoral arrangements

58 We gave careful consideration to all representations received at Stage One. However, as a consequence of our decision to adopt the District Council's proposed council size of 63, we were only able to give limited further consideration to the proposals from the Conservatives, which were based on a council size of 60. Similarly, we could only give limited further consideration to proposals for the north of the district by Normanton Constituency Labour Party, Bill O'Brien MP and nine local residents, which were based on a 66-member council.

59 In the north of the district (excluding the city of Wakefield) we based our draft recommendations on the District Council's proposals, subject to a number of amendments. We considered that they would generally achieve better electoral equality, better reflect community identities and interests and provide more effective and convenient local government than the existing arrangements. However, in the south of the district we put forward our own proposals to place Hemsworth parish and the Havercroft/Ryhill area in single district wards, uniting communities that are divided under the existing warding pattern. These revised wards to some extent reflected representations made by the District Council, the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats and Hemsworth Town Council.

60 In the city of Wakefield, we based our draft recommendations on the District Council's proposals subject to a number of amendments. These changes were to some extent necessary to accommodate the revised warding pattern in the south of the district while continuing to provide for good electoral equality in the city. Nonetheless, we considered that our proposals better reflected community identities and interests in the City Centre, Lupset and Northgate areas. Finally, in order to follow existing ground detail, we put forward minor modifications to proposed boundaries.

61 At Stage Three the District Council supported those elements of the draft recommendations that reflected its Stage One proposals. Together with Yvette Cooper MP and two district councillors, it also supported the draft proposals for the Castleford area, subject to minor amendments. The Liberal Democrats expressed broad support for the draft recommendations (except in Ossett town), particularly where its proposals had been wholly or partly adopted, while

one town council, three parish councils and two community groups supported the draft recommendations for their respective parts of the district.

62 However, the District Council opposed the draft recommendations for Wakefield city, proposing a revised version of its Stage One proposals for this area. In particular, it considered that the Agbrigg area in the proposed Wakefield South ward should be united with the adjoining area of Belle Vue in Wakefield East ward. Wakefield Constituency Labour Party proposed that the District Council's Stage One scheme be adopted in Wakefield city in its entirety, while a local resident supported the retention of the existing boundary between Wakefield North and Wakefield West wards. The Conservatives continued to support a 60-member council but put forward proposals based on the proposed 63-member council. They supported the District Council's proposals for the Agbrigg and Belle Vue areas, but supported parts of the draft recommendations elsewhere in Wakefield city.

63 An amendment between Horbury and Ossett wards put forward in the draft recommendations to improve electoral equality was opposed by the District Council, the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats, two district councillors and five local residents. The district councillors also enclosed a petition and copies of local correspondence; together with the Liberal Democrats and a resident they proposed an alternative name for Horbury ward.

64 Bill O'Brien MP, a Normanton town councillor and two local residents all opposed the proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward. As at Stage One, respondents considered that this ward would not reflect community identities and interests and put forward alternative proposals for the north of the district based on a council size of 66. Bill O'Brien MP and a local resident also made a number of comments on the review process, which we have sought to address in the previous section of this report on council size and in the following section of this report on the proposed electoral arrangements for Castleford town. Finally, the Conservatives and three parish councils opposed parts of the proposed Ackworth, North Elmsall & Upton, Featherstone, Pontefract South and South Elmsall wards.

65 After due consideration of the representations received, we proposed that the draft recommendations be substantially retained. We generally consider that they would provide the best available balance between achieving electoral equality, reflecting community identities and interests and providing effective and convenient local government. As discussed in the previous section, we are proposing to retain a 63-member council, which consequently limits the extent to which proposals by Bill O'Brien MP and others, based on a 66-member council, could be taken into consideration.

66 Nonetheless, we have decided to move away from our draft recommendations in several areas. In the city of Wakefield, we have received further evidence that the inclusion of the Agbrigg and Belle Vue areas in a single ward would better reflect community identities and interests. However, we note that it is not possible to adopt the District Council's scheme in the city and provide for good electoral equality. We therefore propose to include both areas in Wakefield South rather than Wakefield East as proposed by the District Council, transferring Portobello to Wakefield East ward to ensure that electoral variances would remain low. We are also putting forward two other minor amendments to provide for more clearly defined ward boundaries, affecting the wards of Wakefield East, Wakefield North and Wakefield West.

67 In Ossett town, we have been persuaded by new evidence that retaining the existing boundary between Ossett and Horbury wards would better reflect community identities and interests, although a slight fall in electoral equality would result. We are also adopting the revised ward name 'Horbury & South Ossett'. To facilitate effective and convenient local government, we have also been persuaded to include all of Crofton parish in Crofton, Ryhill & Walton ward, rather than including part of the parish in Featherstone ward. Finally, we propose a number of minor amendments affecting no electors.

68 The draft recommendations have been reviewed in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

### **The ‘five towns’**

- (a) Featherstone and Normanton & Sharlston wards (page 29)
- (b) Castleford Ferry Fryston, Castleford Glasshoughton and Castleford Whitwood wards (page 32)
- (c) Knottingley, Pontefract North and Pontefract South wards (page 37)

### **The south**

- (d) Hemsworth and South Kirkby wards (page 40)
- (e) Crofton & Ackworth and South Elmsall wards (page 43)

### **The city of Wakefield**

- (f) Wakefield Rural and Wakefield South wards (page 46)
- (g) Wakefield Central, Wakefield East and Wakefield North wards (page 51)

### **The north-west**

- (h) Stanley & Altofts and Stanley & Wrenthorpe wards (page 56)
- (i) Horbury and Ossett wards (page 59)

69 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large maps.

### **The ‘five towns’**

#### **(a) Featherstone and Normanton & Sharlston wards**

70 The wards of Featherstone and Normanton & Sharlston are situated in the north and centre of the district and are each represented by three councillors. Featherstone ward is coterminous with the parish of the same name, which comprises the town of Featherstone and the villages of Ackton, North Featherstone, Old Snydale, Purston Jaglin, Snydale and Streethouse. Normanton & Sharlston ward comprises the parishes of Newland with Woodhouse Moor, Sharlston and Warmfield cum Heath, together with the Normanton and Woodhouse parish wards of Normanton parish. Under the existing arrangements, Featherstone ward and Normanton & Sharlston ward have 6% fewer and 8% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3% fewer and 11% more than the average by 2006).

71 At Stage One, the District Council proposed a new Normanton ward, which would include: the Normanton parish wards of Normanton, Normanton Common and Woodhouse; the parishes of Newland with Woodhouse Moor and Warmfield cum Heath; the Western Gales Way area of Featherstone parish; and a small part of the Castleford unparished area to the south of the M62 containing no electors. This proposal would provide for the transfer of the Normanton Common area (the part of Normanton parish to the north of Eastfield Grove and Gladstone Street) from the existing Castleford Whitwood ward. The District Council considered this area to be ‘an integral part of Normanton’ with ‘a direct affinity’ to the town. It also considered that residents of the Western Gales Way area, situated to the west of the A655 Normanton bypass and to the north of Snydale Road, use facilities in Normanton and ‘have little, if any affinity with Featherstone.’

72 Under the District Council's Stage One proposals the existing Featherstone ward would be subject to two further amendments. First, it would include Sharlston parish from the existing Normanton & Sharlston ward. The District Council considered that this would reflect existing social ties between Sharlston and Featherstone, although it noted the opposition of Sharlston Parish Council and the geographical and social links between the villages of Crofton and Sharlston. Second, the Ackton Pasture area of Featherstone parish to the north of the M62 would be transferred to a new Altofts & Whitwood ward. The District Council indicated that, while this area currently contains only 164 electors, substantial new residential development is expected to result in a forecast electorate of 800 electors by 2006. It considered that these new electors would identify with Castleford rather than with Featherstone town.

73 On a 60-member council, the Conservative's proposed Featherstone and Normanton wards were similar to those of the District Council. However, their proposed Featherstone ward would also include the Birkwood Avenue area of Crofton parish from the existing Crofton & Ackworth ward, which they considered to be 'an intrinsic part of Sharlston'. Normanton Constituency Labour Party, Bill O'Brien MP and nine district residents put forward proposals for the Normanton parliamentary constituency area based upon a council size of 66 without a complete warding pattern. Like the District Council, they proposed the removal of the Normanton Common area of Normanton parish from the existing Castleford Whitwood ward. However, Bill O'Brien MP opposed the District Council's proposal to place Normanton town and Sharlston parish in different wards.

74 Yvette Cooper MP, Normanton Town Council, Normanton Central Branch Labour Party and a Normanton resident supported the District Council's proposals for the Normanton Common area. The Town Council also forwarded two petitions from a total of 63 residents in support of this proposal. Jon Trickett MP, Featherstone Town Council and the RCG Tenants & Residents Association, (Girnhill Lane & Priory Road), a community group in Featherstone, supported the District Council's proposed Featherstone ward. However, Sharlston Parish Council, Streethouse Village Community Group and a local resident opposed the District Council's proposed Featherstone ward. Finally, a resident of Warmfield cum Heath parish proposed the inclusion of a small number of properties in the parish in Wakefield East ward.

75 We based our draft recommendations on the District Council's proposals. We noted that the proposed Normanton and Featherstone wards had received some local support and would resolve the forecast under-representation of the existing Normanton & Sharlston ward by 2006. As a result of our recommendation to retain a 63-member council, we were only able to give limited further consideration to proposals by the Conservatives and by Normanton Constituency Labour Party, Bill O'Brien MP and others, which were based on 60-member and 66-member councils respectively.

76 We adopted the District Council's proposed Normanton ward without amendment. We noted that the existing boundary between Castleford Whitwood and Normanton & Sharlston wards separates Normanton Common parish ward from the remainder of the town of Normanton, with which it is contiguous. We further noted that the existing boundary divides Eastfield Grove and Hopetown Walk between the two wards. In contrast, Normanton Common and the Whitwood area of Castleford are separated by the M62 and an industrial estate. Noting the evidence provided by local interested parties to suggest that residents of Normanton Common identify with the rest of Normanton rather than with Castleford, we considered that the District Council's proposed Normanton ward would better reflect community identities and interests in the town than the current arrangement. We were similarly content on the basis of evidence received that electors in the Western Gales Way area of Featherstone parish to the west of the A655 Normanton bypass identify with Normanton and should accordingly be included in the new Normanton ward.

77 We also adopted the District Council's proposed Featherstone ward, including Sharlston parish, subject to one minor amendment proposed by the Conservatives. We noted the apparent

consensus that the interests of the Ackton Pasture area of Featherstone parish would be best served by its inclusion in the proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward with the western part of Castleford. We considered that Ackton Pasture formed part of the Castleford urban area and was separated from the town of Featherstone by open country and the M62. We therefore concluded that this proposal would better reflect community identities and interests than the existing arrangement.

78 We acknowledged the view of Sharlston Parish Council, Bill O'Brien MP and other respondents that Sharlston's ties with Crofton and Normanton are stronger than those with Featherstone. However, we were unable to identify alternative proposals based on a 63-member council that would enable Sharlston and Crofton, or Sharlston and Normanton, to be placed in a single district ward providing good electoral equality without affecting proposals for surrounding wards. We also noted the view of the District Council, the Conservatives and Jon Trickett MP that Featherstone and Sharlston were linked socially, and further noted the proximity of Sharlston village to Streethouse and Old Snydale villages in Featherstone parish.

79 However, we decided to adopt the Conservatives' proposal to include the Birkwood Avenue area of Crofton parish in the proposed Featherstone ward. We concurred with the view of the Conservatives that it would better reflect local community identities for this area, which geographically forms part of Sharlston village, to be included in the same ward as Sharlston. The proposed ward boundary would run from the A645 Weeland Road as far south as Birkwood Grange Farm on West Lane, and extend as far west as Birkwood House Farm.

80 We also noted that our proposals would result in the creation of relatively over-represented Ackton Pasture and Western Gales Way wards of Featherstone parish and a similarly over-represented East ward of Crofton parish, although substantial electoral growth is forecast in Ackton Pasture parish ward by 2006. However, the District Council indicated that it intends addressing the issue of parish boundary anomalies in a parish review following the completion of this PER. We were therefore content to put forward these amendments as part of our draft recommendations to provide in our view the best available reflection of community identities and interests in the affected areas. Finally, we noted that such a parish review may consider the status of Newland with Woodhouse Moor parish, which contains no electors, as well as the amendment put forward by a resident of Warmfield cum Heath parish affecting a small number of properties on the A638 Doncaster Road.

81 Under the draft recommendations, Featherstone ward (comprising Sharlston parish, the proposed East parish ward of Crofton parish and all of Featherstone parish except the proposed Ackton Pasture and Western Gales Way parish wards) would have 10% more electors per councillor than the district average (8% more by 2006). Normanton ward (comprising the parishes of Newland with Woodhouse Moor and Warmfield cum Heath, all of Normanton parish except Altofts parish ward, the proposed Western Gales Way parish ward of Featherstone parish and part of the Castleford unparished area) would have 2% fewer electors per councillor than the district average (2% more by 2006).

82 At Stage Three the District Council supported the adoption in the draft recommendations of its Stage One proposals for this part of the district, making no comment on Crofton parish. However, Bill O'Brien MP, two Altofts residents and a Normanton town councillor opposed the draft recommendations for the north of the district. All but one of the residents supported the Stage One 66-member proposals for the north of the district by Normanton Constituency Labour Party, Bill O'Brien MP and others. Bill O'Brien MP stated that the 'vast majority' of his constituents supported the proposals. The remaining resident concurred with the view expressed at Stage One by a number of respondents that the Normanton Common area of Normanton parish did not identify with Castleford town.

83 Crofton Parish Council stated that it had 'no great objection' to the draft recommendation to include the Birkwood Avenue area of the parish in the proposed Featherstone ward with

Sharlston parish, provided that this proposal did not require the creation of an over-represented parish ward. The Parish Council noted 'that this does not seem to be a practical arrangement for what will hopefully be a short period of time, until the parish boundaries can be realigned,' It suggested instead that one of the existing 13 parish councillors could be allocated responsibility for the Birkwood Avenue area.

84 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to confirm the draft recommendation for the proposed Featherstone and Normanton wards, subject to one minor amendment. Our decision to confirm the draft recommendation for a 63-member council limited the extent to which proposals by Bill O'Brien MP and others, based on a 66-member council, could be taken into consideration.

85 We note that Crofton Parish Council did not support the creation of a relatively over-represented parish ward in the Birkwood Avenue area, considering that this would not provide effective and convenient local government at parish level, even as a short-term measure prior to a review of parish boundaries conducted by the District Council. There is no provision in legislation for us to allocate temporary responsibility for the Birkwood Avenue area to an existing parish councillor, as suggested by the Parish Council, since we can only propose dividing a parish between different district wards if we also divide that parish into parish wards. We therefore propose that Crofton parish be wholly included in the proposed Crofton, Ryhill & Walton ward, which would also result in a slight improvement to electoral equality in both wards.

86 Under the final recommendations, Featherstone ward (comprising Sharlston parish and all of Featherstone parish except the proposed Ackton Pasture and Western Gales Way parish wards) would have 9% more electors per councillor than the district average (7% more by 2006). Normanton ward (comprising the parishes of Newland with Woodhouse Moor and Warmfield cum Heath, all of Normanton parish except Altofts parish ward, the proposed Western Gales Way parish ward of Featherstone parish and part of the Castleford unparished area) would have 2% fewer electors per councillor than the district average (2% more by 2006). Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2, Map A1 and the large maps.

### **(b) Castleford Ferry Fryston, Castleford Glasshoughton and Castleford Whitwood wards**

87 The town of Castleford lies in the north-east of the district, to the north of the M62, and is unparished. It is represented by three three-member wards: Castleford Ferry Fryston ward, situated in the east of the town; Castleford Glasshoughton ward, in the centre of the town; and Castleford Whitwood ward, to the west. Castleford Whitwood ward also includes the Normanton Common parish ward of Normanton parish. Castleford Ferry Fryston and Castleford Whitwood wards are currently over-represented, with 19% and 16% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (21% fewer and 17% fewer by 2006). Castleford Glasshoughton ward has 10% fewer electors per councillor than the average both now and in 2006.

88 At Stage One, the District Council put forward revised Castleford Ferry Fryston, Castleford Glasshoughton and Castleford Whitwood wards, to be renamed Airedale & Ferry Fryston ward, Castleford Central & Glasshoughton ward and Altofts & Whitwood ward respectively. The proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward would comprise the western part of Castleford, subject to amendments as outlined below; the Altofts parish ward of Normanton parish (comprising the village of Altofts, currently in Stanley & Altofts ward), and the Ackton Pasture area (part of Featherstone parish to the north of the M62 and currently in Featherstone ward). As previously discussed, the Normanton Common parish ward of Normanton parish (currently in Castleford Whitwood ward) would be transferred to a revised Normanton district ward.

89 Under the District Council's proposals, all of the existing Altofts & Whitwood ward to the east of (and including) Barnes Road and Beaucroft Road, to the east of the A655 Albion Street and Wood Street, and to the south of the A6032 Saville Road, would be transferred to Castleford



Central & Glasshoughton ward. Further south, the ward boundary would be adjusted to follow the line of the planned Coalfields Link Road, transferring a small number of properties on Flass Lane and the A639 Leeds Road from Castleford Central & Glasshoughton ward to Altofts & Whitwood ward.

90 The District Council also proposed to transfer to Airedale & Ferry Fryston ward all of the existing Castleford Central & Glasshoughton ward to the east of (and including) Redhill Drive, together with Park View, Spital Hardwick Lane, and No's 199-221 and the Airedale Hotel on the B6136 Holywell Lane. It also proposed to resolve the current division of the Healdfield Road area between these two wards by placing all of it in Castleford Central & Glasshoughton ward. Finally, the District Council proposed to adjust the boundary between Airedale & Ferry Fryston ward and the existing Knottingley ward to follow the planned A1 link road. This would result in the transfer of a small number of properties on Fryston Lane to Airedale & Ferry Fryston ward.

91 The District Council noted the over-representation of the Castleford area and the under-representation of the existing Normanton & Sharlston, Stanley & Altofts and Stanley & Wrenthorpe wards to the west. It considered that its proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward would facilitate improved electoral equality in the north of the district by transferring the village of Altofts from the under-represented area to the over-represented area. The District Council stated that, 'whilst the residents of the village look to Normanton for some facilities, Altofts tends to be fairly self-contained and insular. It is partially isolated by motorways and rivers, even though it is part of the civil parish of Normanton.' Similarly, it noted the separation of Altofts from the remainder of the existing Stanley & Altofts ward (the Stanley and Outwood unparished area) by the River Calder and the Aire & Calder Navigation canal, with only one crossing point within the existing ward. The District Council concluded that, 'seeking to improve electoral equality' and 'anxious to avoid the splitting of established communities', it had 'attempted, in a tight urbanised area, to keep clear defined boundaries, that will be in place for many years to come.'

92 On a 60-member council, the Conservatives' proposals substantially differed from those of the District Council, but also placed Altofts and the Whitwood area of Castleford in a single district ward. Yvette Cooper MP supported the District Council's proposals in this area. She considered that the Europort and neighbouring commercial developments by the M62 linked Altofts with the Whitwood area of Castleford and that these links are stronger than those with Stanley in the existing Stanley & Altofts ward. She expressed the view that the District Council's proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward would better reflect community identities and interests in this part of the district than the further division of the Normanton urban area between district wards.

93 Normanton Constituency Labour Party, Bill O'Brien MP and nine district residents put forward proposals based upon a council size of 66, although a complete warding pattern was not provided. They opposed the proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward, stating that Altofts village 'is undeniably identified with the town of Normanton and in no way ... with the town of Castleford.' It was considered that an exception to the aim of achieving electoral equality should be made in this area, such as had been proposed by the District Council and the Conservatives for Knottingley ward, to ensure the best reflection of community identities and interests. A Normanton town councillor, representing Altofts parish ward, also stated that the M62 and the Europort commercial area separated Whitwood from Altofts, which looked to Normanton for shops, services, schools and social activities. Normanton Town Council noted the concerns of town councillors representing Altofts that community identities and interests would not be reflected.

94 We based our draft recommendations in this area on the District Council's proposals. As a result of our proposal to retain a 63-member council, we were only able to give limited further consideration to 60-member proposals by the Conservatives and 66-member proposals by Normanton Constituency Labour Party and others.

95 Assuming that the Ackton Pasture area of Featherstone parish is transferred to Castleford for district warding purposes (see the previous section of this report for details of this proposal), we noted that on a council size of 63, Castleford town is entitled to 7.5 councillors now and 7.6 councillors in 2006. Since in practice we can only recommend three-member wards in metropolitan authorities, to provide good electoral equality in the town we had to propose a ward that includes an area that is not part of Castleford. We noted that this would remain the case under Normanton Constituency Labour Party's proposed council size of 66.

96 We noted that the M62 separates Castleford town from the rest of the district, with the exception of the existing Knottingley ward to the east. However, like Castleford, Knottingley is also slightly over-represented on a 63-member council. This means that there is no means of providing good electoral equality in Castleford without putting forward a district ward that would cross the M62. While we acknowledged the view of a number of respondents that the motorway divides communities in this area, we noted that towns and villages to the north and south – including Altofts and Castleford – are linked by major roads and railway lines.

97 We therefore examined those areas to the south of the M62 to assess their suitability for inclusion in a ward with part of Castleford. We concluded that the transfer of any part of the Featherstone, Normanton or Pontefract urban areas would neither reflect community identities nor prove effective and convenient for the affected electors, since it would result in a ward comprising fragments of two larger urban areas. Indeed, we noted that this is currently the case in Castleford Whitwood ward, which includes the Normanton Common parish ward of Normanton parish. As discussed in the preceding section of this report, we therefore adopted a proposal to include Normanton Common in a revised Normanton ward as part of our draft recommendations.

98 We noted that the village of Altofts could be included in a district ward with part of Castleford to reduce the over-representation of the town, without dividing the village between wards. Having visited the area, we acknowledged the view of a number of respondents that Altofts' primary social and commercial ties are with Normanton rather than Castleford, and noted that it forms part of Normanton parish. We also conceded that the proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward would not provide an optimal reflection of the village's identity and interests. However, we were not convinced that services and social arrangements would necessarily be disrupted by the District Council's proposal, particularly as Altofts is currently in a different district ward (Stanley & Altofts) to the remainder of Normanton. We also noted the view of the District Council that Altofts is a discrete community separated from Normanton town by the Wakefield to Castleford railway line and, having visited the area, would add that there is good road access between Altofts and the western part of Castleford.

99 We also stated that we were unable to consider any area in isolation and took the view that the linkage of Altofts and Whitwood would make a significant contribution to improving electoral equality across the north of the district, given the under-representation of a number of existing wards to the west such as Stanley & Altofts and the current over-representation of the Castleford area. Further, while we noted the comments of Normanton Constituency Labour Party, Bill O'Brien MP and others, we stated that we could take no account of existing parliamentary constituency boundaries in recommending new district wards.

100 Having accepted the linkage of Altofts and Whitwood, we put forward the District Council's proposals for the remainder Castleford as part of our draft recommendations, subject to amendments to improve electoral equality. We noted the support of Yvette Cooper MP and the local consensus-building consultation undertaken by the District Council. We proposed that all of the proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward to the east of Bryan Close and to the north of the Wakefield to Castleford railway line be transferred to the proposed Castleford Central & Glasshoughton ward, affecting a mixed residential and industrial area centred on the A6032 Methley Road. Further to the east, we also proposed that the following roads be transferred to the proposed Airedale & Ferry Fryston ward from the proposed Castleford Central &

Glasshoughton ward: Quarrydene Drive; Redhill Mount; Redhill Road; Towers Paddock; West Mead; and West View Avenue. Having visited these areas we considered that the above amendments would improve electoral equality in Castleford while providing well-defined ward boundaries.

101 We also proposed revised boundaries between the proposed wards of Altofts & Whitwood and Castleford Central & Glasshoughton, and the proposed wards of Airedale & Ferry Fryston and Knottingley, where the District Council proposed that these follow planned link roads. We are required to adhere to existing ground detail where possible and therefore put forward alternative boundaries that broadly followed the intention of the District Council, although we propose to include all properties on Flass Lane and no. 80 Leeds Road in the proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward and to retain all properties on Fryston Lane in Knottingley ward. Finally, we also put forward a number of minor amendments to tie proposed ward boundaries to ground detail, which affect no electors.

102 Under our draft recommendations, Airedale & Ferry Fryston ward and Castleford Central & Glasshoughton ward (each comprising part of the Castleford unparished area) would have 1% and 3% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (both 3% fewer by 2006). Altofts & Whitwood ward (comprising the western part of Castleford, the Altofts parish ward of Normanton parish and the proposed Ackton Pasture parish ward of Featherstone parish) would have 6% fewer electors per councillor than the average (1% fewer by 2006).

103 At Stage Three the District Council supported the draft recommendations for Castleford, subject to only two minor amendments. It reiterated its Stage One proposal that the boundary between the proposed Altofts & Whitwood and Castleford Central & Glasshoughton wards follow the line of the planned Coalfields Link Road. Second, the District Council proposed that the boundary between Airedale & Ferry Fryston and Knottingley wards be adjusted to run to the west of properties on Fryston Lane. This would affect no electors, but would enable the inclusion in Castleford Ferry Fryston ward of projected residential build on Hillcrest Avenue and Hillcrest Mount. Yvette Cooper MP, Councillor Burns-Williamson (Castleford Glasshoughton) and Councillor Groves (Castleford Ferry Fryston ward) supported the District Council's response to the draft recommendations.

104 Bill O'Brien MP, a Normanton town councillor and two local residents opposed the proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward. Respondents stated that there was no local support for the proposal, Bill O'Brien MP noting in particular the opposition of affected Labour party branches to the proposed ward. Together with a local resident he therefore considered that a referendum should be held on the draft recommendations. As at Stage One, it was argued that the village of Altofts identifies with and uses services in Normanton town rather than Castleford town, from which it is separated by the M62 and the Europort industrial area. Bill O'Brien MP considered that the proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward neither reflected community identities and interests nor provided effective and convenient local government, and therefore contravened the provisions of the Local Government Act 1992 (as outlined on page 13 of this report).

105 Both Bill O'Brien MP and the Normanton town councillor argued that the Boundary Committee should be consistent in its use of the M62 as a potential ward boundary. It was noted that the proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward included areas to the north and south of the motorway to provide for electoral equality, but that the proposed Knottingley ward, which was slightly over-represented, did not do so. Bill O'Brien also cited paragraph 7.4 of the Committee's *Guidance*, which states that we attach 'considerable importance to obtaining locally derived proposals that are enduring, have been subject to local consultation, and on which there is a measure of local agreement.' Bill O'Brien considered that the consultation conducted by the District Council on its Stage One proposals had not been adequate because it had not taken opposition to the proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward into account.

106 Bill O'Brien MP and one of the above residents therefore supported the Stage One proposals for the north of the district by Normanton Constituency Labour Party and others. Their proposals were based on a 66-member council, and as previously stated did not include full details of a warding pattern for this area. Bill O'Brien MP considered that these proposals would reduce the over-representation of the Castleford area without requiring the inclusion of Altofts in the proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward. As previously noted, supporters of a 66-member council made a number of criticisms of the review process, a number of which directly concern the draft recommendations in this area. The local resident suggested that the Leader of the Council and other district councillors had influenced the Boundary Committee's proposals for Altofts. Bill O'Brien MP also considered that the District Council had been at an advantage in putting forward proposals to the Committee because of the superior resources available to it.

107 We have carefully considered the views received at Stage Three, noting that there has been some local opposition to the proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward. We would emphasise that we give equal consideration to all representations, regardless of their origin. We therefore took no preconceived view on the most appropriate pattern of district wards for this area, but rather formulated our draft and final recommendations based upon the evidence that had been made available to us. As previously stated, there is no provision in legislation for the Boundary Committee to carry out a referendum on its proposals for revised electoral arrangements in any local authority. We further note Bill O'Brien MP's comment regarding the difference in available resources between the District Council and other interested parties, but are unable to take this issue into consideration as part of this review.

108 Bill O'Brien MP has stated that a 66-member council would enable us to recommend wards in Castleford town that would contain no area situated to the south of the M62 such as Altofts, but which would provide for acceptable electoral equality in Castleford. However, when determining council size, we consider in the first instance the most appropriate number of councillors for the local authority as a whole, rather than issues pertaining to individual wards. Our decision to confirm the draft recommendation to retain the existing 63-member council, as discussed on pages 26-28, has thus limited the extent to which proposals for this part of the district, based on a council size of 66, could be taken into consideration.

109 Further, we note that a 66-member council would *not* resolve the problem of how to achieve electoral equality in Castleford without including an area to the south of the M62. Under this council size, Castleford (plus Ackton Pasture) would be entitled to 7.8 councillors now and 7.9 in 2006. If the electorate in this area were divided equally into three three-member wards, each of these wards would therefore be over-represented on a 66-member council, with 13% fewer electors per councillor than the average for the district as a whole and 12% fewer by 2006.

110 In our draft recommendations report, we noted the evidence provided at Stage One of community ties between Altofts village and Normanton town, based on local identities, parish ties and the use of shops and services in the town by Altofts residents. Respondents at Stage Three have reiterated much of this evidence, and we would again acknowledge that the proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward does not provide an optimal reflection of the village's identity and interests. Nonetheless, we have received no further evidence at Stage Three that the inclusion of Altofts in a ward with part of Castleford is an intrinsically poorer reflection of community identities and interests than its inclusion in the existing Stanley & Altofts ward with Stanley and the eastern part of Outwood. While respondents have reiterated views expressed at Stage One concerning the separation of Altofts from Castleford by the M62 and the Europort industrial estate, we also note that Altofts is also separated from Stanley by open country and the River Calder.

111 However, we have received no alternative proposals for the village of Altofts based on a 63-member council and no other suggestion as to how to address the over-representation of Castleford town to the east. Further, no other area of the district has been nominated for inclusion in a ward with part of Castleford. Similarly, we have received no alternative proposal to

improve the under-representation of the existing Stanley & Altofts and Stanley & Wrenthorpe wards to the west, except through the transfer of Altofts village to the proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward. We further note that despite their community ties, the combined electorate of Altofts and Normanton town is too large for a single three-member ward, but too small for two three-member wards.

112 While we may recommend wards that are slightly over-represented or under-represented to better reflect community identities and interests and provide effective and convenient local government, we cannot wholly disregard our other statutory aim of achieving electoral equality. Accordingly, we cannot examine any area in isolation, but must consider the knock-on effects of any amendment to our proposals. As noted in the following section of this report, the slight over-representation of the proposed Knottingley ward does not adversely affect the achievement of electoral equality across the rest of the district. Conversely, it has been noted that the proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward would facilitate the achievement of electoral equality across much of the north of the district.

113 Under these circumstances, we have therefore found it impossible to identify a means of providing a better balance between all three statutory criteria in the north of the district than the draft recommendations. We have therefore decided to confirm the draft recommendation for the proposed Airedale & Ferry Fryston, Altofts & Whitwood and Castleford Central & Glasshoughton wards, subject to a minor amendment affecting no electors. With the exception of the Altofts area, we note that our proposals have received some local support. We have been persuaded to adopt the District Council's revised boundary between Airedale & Ferry Fryston and Knottingley wards, considering that this would prevent the inclusion in Knottingley ward of projected residential development on the eastern edge of Castleford.

114 However, we have not been convinced by the District Council's proposal to amend the proposed boundary between Altofts & Whitwood and Castleford Central & Glasshoughton wards to follow the planned Coalfield Link Road. As noted in our draft recommendations report, we are required to adhere to the existing ground detail where possible, and this road has not yet been built. Our final recommendations would provide the same levels of electoral equality as the draft recommendations, and are illustrated on Map 2, Map A1 and the large maps.

### **(c) Knottingley ward, Pontefract North ward and Pontefract South ward**

115 The towns of Knottingley and Pontefract are situated in the north-east of the district and are unparished. Knottingley is situated to the east of Castleford and to the north of the M62 and is represented by a single three-member ward of the same name. Pontefract is situated to the south of Castleford and the motorway and is represented by three-member Pontefract North and Pontefract South wards, with Pontefract South ward also including the parishes of Darrington and East Hardwick. Under existing arrangements, Knottingley ward has 10% fewer electors per councillor than the district average (12% fewer by 2006). Pontefract North and Pontefract South wards have 11% more and 8% fewer electors per councillor than the average respectively (11% more and 11% fewer by 2006).

116 At Stage One, the District Council proposed to broadly retain the existing Knottingley ward subject to the following minor amendments. It considered that Knottingley ward, situated in the north-east corner of the district, has clearly defined boundaries in the form of the M62 to the south and the A1 and Ferrybridge Power Station to the west. The District Council stated that the Knottingley community has its own identity and interests, which in its view would be best reflected by the retention of the existing ward, despite the slight over-representation forecast by 2006. It therefore proposed that the western and southern ward boundaries be adjusted to follow the planned A1 link road and the M62 respectively, resulting in the transfer of a small number of electors on Fryston Lane to the proposed Airedale & Ferry Fryston ward (as discussed in the previous section) and two properties on Grovehall Lane to a revised Pontefract South ward.

117 The District Council proposed to improve electoral equality in Pontefract by transferring to a revised Pontefract South ward all of the existing Pontefract North ward to the east of the Sheffield to York railway line and to the south of Baghill Lane, affecting an area known as 'Harewood Park'. It also proposed to include in Pontefract South ward a rural part of Ackworth parish to the east of the Sheffield to York railway line (currently in Crofton & Ackworth ward). The District Council stated that this would provide a clearly defined ward boundary, and that the few electors in this area looked towards 'Pontefract for major facilities and to East Hardwick [village] for more social amenities.'

118 Finally, the District Council proposed uniting the village of Wentbridge by transferring that part of the village in Darrington parish to a revised South Elmsall ward. Wentbridge is currently divided between three parishes; Darrington parish is in Pontefract South ward, while North Elmsall and Thorpe Audlin parishes are in South Elmsall ward. The District Council stated that proposals had been made to unite the village in either district ward, and that neither would significantly affect electoral equality in this area. However, it considered that the inclusion of all of Wentbridge in South Elmsall ward reflected local preferences, as expressed in a previous petition by local residents to the District Council.

119 The Conservatives put forward proposals based on a council size of 60, entailing the retention of Knottingley ward on its existing boundaries. They expressed similar views to those of the District Council concerning this area. They also concurred with the proposal to include part of Ackworth parish in a revised Pontefract South ward, although they put forward their own revised ward boundary in this area. However, the Conservatives opposed the District Council's proposals for the Pontefract area, and while they agreed that Wentbridge village should be united in a single ward, they considered that this should be Pontefract South ward.

120 The Liberal Democrats put forward similar proposals in the Pontefract urban area to those of the District Council. Yvette Cooper MP generally supported the District Council's proposals, but together with a Wentbridge resident proposed the inclusion of all of Wentbridge village in Pontefract South ward. Jon Trickett MP supported the District Council's proposal to transfer the eastern part of Ackworth parish to Pontefract South ward. Finally, Upton & North Elmsall Parish Council and Upton & North Elmsall History Group supported the retention of the existing South Elmsall ward, but did not specifically comment on Wentbridge.

121 We adopted the District Council's proposals in this area subject to minor amendments. We noted the apparent consensus on the approximate retention of the existing Knottingley ward and concurred with the view of respondents that the town of Knottingley possesses clearly defined boundaries and forms a community distinct from Castleford and Pontefract. Noting that Knottingley ward would be over-represented by 2006, we examined alternative proposals to improve electoral equality. However, we considered that the inclusion of any part of Castleford or Pontefract in a ward with Knottingley would neither reflect community identities nor prove effective and convenient for the affected electors, as it would result in the division of a larger urban area. While Knottingley ward also borders Darrington parish in Pontefract South ward, we noted that Darrington village stands in close proximity to Pontefract and is partly contiguous with the Carleton area of the town.

122 Noting finally that the retention of the existing Knottingley ward would not affect the achievement of electoral equality elsewhere in the district due to its isolated position in the north-east, we were content that this proposal would provide the best available balance between the statutory criteria. However, as discussed in the preceding section of this report, we put forward a revised western ward boundary to follow existing ground detail that broadly followed the intention of the District Council, but would retain all electors on Fryston Lane in Knottingley ward.

123 We noted that under the existing arrangements Pontefract North ward is slightly under-represented, while Pontefract South ward is forecast to be slightly over-represented by 2006. We noted the opposition of the Conservatives, but considered that the District Council's

proposed amendment between Pontefract North and Pontefract South wards would improve electoral equality while allowing for the use of the Sheffield to York railway line as a stronger boundary than either the existing arrangements or the Liberal Democrats' similar proposals. We also put forward a minor amendment to the south of the M62 to ensure that the proposed boundary in this area between the wards of Knottingley, Pontefract North and Pontefract South would adhere to ground detail.

124 However, we noted that there was no agreement on the most appropriate warding arrangement for the village of Wentbridge, which is currently divided between three parishes and two district wards. We can only propose dividing a parish between different district council wards if we divide that parish into parish wards. Following a parish review, consequential district warding changes to place the village in a single ward may be requested of the Electoral Commission. We were also mindful of the District Council's intention to conduct a parish review following the completion of the PER. In view of the conflicting evidence on local preferences we were reluctant to adopt district ward proposals for this area that may pre-empt a decision on which parish should include the entire village. After careful consideration we therefore proposed to retain the existing district ward boundary in this area.

125 We noted that the rural area of Ackworth parish to be included in Pontefract South ward under the District Council's proposals contains only 100 electors and would require the creation of a substantially over-represented Ackworth parish ward. We were not convinced on the basis of the evidence received that this amendment would provide effective and convenient local government. We therefore proposed no change to the existing boundary of Pontefract South ward in this area.

126 Under our draft recommendations, Knottingley ward (comprising the Knottingley unparished area) would have 10% fewer electors per councillor than the district average (12% fewer by 2006). Pontefract North ward (comprising part of the Pontefract unparished area) would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor both now and in 2006. Pontefract South ward (comprising part of the Pontefract unparished area, and the parishes of Darrington and East Hardwick) would have 3% more electors per councillor than the average (equal to the average by 2006).

127 At Stage Three, the District Council supported the draft recommendations, where these reflected its Stage One proposals. As noted in the previous section of this report, it proposed a minor amendment affecting no electors between Airedale & Ferry Fryston and Knottingley wards, which was supported by Yvette Cooper MP, Councillor Burns-Williamson (Castleford Glasshoughton) and Councillor Groves (Castleford Ferry Fryston).

128 The Conservatives reiterated their view, expressed at Stage One, that Wentbridge village should be wholly included in Pontefract South ward. Yvette Cooper MP stated that 'if it is not possible to reach a consensus on this issue, I support the Boundary Committee's proposal to retain the current boundary.' The Liberal Democrats stated that they broadly supported the draft recommendations, particularly where they reflected its Stage One proposals, as was to some extent the case in Pontefract North and Pontefract South wards. Bill O'Brien MP proposed that electoral equality be improved in Knottingley ward by including the Myson Chair area of Pontefract, currently in Pontefract North ward.

129 East Hardwick Parish Council provided further evidence in support of the Stage One proposal by the District Council, the Conservatives and Jon Trickett MP to include part of Ackworth parish in Pontefract South ward. As at Stage One, it was considered that residents of this area identified with East Hardwick village. The Parish Council also noted that affected properties had 'East Hardwick postal addresses' and were situated in the ecclesiastical parish of East Hardwick, and stated that 'it had fallen to ... our parish council to help maintain the rural character' of this area. It considered, 'the provision of a clearly defined ward boundary of the Sheffield to York railway line would have gone a long way to avoiding the anomalies caused by

the [A639] bisecting our community.’ The Parish Council also supported the transfer of this part of Ackworth parish into East Hardwick parish, and expressed concern that this could not be achieved without prior amendment to the district warding pattern in this area. Ackworth Parish Council supported the draft recommendations, although it did not comment specifically on this issue.

130 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendation for the proposed Knottingley, Pontefract North and Pontefract South wards as final, except for two minor amendments. We note that the majority of our draft recommendations in this area have received some support. As outlined in the previous section of this report, we propose to adopt the District Council’s revised boundary between Airedale & Ferry Fryston and Knottingley wards, which would affect no electors. We are also amending the proposed boundary between Pontefract North and Pontefract South wards to unite properties on Grovehall Lane directly to the west of the A1M in Pontefract South ward. This amendment would only affect four electors, but would in our view better reflect community identities and interests.

131 While we acknowledge the view of the Conservatives that Wentbridge village should be wholly included in Pontefract South ward, we consider that we have received no new substantive evidence in support of this proposal. We have also not been persuaded on the basis of the evidence received that the proposal by Bill O’Brien MP to include the Myson Chair area of Pontefract town in Knottingley ward would sufficiently reflect community identities and interests as to provide an overall better balance between our three statutory criteria.

132 We remain concerned that the inclusion of part of Ackworth parish in Pontefract South ward would create a substantially over-represented parish ward for Ackworth Parish Council, and would not facilitate effective and convenient local government. Consequently, we are not adopting this proposal. However, we note that, following a review of parish boundaries undertaken by the District Council, consequential changes to district wards may be requested of the Electoral Commission. Our final recommendations would provide the same levels of electoral equality as the draft recommendations, and are illustrated on Map 2, Map A1 and the large maps.

## The south

### **(d) Hemsworth and South Kirkby wards**

133 Hemsworth and South Kirkby wards are situated in the south and south-east of the district and are each represented by three councillors. Hemsworth ward comprises all of Hemsworth parish (including Hemsworth town and the villages of Fitzwilliam and Kinsley) except the South parish ward, together with the parishes of Havercroft with Cold Hiendley and South Hiendley. South Kirkby ward comprises South Kirkby & Moorthorpe parish and the South parish ward of Hemsworth parish. Under existing arrangements, Hemsworth and South Kirkby wards have 8% fewer and 9% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively, both now and in 2006.

134 At Stage One, the District Council stated that electors in the South parish ward of Hemsworth, situated to the west of the B6273 Southmoor Road/Market Street and south of Barnsley Road, identify with Hemsworth rather than South Kirkby. Similarly, it noted that Hemsworth residents used town-centre facilities situated in the South parish ward. It therefore considered that the transfer of this area to Hemsworth district ward would best reflect community identities and interests while providing effective and convenient local government. The District Council acknowledged that the removal of this part of Hemsworth from the existing South Kirkby ward would lead to it being substantially over-represented, with 29% fewer electors per councillor than the district average both now and in 2006. The revised Hemsworth ward would



also be slightly under-represented, with 11% more electors per councillor than the average both now and in 2006.

135 However, the District Council considered that any further amendments to improve electoral equality would have a 'dramatic effect on other communities.' It therefore concluded that the Committee 'ought to be persuaded by the evidence' to include the South parish ward of Hemsworth parish in a revised Hemsworth district ward without further amendments to the existing South Kirkby ward or to existing wards elsewhere in the south of the district to improve electoral equality. The District Council noted that the adjacent settlements of Havercroft and Ryhill (in the parishes of Havercroft with Cold Hiendley and Ryhill) were divided by the boundary of the existing Crofton & Ackworth and Hemsworth wards. However, it stated that it did not wish to make proposals for change in this area until suitable warding arrangements for Hemsworth had been put forward.

136 The Conservatives' 60-member proposals substantially differed from those of the District Council, but concurred that the South parish ward of Hemsworth parish should be included in Hemsworth district ward. However, the Conservatives also proposed a new Kirkby & Elmsall ward combining South Kirkby & Moorthorpe parish with South Elmsall parish and the southern part of North Elmsall parish, currently in South Elmsall ward. They considered that the communities of South Elmsall and South Kirkby & Moorthorpe had 'effectively merged', with many residents using shops and services in both areas. Together with the Liberal Democrats, the Conservatives proposed to transfer Ryhill parish (currently in Crofton & Ackworth ward) to a revised Hemsworth ward, to unite it with the adjacent village of Havercroft.

137 Jon Trickett MP considered that it would be difficult in this area to reconcile the achievement of electoral equality with the reflection of community identities and interests. Hemsworth Town Council supported the District Council's proposals for this area. South Kirkby & Moorthorpe Town Council supported the retention of the existing South Kirkby ward, but supported as a second preference the District Council's proposals for this part of the district. Upton & North Elmsall Parish Council and Upton & North Elmsall History Group proposed to retain the existing South Elmsall ward.

138 We put forward our own proposals in this area, based in part on representations by the District Council, the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats and Hemsworth Town Council. Having visited the area, we considered that the existing division of Hemsworth parish between district wards does not reflect community identities and interests or provide effective and convenient local government. We therefore proposed to transfer the South parish ward of Hemsworth parish to a revised Hemsworth ward, as suggested by the District Council, the Conservatives and Hemsworth Town Council. We were not convinced on the basis of the evidence received by South Kirkby & Moorthorpe Town Council's view that Hemsworth electors currently obtain more effective and convenient representation from two district wards.

139 We proposed that the revised Hemsworth ward comprise the parishes of Hemsworth and South Hiendley. We noted that both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats proposed uniting Havercroft with Cold Hiendley parish with the contiguous community of Ryhill by including Ryhill parish in Hemsworth ward. However, we also noted that this would result in the further under-representation of the revised Hemsworth ward. We therefore proposed that the parish of Havercroft with Cold Hiendley be transferred to a new Crofton, Ryhill & Walton ward, as described in the following section.

140 Our *Guidance* states that we require particular justification for an electoral variance of over 10% in any ward, with imbalances of 20% and over arising only in exceptional circumstances and requiring the strongest justification. We did not consider that we had received sufficient substantive evidence to justify an over-representation of 29% in a revised South Kirkby ward, comprising only South Kirkby & Moorthorpe parish, following the transfer of the South parish ward of Hemsworth parish to Hemsworth district ward.

141 We therefore proposed a new South Elmsall & South Kirkby ward comprising the parishes of South Elmsall and South Kirkby & Moorthorpe, to some extent reflecting proposals by the Conservatives. We noted that this ward would be slightly under-represented, with a forecast electoral variance of 15% by 2006, but considered that this compares favourably with a variance of 29%. Having visited the area, we concurred with the view of the Conservatives that South Elmsall and South Kirkby & Moorthorpe parishes form a single urban area. We further noted their view that residents make use of local shops and services in both parishes.

142 While we also noted that the Minsthorpe area of North Elmsall parish formed part of the same urban area, the inclusion of this area in the proposed South Elmsall & South Kirkby ward would increase its under-representation. We further noted that North Elmsall parish comprises not only Minsthorpe, but also the village of North Elmsall and a significant part of the large village of Upton further to the north. The parishes of North Elmsall and Upton form a grouped parish council. We therefore considered that there is evidence to suggest that the Minsthorpe community identifies with these areas to the north, and that its exclusion from the proposed South Elmsall & South Kirkby ward would not adversely effect the provision of effective and convenient local government.

143 By facilitating the inclusion of all of Hemsworth parish and the settlements of Havercroft and Ryhill in single district wards we considered that our draft recommendations for this area provided a better balance between the statutory criteria than either the existing arrangements or the District Council's proposals. We also considered that our proposals would provide unified representation for the South Elmsall/South Kirkby urban area. Under our draft recommendations, Hemsworth ward (comprising the parishes of Hemsworth and South Hiendley) and South Elmsall & South Kirkby ward (comprising the parishes of South Elmsall and South Kirkby & Moorthorpe) would have 2% fewer and 11% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (2% fewer and 15% more by 2006).

144 At Stage Three, the District Council noted that a South Kirkby ward councillor was 'broadly in agreement' with the proposals, but made no further comment in relation to this area. The Liberal Democrats stated that they broadly supported the draft recommendations, particularly where they reflected its Stage One proposals, as was to some extent the case in the Havercroft and Ryhill area. Hemsworth Town Council supported the proposed Hemsworth ward, in particular the proposal to unite Hemsworth parish in a single ward.

145 As discussed in more detail in the following section of this report, Upton & North Elmsall Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations for the south-east of the district. In particular, it opposed the inclusion of South Elmsall parish in the proposed South Elmsall & South Kirkby ward. As at Stage One, the Parish Council noted its historical links with South Elmsall parish, considering that the effects of the draft recommendations on available funding for social projects, on schools, on businesses and on the Joint Burial Board in South Elmsall, South Kirkby & Moorthorpe and Upton would be 'disastrous.'

146 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to confirm the draft recommendation for the proposed Hemsworth and South Elmsall & South Kirkby wards as final. We note that our proposed wards have received a measure of local support. While we acknowledge the view of Upton & North Elmsall Parish Council, we do not consider that they have provided new substantive evidence in support of their proposals, and we are unable to take issues of regeneration funding into consideration when proposing new district warding arrangements. Further, we have not received details of an alternative scheme that would reflect the views of the Parish Council, unite Hemsworth parish in a single ward, and provide for good electoral equality in this area. Our final recommendations would provide the same levels of electoral equality as the draft recommendations, and are illustrated on Map 2, Map A1 and the large maps.

## **(e) Crofton & Ackworth and South Elmsall wards**

147 The wards of Crofton & Ackworth and South Elmsall are situated in the south and south-east of the district, broadly to the north of Hemsworth and South Kirkby wards, and are each represented by three councillors. Crofton & Ackworth ward comprises the parishes of Ackworth, Crofton, Hessle & Hill Top, Huntwick with Foulby & Nostell, Ryhill, West Hardwick and Winterset. South Elmsall ward comprises the parishes of Badsworth, North Elmsall, South Elmsall, Thorpe Audlin and Upton. Under existing arrangements, Crofton & Ackworth and South Elmsall wards have 3% more and 2% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (2% more and equal to the average by 2006).

148 At Stage One the District Council proposed to broadly retain the existing warding pattern in this area. It noted that both wards would provide good electoral equality and that this was forecast to continue by 2006. While the District Council noted that the adjacent settlements of Havercroft and Ryhill were currently divided by the existing Crofton & Ackworth/Hemsworth ward boundary, it stated that it did not wish to make proposals for change in this area until suitable warding arrangements for Hemsworth had been put forward. It therefore put forward only two minor amendments to the existing Crofton & Ackworth and South Elmsall wards.

149 As outlined in the preceding section of this report, the District Council proposed to transfer a small rural part of Ackworth parish to the east of the Sheffield to York railway line from Crofton & Ackworth ward to a revised Pontefract South ward. It also proposed to transfer part of Darrington parish from Pontefract South ward to South Elmsall ward to unite the village of Wentbridge in a single district ward. The District Council also referred to The Boundary Committee a suggestion to include the Hare Park area of Walton parish in Crofton & Ackworth ward, as discussed in the following section of this report.

150 The Conservatives' 60-member proposals substantially differed from those of the District Council, entailing a new Ackworth & Upton ward comprising parts of the existing Crofton & Ackworth and South Elmsall wards. However, they supported the District Council's proposed transfer of part of Ackworth parish to Pontefract South ward and the transfer of the Hare Park area of Walton parish to Crofton & Ackworth ward. Unlike the District Council, the Conservatives proposed that Wentbridge village be wholly included in Pontefract South ward, transferring Thorpe Audlin parish and part of North Elmsall parish from the existing South Elmsall ward. The Conservatives also proposed to include the Birkwood Avenue area of Crofton parish with Sharlston parish in a revised Featherstone ward. Finally, together with the Liberal Democrats, they proposed to include Ryhill parish in a revised Hemsworth ward.

151 Jon Trickett MP supported the District Council's proposed Crofton & Ackworth ward and the proposed transfer of the eastern part of Ackworth parish to a revised Pontefract South ward. However, he also expressed the view that Walton parish in Wakefield South ward is 'a former mining community and has more in common with Crofton and other villages to the east than it does with Sandal [part of Wakefield city in Wakefield South ward] and other areas of the city of Wakefield.' Yvette Cooper MP and a Wentbridge resident proposed the inclusion of all of Wentbridge village in Pontefract South ward. Upton & North Elmsall Parish Council and Upton & North Elmsall History Group proposed to retain the existing South Elmsall ward.

152 As discussed in the previous section of this report, in our draft recommendations we put forward a new South Elmsall & South Kirkby ward comprising South Elmsall parish and South Kirkby & Moorthorpe parish, to facilitate the inclusion of all of Hemsworth parish in a revised Hemsworth ward. While we noted the comments received from the District Council and other respondents opposing change to South Elmsall ward, we considered on the basis of the available evidence that our proposals for the parishes of Hemsworth, South Elmsall and South Kirkby would provide the best available balance between the statutory criteria in that part of the district.

153 However, we also noted that the remainder of the existing South Elmsall ward (the parishes of Badsworth, North Elmsall, Thorpe Audlin and Upton) would be significantly over-represented at district level without further amendment. We examined alternative warding options to improve electoral equality and concluded that the only available option was to combine these parishes with Ackworth parish to the north-west. Consequently, we proposed a new Ackworth, North Elmsall & Upton ward comprising the parishes of Ackworth, Badsworth, Hessle & Hill Top, Huntwick with Foulby & Nostell, North Elmsall, Thorpe Audlin, Upton and West Hardwick. This ward to some extent reflected the Conservatives' proposed Ackworth & Upton ward, allowing for the difference in proposed council size and our adoption of different proposals elsewhere in the district. We were not persuaded by the District Council's proposal to transfer parts of Ackworth or Walton parishes to other wards or by any of the proposals to unite Wentbridge village in a single ward.

154 We noted the view of Upton & North Elmsall Parish Council that the parishes of Upton and North Elmsall have no ties with Ackworth and acknowledged these concerns. However, we were unable to consider any area in isolation from the rest of Wakefield and considered that the proposed ward would facilitate the achievement of electoral equality and a better reflection of community identities in the south-east of the district, as described above.

155 We further noted that the proposed Ackworth, North Elmsall & Upton ward would link parishes situated on or near the A638 Doncaster to Wakefield road. The three parishes of Hessle & Hill Top, Huntwick with Foulby & Nostell and West Hardwick form a grouped parish council containing only 189 electors, and we considered that their inclusion in this ward would reflect their proximity to the town of Ackworth Moor Top. As discussed in the preceding section of this report, while the Minsthorpe area of North Elmsall parish forms part of the South Elmsall/South Kirkby urban area, we noted that its inclusion in the proposed South Elmsall & South Kirkby ward would increase the slight under-representation of this ward. As the parishes of North Elmsall and Upton form a grouped parish council, we also considered that there was evidence to suggest that the Minsthorpe community identifies to some extent with these areas to the north.

156 We proposed that the remainder of the existing Crofton & Ackworth ward, the parishes of Crofton (except the Birkwood Avenue area), Ryhill and Wintersett, form a new Crofton, Ryhill & Walton ward, together with the parishes of Chevet, Notton and Walton from the existing Wakefield South ward and Havercroft with Cold Hiendley parish from the existing Hemsworth ward. We noted the evidence of the District Council and Jon Trickett MP in support of the existing Crofton & Ackworth ward. However, we considered that the proposed Crofton, Ryhill & Walton ward would provide good electoral equality both now and in 2006, would unite the Havercroft/Ryhill area, would reflect those links between Walton and Crofton indicated by Jon Trickett MP and would separate the rural and urban areas of the existing Wakefield South ward. As previously discussed, we adopted the Conservatives' proposal to transfer the Birkwood Avenue area of Crofton parish to a revised Featherstone ward.

157 Under our draft recommendations, Ackworth, North Elmsall & Upton ward (comprising the parishes of Ackworth, Badsworth, Hessle & Hill Top, Huntwick with Foulby & Nostell, North Elmsall, Thorpe Audlin, Upton and West Hardwick) would have 3% more electors per councillor than the district average (2% more by 2006). Crofton, Ryhill & Walton ward (comprising the parishes of Chevet, Havercroft with Cold Hiendley, Notton, Ryhill, Walton and Wintersett and the proposed West parish ward of Crofton parish) would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor (1% fewer by 2006).

158 At Stage Three, the District Council made no specific comment in relation to this area. The Liberal Democrats stated that they broadly supported the draft recommendations, particularly where they reflected their Stage One proposals, as was to some extent the case in the Havercroft and Ryhill area. Ackworth Parish Council, Badsworth Parish Council and Upton & North Elmsall History Group supported the proposed Ackworth, North Elmsall & Upton ward.

Badsworth Parish Council noted that Badsworth 'is a mixed agricultural and residential village and thus has more in common with Ackworth than the ex-mining towns of South Kirkby and South Elmsall,' although it expressed concern that in the proposed ward it [the parish] would 'move to being a small area between two councils with differing interests [Ackworth and Upton].'

159 However, Upton & North Elmsall Parish Council opposed the proposed Ackworth, North Elmsall & Upton ward. As at Stage One, it stated that it had no links with Ackworth parish apart from being linked by the A638 from Wakefield to Doncaster. The Parish Council noted its historical links with South Elmsall parish, and considered that the effects of the proposal on available funding for social projects, on schools, on businesses and on the Joint Burial Board in South Elmsall, South Kirkby & Moorthorpe and Upton would be 'disastrous.'

160 As previously noted, Crofton Parish Council stated that it had 'no great objection' to the draft recommendation to include the Birkwood Avenue area of the parish in the proposed Featherstone ward with Sharlston parish, provided that this proposal did not require the creation of an over-represented parish ward in this area. The Parish Council noted 'that this does not seem to be a practical arrangement for what will hopefully be a short period of time, until the parish boundaries can be realigned,' It suggested instead that one of the existing 13 parish councillors could be allocated responsibility for the Birkwood Avenue area.

161 As previously discussed, the Conservatives proposed as at Stage One to transfer those parts of Wentbridge village in South Elmsall ward to Pontefract North ward. Yvette Cooper MP expressed a preference for the inclusion of Wentbridge in Pontefract North ward, but supported the draft recommendation to retain the existing ward boundary in this area. East Hardwick Parish Council provided further evidence in support of the District Council's, the Conservatives' and Jon Trickett MP's proposal at Stage One to transfer to Pontefract South part of Ackworth parish to the east of the Sheffield to York railway line.

162 Having carefully considered the representations received, we are proposing to confirm the draft recommendation for the proposed Ackworth, North Elmsall & Upton and Crofton, Ryhill & Walton wards as final, subject to only one amendment. As previously discussed, we are proposing to include all of Crofton parish in Crofton, Ryhill & Walton ward, rather than including the Birkwood Avenue area in Featherstone ward. We have been persuaded in this instance by the view of the Parish Council that this would not provide effective and convenient local government at parish council level.

163 While we acknowledge the view of Upton & North Elmsall Parish Council, we do not consider that it has provided new substantive evidence in support of its proposals, and we are unable to consider the issue of regeneration funding when proposing new district warding arrangements. Moreover, we note that we have not received details of an alternative scheme that would reflect the views of the Parish Council, unite Hemsworth parish in a single ward, and provide for good electoral equality in this area.

164 As previously stated, we have received no further evidence to convince us to depart from our draft recommendations in the Wentbridge area. Similarly, we remain unconvinced that the creation of an over-represented parish ward in Ackworth parish, to provide for its inclusion in Pontefract South ward, would provide effective and convenient local government. In both cases, we note that following a review of parish boundaries undertaken by the District Council consequential changes to district wards may be requested of the Electoral Commission.

165 Under our final recommendations, Ackworth, North Elmsall & Upton ward (comprising the parishes of Ackworth, Badsworth, Hessle & Hill Top, Huntwick with Foulby & Nostell, North Elmsall, Thorpe Audlin, Upton and West Hardwick) would have 3% more electors per councillor than the district average (2% more by 2006). Crofton, Ryhill & Walton ward (comprising the parishes of Chevet, Crofton, Havercroft with Cold Hiendley, Notton, Ryhill, Walton and

Winterset) would have 1% more electors per councillor than the average (equal to the average by 2006). Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2, Map A1 and the large maps.

## The city of Wakefield

### **(f) Wakefield Rural and Wakefield South wards**

166 The wards of Wakefield Rural and Wakefield South are situated in the south-west of the district and are each represented by three councillors. Wakefield Rural ward comprises the parishes of Crigglestone, Sitlington, West Bretton and Woolley, while Wakefield South ward comprises the southern part of the city of Wakefield, together with the parishes of Chevet, Notton and Walton. Under existing arrangements, Wakefield Rural and Wakefield South wards have 9% and 5% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (8% and 4% more by 2006).

167 At Stage One, the District Council proposed to broadly retain the existing Wakefield Rural and Wakefield South wards, subject to one significant amendment. It proposed that all of Wakefield South ward to the north of the Wakefield to Doncaster railway line be transferred to a revised Wakefield East ward, to unite the Agbrigg community in a single ward. The District Council considered that Agbrigg forms part of the Wakefield urban area and should therefore be included in a wholly urban ward, rather than the 'mainly rural' Wakefield South ward.

168 It also proposed to broadly retain the existing Wakefield Rural ward, noting that it is situated in the south-west corner of the district and bounded in the north by the River Calder, while those parishes adjoining the Wakefield urban area (Crigglestone and Sitlington) have an identity separate to that of the city. However, in the absence of local consensus the District Council referred two amendments to The Boundary Committee without recommendation. First, it was suggested that Woolley parish be transferred to Wakefield South ward to improve electoral equality in Wakefield Rural ward and link the parishes of Woolley and Notton, which were felt to be similar in character. Second, it was also suggested that the Newmillerdam area of Crigglestone parish be transferred from Wakefield Rural ward to Wakefield South ward to unite the Newmillerdam community and further improve electoral equality.

169 The District Council also referred to The Boundary Committee four possible minor amendments to Wakefield South ward: (a) the inclusion in Wakefield Central ward of Newlyn Drive to reflect access from Milnthorpe Lane (north); (b) the transfer from Wakefield Central ward of Castle Farm on Milnthorpe Lane (south); (c) the inclusion in a revised Crofton & Ackworth ward of the Hare Park area of Walton parish to reflect access from Crofton village; and (d) the inclusion in Wakefield Rural ward of a small number of properties in Notton parish on the A61 Barnsley Road and Seckar Lane.

170 Under the Conservatives' 60-member proposals, Wakefield Rural and Wakefield South wards would also be generally retained, subject to the inclusion of all of the Agbrigg area of the city in Wakefield East ward, as proposed by the District Council. They supported the District Council's minor amendments except (b), but opposed the suggested amendments in the Woolley and Newmillerdam areas.

171 Jon Trickett MP suggested that consideration be given to uniting Agbrigg in a single ward. He also expressed the view that Walton parish, 'a former mining community ... has more in common with Crofton and other villages to the East' than with the Sandal area of the city of Wakefield, part of Wakefield South ward. In turn, Jon Trickett MP considered that Sandal had more in common with the rest of the city. Crigglestone Parish Council supported the retention of the existing Wakefield Rural ward. Woolley Parish Council opposed the transfer of the parish from Wakefield Rural ward to Wakefield South ward, due to 'very strong' links with West Bretton parish in Wakefield Rural ward.

172 We put forward our own revised Wakefield South ward. As discussed in the previous section, our proposals for the south of the district included a new Crofton, Ryhill & Walton ward, which would include the parishes of Chevet, Notton and Walton from the existing Wakefield South ward. We noted that this would leave the remainder of Wakefield South ward, comprising the southern part of Wakefield city, substantially over-represented and therefore put forward amendments to improve electoral equality.

173 We therefore decided to provide for good electoral equality in the revised Wakefield South ward by recommending the inclusion of the Portobello area from the existing Wakefield Central ward and the northern part of the Agbrigg area from the existing Wakefield East ward. We proposed that Wakefield South ward include all of the city to the south of the junction of the A61 Barnsley Road and Portobello Road, to the south of the Sugar Lane allotment gardens, Wakefield City Cemetery, Regent Street, Wakefield Trinity Rugby League Football Ground and 186-190 Doncaster Road, and to the west of the A638 Doncaster Road and Charles Avenue. Under our proposals the north-west boundary of Wakefield South ward would be adjusted to follow the River Calder south to the existing boundary with Wakefield Rural ward.

174 We noted that the revised Wakefield South ward would comprise areas of Wakefield city that are different in character. However, we concurred with the view of Jon Trickett MP that the unparished area of the existing Wakefield South ward has more in common with the rest of the city than it does with Chevet, Notton and Walton parishes. We considered that as a result of the proposed transfer of these parishes to the new Crofton, Ryhill & Walton ward, Wakefield South ward would acquire a more urban character, to which the affected areas to the north could reasonably be added.

175 Further, we considered that the current warding arrangement, under which the Agbrigg community is divided between district wards and the Portobello area is separated from the rest of the existing Wakefield Central ward by the River Calder, neither reflects community identities or interests nor provides effective and convenient local government. We noted that there is support from the District Council, the Conservatives and Jon Trickett MP for the inclusion of Agbrigg in a single district ward. Having visited the area we were content that the revised Wakefield South ward would best meet our statutory criteria within the context of our proposals for the south of the district as a whole.

176 We based our draft recommendations for Wakefield Rural ward on the District Council's proposals, deciding to retain the ward on its existing boundaries. We considered that an arbitrary division of Crigglestone parish would be required to transfer sufficient electors to provide for improved electoral equality in the revised Wakefield South ward. We were also not convinced on the basis of the evidence received that such amendments would reflect community identities and interests. We were unable to give further consideration to the suggested transfer of Woolley parish to Wakefield South ward, as the parish would no longer border this ward under our proposals for a new Crofton, Ryhill & Walton ward. We also considered on the basis of the evidence received that retaining the parish in Wakefield Rural ward would best reflect the identity and interests of the Woolley community.

177 Finally, we noted that our proposals for Wakefield South ward would resolve two of the four minor amendments suggested by the District Council – (a) and (b) – by placing both sides of Milnthorpe Lane (north) and Milnthorpe Lane (south) in the same district ward. However, we did not adopt the remaining two amendments – (c) and (d) – affecting the parishes of Notton and Walton. We noted that both areas contain very few electors and that their transfer to another ward would require the creation of two highly over-represented parish wards, as we have no power to recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of a PER.

178 Under our draft recommendations, Wakefield South ward (comprising part of the city of Wakefield unparished area) would have 2% more electors per councillor than the district

average (1% more by 2006). Wakefield Rural ward (comprising the parishes of Crigglestone, Sitlington, West Bretton and Woolley) would have 9% more electors per councillor than the district average (8% more by 2006).

179 At Stage Three, the District Council supported the draft recommendation to retain the existing Wakefield Rural ward, which broadly reflected its Stage One proposals. It noted that it had received some local support for the existing ward in this area, and made no further comment on the suggested amendments that it had referred to The Boundary Committee at Stage One, affecting the parishes of Crigglestone, Notton and Woolley.

180 However, the District Council opposed the proposed Wakefield South ward. In particular, it did not support the inclusion of the Agbrigg and Portobello areas of Wakefield city in this ward. The District Council considered these areas to be 'intrinsic parts of the city of Wakefield' and that to place them 'into a relatively affluent rural ward is neither reasonable nor sensible. It will not secure effective and convenient local government, in fact it will destroy many programmes ... and worsen the situation that already exists.' The District Council also noted the concern of a number of district councillors that changes to ward boundaries would have repercussions on funding arrangements for deprived areas. The District Council acknowledged that these issues could not be taken into account as part of this review but nonetheless considered that 'the loss of funding for some of the most deprived areas of the city will affect the communities [such as Agbrigg and Portobello] so much that their identity will be lost, and their best interests not served.'

181 The District Council considered that the Agbrigg area (in the proposed Wakefield South ward) and the Belle Vue area immediately to the north (in the proposed Wakefield East ward) formed a single 'very tight close-knit' community. Concern was expressed that the proposed boundary between Wakefield East and Wakefield South wards in this area would divide 'the heart of the community in an apparently random fashion.' The District Council provided examples of a number of community initiatives that served both areas: the Belle Vue & Agbrigg Community Group and Community Centre; an allotments group; and a planned new neighbourhood nursery. It also noted that pupils from Agbrigg and Belle Vue attended the same school and that the city's Asian community lived throughout both areas, supported by the activities of the Wakefield Asian Welfare Association. The District Council also drew the attention of the Committee to the opposition of several of its own local consultees in Wakefield to the draft recommendations in this area.

182 The District Council therefore proposed that the Agbrigg area should be included with Belle Vue in Wakefield East ward, as it had suggested at Stage One. It also proposed that Portobello be included in another city ward to the north or west, but did not specify which ward that should be. The District Council considered that this revised warding pattern would reflect community identities and interests and provide more effective and convenient local government.

183 Like the District Council, the Conservatives also proposed to include the Agbrigg area with Belle Vue in Wakefield East ward, reflecting their Stage One proposals. However, unlike the District Council, the Conservatives supported the draft recommendation to transfer the Portobello area from Wakefield West ward to Wakefield South ward, taking the view that Portobello did not form part of the west of the town. They stated that the majority of residents of this area considered themselves as living in Sandal, the area of Wakefield South ward immediately to the south of Portobello, and many pupils from this area attended schools in Sandal. The Conservatives noted that the name 'Sandal' was often included in the postal address for Portobello. Finally they urged 'The Boundary Committee not to introduce new proposals to move parts of surrounding wards into the City [of Wakefield] or [Wakefield] South ward.'

184 Wakefield Constituency Labour Party supported the proposal to retain the existing Wakefield Rural ward. However, it opposed the proposed Wakefield South ward and considered



that Agbrigg should be included in Wakefield East ward and Portobello in Wakefield West ward, as under the District Council's Stage One proposals. The Constituency Labour Party expressed similar views to the District Council regarding the urban character of Agbrigg and Portobello, community ties between the Agbrigg and Belle Vue areas and the effect of the draft recommendations on regeneration funding for deprived areas. It also noted that the proposals would divide the Agbrigg/Belle Vue community between parliamentary constituencies and remove Agbrigg and Portobello from the Wakefield city area forum, which 'could jeopardise the development of ... programmes in some of the most deprived communities in the district.' North Wakefield Community Group expressed similar concerns to the District Council and the Constituency Labour Party regarding the availability of funding for community projects in Agbrigg and Portobello in Wakefield South ward, which was 'considered to be affluent.'

185 Woolley Parish Council supported the retention of the existing Wakefield Rural ward. As at Stage One, it emphasised the 'strong links' between the villages of West Bretton and Woolley, both in Wakefield Rural ward. The Parish Council stated that both fell within the same ecclesiastical parish and that there were links between Anglican and Methodist congregations in Woolley and West Bretton respectively. It also reiterated the view, expressed at Stage One, that Woolley did not have close ties with Notton parish in the proposed Crofton, Ryhill & Walton ward, noting that Notton village had no church. The Parish Council supported the inclusion in Woolley parish of a small part of Notton parish in the Seckar Lane / A61 Barnsley Road area, put forward at Stage One by the District Council.

186 We have given careful consideration to the representations received at Stage Three, and are proposing to confirm as final our draft recommendation to retain the existing Wakefield Rural ward, which we note has received some support. In particular, we note that Woolley Parish Council continues to support the inclusion of the parish in Wakefield Rural ward together with the neighbouring parish of West Bretton. We further note Woolley Parish Council's aim of amending the boundary between Notton and Woolley parishes, affecting a small number of electors. A review of parish boundaries lies within the remit of the District Council; consequential changes to district wards may be requested of The Electoral Commission.

187 In contrast, we note that the draft proposal to include the Agbrigg area of Wakefield city in Wakefield South ward has been generally opposed. We also note that there is no consensus as to whether the Portobello area of the city should be included in Wakefield South ward. We therefore re-examined our draft recommendations in the light of further evidence received at Stage Three.

188 Respondents have raised a number of issues for which we cannot have regard in making recommendations on revised electoral arrangements. As the District Council has noted, we cannot take into account the allocation of funding for deprived areas on a ward-by-ward basis, although we acknowledge that this is regarded locally as an important issue. We also do not regard postal addresses as a satisfactory indicator of community identities and interests. Finally, we take no account of existing parliamentary constituency boundaries in recommending new district wards. In practice, once new district wards are implemented, the (Parliamentary) Boundary Commission will take them into account in its ongoing Fifth General Review of Parliamentary Constituencies, as a result of which constituencies in Wakefield will change at some future point.

189 We further note that respondents opposing the proposed Wakefield South ward have placed considerably greater emphasis on the reflection of community identities and interests and the provision of effective and convenient local government than the achievement of electoral equality. Nonetheless, we cannot take any area in isolation, but are obliged to put forward proposals that in our view provide the best available balance between our three statutory criteria.

190 The removal of either Agbrigg or Portobello from Wakefield South ward would mean that the ward would have 15% fewer electors per councillor than the district average (16% fewer than

the average by 2006). The removal of both areas would mean that Wakefield South ward would have 32% fewer electors per councillor than the average (33% fewer than the average by 2006). As discussed in the following section of this report, we also note that the transfer of Agbrigg to Wakefield East ward would result in this ward becoming slightly under-represented. We were not persuaded that other amendments to Wakefield East ward proposed by the District Council to improve electoral equality would sufficiently reflect community identities and interests as to warrant their adoption.

191 Our *Guidance* states that we require particular justification for an electoral variance of over 10% in any ward, with imbalances of 20% and over arising in only exceptional circumstances and requiring the strongest justification. We do not consider that we have received sufficient substantive evidence to justify an over-representation of more than 30% in Wakefield South ward, if both Agbrigg and Portobello were transferred to other wards, as proposed by the District Council and the Wakefield Constituency Labour Party. If possible, we would also seek to avoid adopting revised Wakefield South and Wakefield East wards that reflected community identities and interests in one of either Agbrigg or Portobello, but which provided for good electoral equality in neither of the two wards.

192 As stated in our draft recommendations report, we note that Portobello and Agbrigg are different in character in a number of ways to the remainder of Wakefield South ward, comprising parts of the city such as Hill Top, Kettlethorpe, Milnthorpe, Pledwick, Sandal and Woolgreaves. It has been put to the Committee that the former are 'inner city' areas, whereas the latter are relatively affluent, although urban and unparished. It may be therefore that the inclusion of Portobello and Agbrigg in other district wards together with areas of the city regarded by respondents as being more similar in character would better reflect community identities and interests and provide more effective and convenient local government.

193 Nonetheless, we do not consider that much substantive evidence has been provided in support of this view. In particular, we note that we have received evidence that Portobello both looks to Sandal *as well as* to other parts of the city to the north and west. We have not been wholly persuaded by either point of view, but have concluded on this basis that there is a case for including Portobello in either Wakefield South ward or other city wards.

194 However, respondents *have* provided a considerable amount of evidence in support of the view that Agbrigg (in the proposed Wakefield South ward) and the adjoining area of Belle Vue (in the proposed Wakefield East ward) form a single community and should be included in the same ward. On the one hand, we therefore remain unconvinced that adjoining parts of Wakefield city such as Agbrigg and Sandal have so little in common that their separation should take precedence over all other aspects of our statutory criteria. On the other hand, we consider that the inclusion of Agbrigg and Belle Vue in the same ward would secure a substantially better reflection of community identities and interests, although this cannot be obtained under the District Council's proposals in a manner consistent with the achievement of electoral equality.

195 Attempting to reconcile our statutory criteria, we are therefore proposing a revised Wakefield South ward, broadly entailing the transfer of Portobello to Wakefield East ward and the inclusion of Belle Vue with Agbrigg in Wakefield South ward. The revised Wakefield South ward would thus extend as far north as the Fall Ings Cut of the River Calder, but would be bounded in the west by (from north to south) Sugar Lane, Woodcock Street, the A61 Barnsley Road, Manygates Lane and Milnthorpe Lane (northern part). We note that this proposed boundary would be reinforced at some points by open spaces such as the cemetery and allotment gardens on Sugar Lane.

196 We note that this does not wholly reflect the preference of the District Council and other respondents. However, we have sought to take into account new evidence at Stage Three that the draft recommendations did not reflect community identities and interests or provide effective and convenient local government in the Agbrigg and Belle Vue areas of the city. In the absence

of locally generated proposals that would provide for good electoral equality, we have had to put forward proposals of our own that would in our view achieve the best available balance between our three statutory criteria. We note that several respondents, including the District Council, argued that the identity of the Portobello community would be better reflected if it were not included in Wakefield South ward. Although this view was not consensual, we have been unable to identify another means of providing for acceptable electoral equality in Wakefield East and Wakefield South wards that would better reflect community identities and interests.

197 Under our final recommendations, Wakefield South ward (comprising part of the city of Wakefield unparished area) would have 5% fewer electors per councillor than the district average (6% fewer by 2006). Wakefield Rural ward (comprising the parishes of Crigglestone, Sitlington, West Bretton and Woolley) would have 9% more electors per councillor than the district average (8% more by 2006).

### **(g) Wakefield Central, Wakefield East and Wakefield North wards**

198 The three-member wards of Wakefield Central, Wakefield East and Wakefield North comprise all of the city of Wakefield not included in Wakefield South ward, and are primarily situated to the north of the River Calder. Under existing arrangements, Wakefield Central and Wakefield North wards have 3% and 4% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3% and 1% fewer by 2006). Wakefield East ward currently has 8% more electors per councillor than the average (7% more by 2006).

199 At Stage One, the District Council proposed to retain the existing warding pattern in this area subject to the following amendments. As described in the previous section, it proposed that Wakefield East ward include part of the existing Wakefield South ward to the north of the Wakefield to Doncaster railway line, which it noted would unite the Agbrigg community in Wakefield East ward. As this would result in Wakefield East ward becoming slightly under-represented, the District Council proposed to transfer parts of the city centre to Wakefield Central and Wakefield North wards. The District Council considered that this would reflect usage of city-centre facilities by electors from a large catchment area.

200 The District Council also proposed a number of further minor amendments, affecting a small number of electors. It proposed that 137-155 Wakefield Road (the A638) be transferred from the existing Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward to Wakefield North ward to reflect road access, and that a small part of the existing Ossett ward to the east of the M1 between Wakefield Road and Queens Drive be transferred to Wakefield North ward.

201 The Conservatives put forward proposals based on a 60-member council, which differed substantially in this area from those of the District Council. However, we noted that they proposed to unite the Northgate North area in the north-east of the town by including in a revised Wakefield North ward all of the existing Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward broadly to the south of the Fieldhead Hospital and west of the A642 Aberford Road. The Liberal Democrats proposed to rename Wakefield Central ward as 'Wakefield West', while a resident of Warmfield cum Heath parish proposed that a small area of the parish be included in Wakefield East ward.

202 We put forward our own proposals in the city of Wakefield, based to some extent on the existing warding pattern, which the District Council proposed to substantially retain. However, as outlined in the preceding section of this report, we proposed to transfer the Agbrigg area of the existing Wakefield East ward and the Portobello area of the existing Wakefield Central ward to a revised Wakefield South ward. In light of this, we put forward a number of consequential amendments to Wakefield Central, Wakefield East and Wakefield North wards to improve electoral equality in the city and better reflect community identities and interests in the city centre, Lupset and Northgate North areas. We also put forward a number of minor amendments to tie proposed ward boundaries to ground detail, which would affect no electors. Finally, since

our proposed Wakefield Central ward would not contain any part of the city centre, we adopted the Liberal Democrats' proposal to re-name this ward 'Wakefield West'.

203 We proposed first to adopt the Conservatives' proposal to unite the Northgate North area in Wakefield East ward, subject to amendments. We were not convinced that residential properties to the north of the Pinderfields General Hospital look to Wakefield rather than settlements to the north. We therefore proposed to transfer to Wakefield East ward only those properties to the south and west of (and including) the hospital. This would affect Eastmoor Road, roads immediately to the north of this street and residential development in the grounds of the Stanley Royd Hospital. We considered that electors in this area are likely to identify with adjacent residential streets to the south rather than areas further to the north from which they are separated by three hospitals, a prison officers' training school and open space.

204 Second, we proposed to improve electoral equality in Wakefield West ward by including in our proposed ward that part of the existing Wakefield North ward to the south of the A638 Dewsbury Road/Wakefield Road. We considered that this amendment would unite the Lupset community in a single district ward while making use of the A638 as a well-defined boundary in the west of the city. We also proposed to include in Wakefield West ward a small part of the existing Ossett ward to the east of the M1 between Wakefield Road and Queens Drive, and 137-155 Wakefield Road (currently in Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward), rather than Wakefield North ward as proposed by the District Council, due to the proximity of residential properties in Wakefield West ward.

205 To improve electoral equality in Wakefield North ward, we also put forward further amendments. Firstly, we proposed that Wakefield North ward include that part of the existing Wakefield East ward to the west of the A61 Marsh Way, broadly comprising the city centre area. We noted the view of the District Council that the proposed division of the city centre between district wards would reflect the usage of its facilities by electors from the surrounding wards. However, we considered that representation in a single ward would be more effective and convenient for residents of this area, and that the Marsh Way ring road forms a well-defined boundary to the east. To the west of the city centre, we also proposed that Wakefield North ward include from Wakefield West ward an area to the east of the A642 Horbury Road, to the north of (and including) Brighton Street and Claremont Terrace, and to the north of Park Avenue and that part of Lawefield Lane which borders Clarence Park.

206 To the north-west of the city, we proposed that the revised Wakefield North ward also include the Willow Lane estate to the south of the Alverthorpe Beck, the proposed residential development on the Alverthorpe Mills site, Tyrell Court and 10 and 37-45 Flanshaw Lane, from the existing Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward. Finally, we proposed a number of minor amendments to the northern ward boundary of Wakefield North to reflect road access and ground detail. These amendments would entail the inclusion of all of Gentian Court in a new Wrenthorpe & Outwood East ward, as described in the following section, the inclusion of all of Whitehill Rise in Wakefield North ward, and the transfer of Newton Gardens and several commercial properties on the A61 Leeds Road in the Newton Hill area to a new Stanley & Outwood East ward to reflect access.

207 Under our draft recommendations, Wakefield East, Wakefield North and Wakefield West wards (each comprising part of the city of Wakefield unparished area) would have 6% fewer, 8% fewer and 5% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (4%, 5% and 5% fewer by 2006).

208 At Stage Three, the District Council opposed the draft recommendations for Wakefield city, considering that they would neither provide effective and convenient local government nor reflect community identities and interests in a number of areas. It therefore proposed amendments which reflected comments by individual district councillors, a number of which were identical to the District Council's Stage One proposals.

209 As discussed in the previous section of this report, the District Council reiterated its Stage One proposal that the Agbrigg area of the city should be included in Wakefield East ward rather than in Wakefield South ward, as put forward in the draft recommendations. It considered that Agbrigg and the neighbouring area of Belle Vue (in the proposed Wakefield East ward) constituted a single community and should be represented by the same district ward. The District Council suggested that good electoral equality could be provided for in Wakefield East ward, following the inclusion of the Agbrigg area, by the transfer to Stanley & Outwood East ward of future residential development on the site of the Stanley Royd Hospital, which it considered would have 'less in common with the rest of the ward' than Agbrigg. However, it noted that several councillors supported the draft recommendation to transfer the Eastmoor Road area to Wakefield East ward, and did not propose that this amendment be reversed.

210 The District Council also noted that electoral equality could be improved in the revised Wakefield East ward following the inclusion of Agbrigg by transferring the Pinders Heath area in the north-east of the city to Stanley & Outwood West. However, no details of this proposal were provided, and we were unable to take it into consideration for the purpose of determining the electoral equality that the District Council's proposed Wakefield East ward would provide. The District Council also proposed to transfer the Southern Washlands open space to the east of the city and north of the River Calder from Stanley & Outwood East ward to Wakefield East ward. This amendment would affect no electors but would reflect the usage of the land for recreation by residents of the Eastmoor estate immediately to the west. Finally, the District Council reiterated the Stage One proposals by a local resident to include several properties in Warmfield cum Heath parish on the A638 Doncaster Road in Wakefield East ward.

211 In the west of the city, the District Council opposed the draft recommendation to transfer the Lawefield Lane area from Wakefield West ward to Wakefield North ward. It noted the view of a councillor that the existing ward boundary of the A638 Westgate separated residential areas to the north and south, and therefore proposed that it be retained. However, further to the west the District Council opposed the draft recommendation to transfer all of the existing Wakefield North ward to the south of the A638 Dewsbury Road/Wakefield Road to Wakefield West ward, considering that this area historically formed part of Wakefield North ward. Instead, it proposed that all this area except that part to the south of Dacre Avenue and to the west of Broadway be included in Wakefield North ward. The District Council noted the view of a councillor that the area subsequently to be retained in Wakefield West ward (the Airedale Heights/Snapethorpe Gate estate) was different in character from the Dacre Avenue area directly to the north and separated from it by a high wall.

212 As previously discussed, the District Council opposed the draft recommendation to include the Portobello area in Wakefield South ward and proposed that it be included in another city ward to the north or west. As at Stage One, it also proposed that a small part of the existing Ossett ward to the east of the M1 between Wakefield Road and Queens Drive, and 137-155 Wakefield Road be included in Wakefield North ward, rather than Wakefield West ward as under the draft recommendations.

213 The District Council reiterated its Stage One proposal that Wakefield city centre should be divided between the wards of Wakefield East, Wakefield North and Wakefield West, rather than being wholly included in Wakefield North ward. As at Stage One, it was considered that residents of each ward should have 'ownership of their City Centre'. This amendment would in its view enable stronger arguments to be put forward by councillors of the three wards for 'the future development and well-being of the city.' The inclusion of the city centre in a single ward was not regarded as being necessary to reflect community identities and interests.

214 In the event of the city centre not being divided between the three wards, the District Council proposed that the existing boundary of Wakefield East ward be retained from the junction of Marsh Way and Northgate, running south on Northgate, and east and south-west on

Kirkgate, rejoining the draft ward boundary at the junction of Kirkgate and Marsh Way. This proposal would result in the transfer of a relatively small part of the city centre from the proposed Wakefield North ward to Wakefield East ward. The District Council stated that the part of the A61 Marsh Way to the south of the junction with Jacobs Well Lane and to the north of Warrengate – the proposed ward boundary under the draft recommendations – was due to be re-routed to the east to accommodate a planned new shopping centre and car park.

215 Under the District Council's Stage Three proposals, the proposed Wakefield East, Wakefield North and Wakefield West wards would have 14% more, 3% fewer and 13% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (12% more than the average, equal to the average and 13% fewer than the average by 2006).

216 As noted in the preceding section of this report, the Conservatives proposed, like the District Council, to include the Agbrigg area with Belle Vue in Wakefield East ward, reflecting their Stage One proposals. However, unlike the District Council, they supported the draft recommendation to transfer the Portobello area from Wakefield West ward to Wakefield South ward. The Conservatives also supported the inclusion of the Lawefield Lane area in Wakefield North ward. As previously noted, they urged 'The Boundary Committee not to introduce new proposals to move parts of surrounding wards into the City [of Wakefield].'

217 Wakefield Constituency Labour Party opposed the draft recommendations for the city of Wakefield and generally proposed that the District Council's Stage One proposals be adopted. As noted in the preceding section of this report, they considered that the Agbrigg area should be included in Wakefield East ward and Portobello in Wakefield West ward. The Constituency Labour Party proposed that electoral equality in Wakefield East ward be maintained following the inclusion of Agbrigg by unspecified amendments with Wakefield North and Wakefield West wards.

218 Together with a local resident, the Constituency Labour Party also expressed similar views to the District Council regarding the retention of the A638 Westgate as the boundary between Wakefield North and Wakefield West wards in the Lawefield Lane area. Further to the west, they supported the District Council's proposal to retain the existing boundary between these wards in the Lupset area, expressing similar views to the District Council. The Constituency Labour Party considered that the division of the Lupset area under the existing arrangements was offset by the fact that both wards formed part of the same Area Committee. The local resident also stated that previous reviews had concluded that 'there never was any intention historically to have a Lupset estate'.

219 North Wakefield Community Group supported the draft recommendation to include the Northgate North area in Wakefield East ward, considering that this area shared common interests with the remainder of the ward. As previously noted, it expressed concern regarding the inclusion of the Agbrigg and Belle Vue area in separate wards under the draft recommendations. Finally, the Liberal Democrats stated that they broadly supported the draft recommendations, particularly where they reflected their Stage One proposals.

220 We have given careful consideration to the representations received at Stage Three. As discussed in more detail in the preceding section of this report, we are putting forward revised proposals of our own, entailing the transfer of the Portobello area to Wakefield East ward and of the Belle Vue area to Wakefield South ward. The revised Wakefield East ward would thus extend as far south as Woodville Court and Duke of York Avenue in the Portobello area, bounded in the east by (from north to south) Sugar Lane, Woodcock Street, the A61 Barnsley Road, Manygates Lane and Milnthorpe Lane (northern part).

221 As previously noted, respondents provided a considerable amount of evidence in support of the view that the Agbrigg area (in the proposed Wakefield South ward) and the adjoining area of Belle Vue (in the proposed Wakefield East ward) form a single community and

should be included in the same ward. However, we received no locally generated proposals that would not only enable the inclusion of both areas in Wakefield East ward, as preferred by respondents, but also provide for good electoral equality in Wakefield South ward. Further, we remain unconvinced on the basis of the evidence received that adjoining parts of Wakefield city such as Agbrigg and Sandal have so little in common that their separation into different wards should take precedence over all other concerns for which we must have regard.

222 We were also not persuaded that the District Council's proposals to improve electoral equality in Wakefield East ward following the inclusion of Agbrigg would reflect community identities and interests in the affected areas. We consider that the Pinders Heath and (when built) Stanley Royd residential areas form intrinsic parts of the Wakefield city urban area. As such, we did not consider that we had received sufficient evidence to support their proposed transfer to Stanley & Outwood East ward.

223 In seeking to provide the best available balance between achieving electoral equality, reflecting community identities and interests and providing effective and convenient local government, we have therefore had to put forward our own revised final recommendations for Wakefield East and Wakefield South wards. This has meant in turn that we have only been able to give limited further consideration to the District Council's Stage Three proposals and to Wakefield Constituency Labour Party's proposal to adopt the District Council's Stage One scheme for the city in full.

224 We note that the transfer of the Portobello area from Wakefield South ward to Wakefield East ward is necessary to counterbalance the inclusion of the Belle Vue area in Wakefield South ward. As previously noted, we have received evidence that Portobello looks to other parts of the city to the north and west, *as well as* to Sandal. We have not been wholly persuaded by either point of view, but have concluded on this basis that there is a case for including Portobello in other city wards. While this area is again being included in a ward with parts of the city to the north of the River Calder, as under the existing arrangements, we note that Portobello is well linked to the remainder of the ward via the A61 Barnsley Road.

225 We note that there appears to be some local support for the draft recommendation to include the Eastmoor Road area in Wakefield East ward, and are content to confirm this proposal as final. Further to the east, we are adopting the District Council's minor amendment in the Southern Washlands area, which affects no electors, though we have modified the proposal slightly to avoid breaching the boundary of Warmfield cum Heath parish. We are content on the basis of the evidence received that this proposal would reflect the usage of this area by city residents.

226 We note that the District Council's proposals for the west of the city would result in Wakefield West ward being over-represented both now and in 2006, and we have not been persuaded on the basis of the evidence received to adopt them. As in the east of the city, we have considered the amendments that had been put to us on an individual basis.

227 We are adopting the proposal by the District Council and others to revert to the existing boundary between Wakefield North and Wakefield West wards on the A638 Westgate. This would entail the inclusion in Wakefield West ward of the Lawefield Lane area, as under the existing arrangements. Although we note the support of the Conservatives for the draft recommendations in this area, we have been persuaded by the evidence received that the consistent use of the A638 as a ward boundary in the west of the town would more clearly distinguish between Wakefield North and Wakefield West wards, thereby promoting effective and convenient local government. While the revised Wakefield North ward would initially be slightly over-represented, we are content that electoral equality would improve by 2006.

228 However, further to the west in the Lupset area of the city, we are not minded to depart from our draft recommendations. We note that the amendment proposed by the District Council

in this area between Wakefield North and Wakefield West wards would result in the proposed Wakefield West ward becoming over-represented. We remain of the view that the A638 constitutes at this point a well-defined ward boundary. As noted above, we consider on the basis of evidence received at Stage Three that its consistent use as a boundary promotes effective and convenient local government.

229 We have also not been persuaded that the historic character of a given ward boundary is sufficient justification for its retention without amendment. While Area Committees may provide an alternative forum for the representation of communities, as Wakefield Constituency Labour Party has suggested, we are not convinced that this would justify the over-representation of Wakefield West ward that would result from a reversion to the existing boundary in this area. However, we propose a further minor amendment to ensure all new residential development on the Alverthorpe Mills site is included in Wakefield North ward, rather than Wrenthorpe & Outwood East ward.

230 In the city centre, we are not proposing to adopt the District Council's Stage One proposal, reiterated at Stage Three, to divide this area between Wakefield East, Wakefield North and Wakefield West wards. We acknowledge, based on further evidence received, that the city centre does not appear to form a distinct community, and thus could be divided between wards in this fashion, but remain of the view that the inclusion of this area in Wakefield North ward facilitates the achievement of electoral equality in this ward.

231 We are proposing to depart from our draft recommendations to the east of the city centre following information provided by the District Council on the redirection of the A61 Marsh Way. Nonetheless, we are not proposing to adopt the District Council's proposed solution, noting that it would result in a further minor loss of electors from Wakefield North ward. Instead, we propose a revised boundary between Wakefield East and Wakefield North wards that would avoid the affected section of Marsh Way without affecting any residential properties. The boundary would run east from Marsh Way on the A642 Jacob's Well Lane before proceeding south between Vicarage Street North and Grantley Street to rejoin Marsh Way.

232 As at Stage One, we have not been persuaded by the District Council's proposal to include a small area of Warmfield cum Heath parish in a ward with part of Wakefield city. This amendment would only affect a few electors and would require the creation of a substantially over-represented parish ward, which we are not persuaded would provide effective and convenient local government. We note that following a review of parish boundaries undertaken by the District Council, consequential changes to district wards may be requested of The Electoral Commission.

233 Under our final recommendations, Wakefield East, Wakefield North and Wakefield West wards (each comprising part of the city of Wakefield unparished area) would have 1% more, 11% fewer and 2% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3% more, 7% fewer and 3% fewer by 2006).

## The north-west

### **(h) Stanley & Altofts and Stanley & Wrenthorpe wards**

234 The three-member Stanley & Altofts and Stanley & Wrenthorpe wards represent a number of small- to medium-sized towns and villages to the north and north-east of the city of Wakefield, broadly divided into three areas: a western unparished area between the M1 and the A650 Wakefield to Bradford road, comprising Alverthorpe, Kirkhamgate, Wrenthorpe and other smaller settlements; a central unparished area between the A650 and the River Calder, comprising the generally contiguous settlements of Bottom Boat, Lee Moor, Lofthouse Gate, Newton Hill, Outwood, Stanley, Stanley Ferry; and Altofts village to the east of the River Calder,



which forms the Altofts parish ward of Normanton parish. The existing Stanley & Altofts ward comprises the village of Altofts and the eastern part of the central unparished area, while the existing Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward comprises the western unparished area and the western part of the central unparished area. Currently both wards are under-represented, with Stanley & Altofts ward and Stanley & Wrenthorpe ward having 18% and 27% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (20% and 25% more by 2006).

235 At Stage One, the District Council proposed to broadly retain the existing Stanley & Altofts and Stanley & Wrenthorpe wards, subject to a number of amendments to improve electoral equality. Under its proposals the wards would also be re-named 'Stanley & Outwood East' and 'Wrenthorpe & Outwood West' respectively, in order to better reflect community identities in the revised wards. The District Council proposed first to transfer the village of Altofts to a new Altofts & Whitwood ward to resolve the under-representation of this area and the over-representation of Castleford town (see the preceding section of this report on Castleford for details).

236 The District Council also put forward a revised boundary between its proposed Stanley & Outwood East and Wrenthorpe & Outwood West wards to provide for good electoral equality in both wards. It proposed that the boundary follow the A61 Leeds Road as far north as the junction of Edward Drive, before heading west to the north of Edward Drive, Charles Avenue, Chandlers Close, Clayton Rise and Railway Terrace and then north-west to the boundary with the city of Leeds along the Wakefield to Leeds railway line. This amendment would result in the transfer to Stanley & Outwood East ward of all of Wrenthorpe & Outwood West ward to the east of the A61 (affecting the Outwood area), and a further area to the west of the A61 and to the north of Edward Drive (affecting the Lofthouse Gate area).

237 The District Council stated that it had been persuaded by the view of the Stanley Labour Party and councillors representing Stanley & Altofts ward that it was not possible to unite the Outwood area in a single district ward and that the area was therefore best divided where possible along the 'clear recognisable boundary' of the A61. As discussed in the previous section, the District Council also proposed to transfer a small number of properties on the A638 Wakefield Road from Wrenthorpe & Outwood West ward to a revised Wakefield North ward. It also proposed that the Low Laithes area to the east of the M1 in the existing Ossett ward be transferred to Wrenthorpe & Outwood West ward.

238 The Conservatives' 60-member proposals differed substantially in this area from those of the District Council. As previously discussed, they proposed to include the Altofts parish ward of Normanton parish in a ward with the Whitwood area of Castleford, like the District Council, but also to include the Northgate North area (currently in Stanley & Altofts ward) in a revised Wakefield North ward. Normanton Constituency Labour Party, Bill O'Brien MP and nine local residents put forward proposals for the Normanton constituency area based upon a 66-member council. Although full details of warding proposals were not provided, these respondents, together with a Normanton town councillor, opposed the District Council's proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward. Normanton Town Council noted the concerns of town councillors representing Altofts regarding the proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward. Finally, Wrenthorpe Environmental Society proposed that the Wrenthorpe area continue to be included in a single district ward.

239 We based our draft recommendations on the District Council's proposals subject to a number of amendments. We have set out our reasons for adopting the District Council's proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward in a previous section of this report, detailing our recommendations for the Castleford area. We noted that the current division of the Outwood area would continue under the District Council's proposals. However, we considered that in a 63-member council there are too many electors in the unparished area between the A650 and the River Calder to form a single district ward providing good electoral equality. Moreover, we considered that the transfer of any part of this area (apart from Northgate North) to another ward to the east or south would not reflect the identity and interests of affected electors.

240 Examining the District Council's proposed Stanley & Outwood East and Wrenthorpe & Outwood West wards, we concurred with its view that the A61 Leeds Road provides an easily recognisable boundary in the Outwood area. We therefore considered that the increased use of the A61 as a ward boundary would provide for a more rational division of the area while providing for improved electoral equality in both wards. We were content to recommend the inclusion in the Wrenthorpe & Outwood West ward of the Low Laithes area of the existing Ossett ward, in order that the ward boundary follows the M1 motorway. We noted the view of Wrenthorpe Environment Society that the Wrenthorpe community should be included in a single ward and consider that this would be achieved by the District Council's proposals.

241 However, we proposed to depart from the District Council's proposals in a number of areas, as discussed in the previous section on warding arrangements for the city of Wakefield. We proposed to improve electoral equality in a revised Wakefield North ward by transferring from Wrenthorpe & Outwood West ward the Willow Lane estate to the south of the Alverthorpe Beck and the proposed residential development on the Alverthorpe Mills site, together with Tyrell Court and a number of properties on Flanshaw Lane. We also proposed to transfer the Northgate North area from Stanley & Outwood East ward to Wakefield East ward, in part reflecting proposals by the Conservatives. We further proposed a number of smaller amendments between the wards of Wakefield North and Wrenthorpe & Outwood West to reflect ground detail and road access in Gentian Court, Newton Gardens and Whitehall Rise.

242 We proposed one additional amendment between the wards of Stanley & Outwood East and Wrenthorpe & Outwood West. We noted that under the District Council's proposals a small number of properties on the western part of Lingwell Nook Lane are accessed from Castle Head Lane in Wrenthorpe & Outwood West ward, yet were to be transferred to Stanley & Outwood East ward, to which they have no direct road access. We therefore proposed a slight adjustment to the proposed boundary to include these properties in Wrenthorpe & Outwood West ward. We also put forward a number of minor amendments to reflect ground detail, which affect no electors.

243 Under our draft recommendations, Stanley & Outwood East ward (comprising the unparished areas of Stanley and Outwood [part]) and Wrenthorpe & Outwood West ward (comprising the unparished areas of Wrenthorpe and Outwood [part]) would have 2% and 1% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (2% and 4% fewer by 2006).

244 At Stage Three, the District Council supported the adoption of the majority of its proposed Stanley & Outwood East and Wrenthorpe & Outwood West wards. As discussed in the preceding section of this report, it also supported the inclusion of the Eastmoor Road area of Wakefield city (currently in the existing Stanley & Altofts ward) in Wakefield East ward. However, the District Council also considered that its proposal to include the Agbrigg area of the city in Wakefield East ward could be counterbalanced by the transfer of the Stanley Royd Hospital residential development site or the Pinders Heath area to Stanley & Outwood East ward. As previously discussed, it also put forward a minor amendment affecting no electors between Stanley & Outwood East and Wakefield East wards in the Southern Washlands open space area, reflecting the use of this area by residents of the Eastmoor estate in Wakefield city.

245 As previously noted, Bill O'Brien MP and an Altofts resident reiterated proposals put forward at Stage One for the north of the district based on a 66-member council. Although a complete warding pattern for this area was not provided, together with a Normanton town councillor and another Altofts resident they opposed the proposed Altofts & Whitwood ward, considering that it would not reflect community identities and interests. Bill O'Brien MP stated that the 'vast majority' of his constituents supported his proposal. North Wakefield Community Group supported the draft recommendation to include the Northgate North area in Wakefield East ward.

246 Having given careful consideration to the representations received at Stage Three, we have decided to confirm the draft recommendation for the proposed Stanley & Outwood East and Wrenthorpe & Outwood West wards as final. Our decision to confirm the draft recommendation for a 63-member council limited the extent to which proposals put forward by Bill O'Brien MP and others on a 66-member council could be taken into consideration. As discussed in the preceding section of this report, we are not persuaded to transfer the Stanley Royd Hospital residential development site or the Pinders Heath area to Stanley & Outwood East ward to facilitate revised arrangements elsewhere in Wakefield city.

247 However, we have decided to adopt the District Council's minor amendment in the Southern Washlands area, which affects no electors, though we have modified the proposal slightly to avoid breaching the boundary of Warmfield cum Heath parish. We are content on the basis of the evidence received that this proposal would reflect the usage of this area by city residents. We also propose a further minor amendment to ensure all new residential development on the Alverthorpe Mills site is included in Wakefield North ward, rather than Wrenthorpe & Outwood East ward. Our final recommendations would provide the same level of electoral equality as the draft recommendations, and are illustrated on Map 2, Map A1 and the large maps.

### **(i) Horbury and Ossett wards**

248 The three-member Horbury and Ossett wards are situated to the west of the M1 and to the north of the River Calder and are unparished. Horbury ward comprises the town of Horbury and the southern part of the town of Ossett, while Ossett ward comprises the remainder of the town of Ossett. Under existing arrangements, Horbury and Ossett wards have 2% more and 6% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (1% more and 7% more by 2006).

249 At Stage One the District Council proposed to retain the existing Horbury ward without amendment, and put forward only minor changes to the existing Ossett ward. It stated that it had considered transferring the Storrs Hill area from Ossett to Horbury to improve electoral equality in both wards, but had concluded that this would not reflect strong community ties in this part of the district. The District Council therefore proposed no changes to the existing warding arrangements except for adjustments to the eastern boundary of Ossett ward, to ensure that it followed the M1 throughout its course. This would entail the transfer of the Low Laithes area to the proposed Wrenthorpe & Outwood West ward. A small area between the M1, the A638 Wakefield Road and Queens Drive would also be transferred to a revised Wakefield North ward. These proposals were broadly supported by the Conservatives, Normanton Constituency Labour Party, Bill O'Brien MP and nine district residents.

250 We based our draft recommendations on the District Council's proposals, noting that they had obtained general support. We noted that Ossett and Horbury wards possess well-defined boundaries with other wards in the form of the M1 to the east and the River Calder/Calder & Hebble Navigation to the south. We concurred with the District Council's proposal to tie the eastern boundary of Ossett ward fully to the motorway, resulting in the transfer of two small areas to other wards as discussed above.

251 However, we proposed to obtain a more equitable distribution of electors between the proposed wards of Horbury and Ossett by means of a minor amendment in the South Ossett area of Ossett town. This would entail the transfer to Horbury ward of Audrey Street, Dunstan Close, Hilda Street, King Street, Lionel Street, 15-75 Manor Road and 164-252 Station Road (the B6128). We noted that this proposal would enable the use of Green Park and adjoining playing fields as a natural boundary in this part of the town, and would also unite all electors on Manor Road in a single ward. We also put forward a number of minor amendments to tie proposed ward boundaries to ground detail, which would affect no electors.

252 Under our draft recommendations, Horbury ward (comprising the Horbury unparished area and part of the Ossett unparished area) and Ossett ward (comprising part of the Ossett unparished area) would have 5% and 3% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (4% and 4% more by 2006).

253 At Stage Three, the District Council supported those parts of the proposed Horbury and Ossett wards that reflected its Stage One proposals. However, it did not support the amendment proposed by The Boundary Committee in the Manor Road/Station Road area of the town of Ossett, considering that the existing boundary between Horbury and Ossett wards should be retained. The Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats, Councillor Metcalfe (Ossett) Councillor Walker (Ossett) and nine local residents (seven from the affected area) put forward identical proposals. Councillors Metcalfe and Walker enclosed letters and a petition in support of this amendment totalling 61 signatories from the affected area.

254 It was generally considered by respondents that the draft proposal would not reflect community identities and interests in the affected area of Ossett town. The District Council considered that the Manor Road/Station Road area formed part of Ossett town centre, and should not therefore be included in Horbury ward. The Liberal Democrats stated that 'we know from canvassing in the Ossett area of the existing Horbury ward that people in this area feel alienated from the electoral process', as they identified with Ossett rather than with Horbury town to the south. According to the Conservatives, the draft recommendation to include a further part of Ossett town in Horbury ward would exacerbate this problem and lead to a reduction in turnout at local elections. Respondents generally expressed similar views; one resident of the Manor Road/Station Road area noted that they used shops in Ossett not Horbury. The District Council also noted that the draft recommendations included proposed wards with higher variances than its proposed Ossett ward, which would have 6% more electors per councillor than the district average both now and in 2006.

255 A number of the above respondents made additional proposals in relation to this part of the district. The Liberal Democrats, Councillors Metcalfe and Walker (supported by 61 signatories) and a local resident all proposed that Horbury ward be re-named 'Horbury & South Ossett'. It was considered that a third of the electorate of Horbury ward lived in Ossett town, and that this should be reflected in the name of the ward. Another local resident suggested that The Boundary Committee include all of Ossett town in Ossett ward.

256 As previously noted, Bill O'Brien MP and a district resident reiterated proposals put forward at Stage One for the north of the district based on a 66-member council, although a complete warding pattern for this area was not provided. Bill O'Brien MP stated that the 'vast majority' of his constituents supported this proposal.

257 We have given careful consideration to the representations received at Stage Three, and have decided to move away from our draft recommendations in this area. We note that the Horbury and Ossett area, separated from the remainder of the district by the M1 and the River Calder, is entitled to six district councillors. Given the distribution of electors in this area, and the fact that we have to recommend a uniform pattern of three-member wards, we consider that to provide for good electoral equality in this area we must recommend a ward containing Horbury and the southern third of Ossett, although the two towns form distinct urban areas separated by a narrow green belt.

258 In unparished areas such as Horbury and Ossett it is often possible to further improve electoral equality, as we are not constrained by the need to base our proposed district wards on the boundaries of parishes or parish wards. Consequently, we sought in our draft recommendations to improve electoral equality in Ossett ward by transferring to Horbury ward a further part of Ossett town in the Manor Road/Station Road area. While we do not accept the implication that councillors elected from Horbury ward are incapable of representing the South Ossett area effectively, we note that the majority of respondents at Stage Three consider that

the existing Horbury ward does not wholly reflect the identity and interests of South Ossett residents. Respondents appear concerned that any further expansion of Horbury ward into Ossett town would exacerbate this problem, and would therefore also fail to provide effective and convenient local government for electors. We note in this context the opposition of the majority of electors affected by our amendment to inclusion in Horbury ward.

259 In this instance, we have therefore been persuaded that the resulting gain in electoral equality under the draft recommendations would be more than offset by the problems affecting the achievement of the other statutory criteria. We are therefore proposing to revert to the existing boundary between Horbury and Ossett wards on Manor Road and Station Road, noting that this proposal would obtain local support and that electoral equality in Ossett ward would still be acceptable in this context. We are also adopting the proposal by the Liberal Democrats and others to re-name Horbury ward 'Horbury and South Ossett', as we consider that this would more fully reflect the different communities represented in the ward.

260 Under our final recommendations, Horbury & South Ossett ward (comprising the Horbury unparished area and part of the Ossett unparished area) and Ossett ward (comprising part of the Ossett unparished area) would have 2% and 6% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (1% and 6% more by 2006). Our proposed wards are illustrated on Map 2, Map A2 and the large maps.

## Electoral cycle

261 Under section 7(3) of the Local Government Act 1972, all Metropolitan borough/cities have a system of elections by thirds.

## Conclusions

262 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided substantially to endorse those draft recommendations, subject to the following amendments:

- in the city of Wakefield, we propose further amendments of our own to the wards of Wakefield East, Wakefield North, Wakefield South and Wakefield West, to obtain a better reflection of community identities and interests and provision of effective and convenient local government, while still having regard for electoral equality;
- we propose to include all of Crofton parish in Crofton, Ryhill & Walton ward, to better provide effective and convenient local government;
- we propose to revert to the existing boundary between Horbury and Ossett wards in Ossett town, to better reflect community identities and interests;
- we propose re-naming Horbury ward 'Horbury & South Ossett', as proposed by the Liberal Democrats, Councillors Metcalfe and Walker and other local respondents.

263 We conclude that, in Wakefield:

- The existing council size of 63 should be retained;
- The council should continue to comprise 21 wards;
- the boundaries of 20 of the existing wards should be modified.

264 Table 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2001 and 2006 electorate figures.

*Table 4: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements*

	2001 electorate		2006 electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	63	63	63	63
Number of wards	21	21	21	21
Average number of electors per councillor	3,980	3,980	4,019	4,019
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	5	2	8	2
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	1	0	3	0

265 As Table 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from five to two, with no wards varying by more than 20% from the district average. This level of electoral equality would be retained in 2006, with only two wards, Knottingley and South Elmsall & South Kirkby, varying by more than 10% from the average, at 12% and 15% respectively. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the statutory criteria.

#### *Final recommendation*

The City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council should comprise 63 councillors serving 21 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A and the large maps.

## Parish and town council electoral arrangements

266 When reviewing parish 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. In our draft recommendations report we proposed consequential changes to the warding arrangements for the parishes of Crofton and Featherstone to reflect the proposed district wards. We also proposed minor warding arrangements for the parish of Normanton.

267 Featherstone Town Council is currently served by 12 councillors representing four parish wards: Central ward, East ward, North West ward and South ward, each represented by three councillors. At Stage One the District Council recognised that its proposal to include the Ackton Pasture and Western Gales Way areas of Featherstone parish in the proposed Altofts & Whitwood and Normanton district wards respectively would require the creation of two new parish wards. The District Council indicated that it intended to review parish boundaries following the completion of the PER. However, it did not put forward detailed proposals for electoral arrangements for Featherstone parish, nor did we receive such proposals from Featherstone Town Council or from any other respondent.

268 In the light of our draft recommendation to adopt the District Council's proposals in this area, we proposed to create two new parish wards, Ackton Pasture ward and Western Gales Way ward, to facilitate the division of Featherstone parish between district wards. The boundary between the two new parish wards and the revised North-West parish ward should reflect the new district ward boundaries in the affected areas. We proposed that the new parish wards of Ackton Pasture and Western Gales Way each be represented by one town councillor.

269 This would entail a consequential reduction of the representation of Central and East parish wards – the two wards with the next smallest electorates – to two town councillors each. We noted that the new Ackton Pasture and Western Gales Way parish wards would be significantly over-represented, although extensive forecast residential development to the north of the M62 would ensure that Ackton Pasture would be entitled to a single councillor by 2006. However, as previously discussed, we noted the District Council's intention to address parish boundary anomalies by means of a parish review following the completion of the PER and were therefore content to put forward these proposals as an interim measure.

270 In response to our draft recommendations, no comments were received from Featherstone Town Council or other interested parties. In light of the confirmation of the proposed district wards in this area, we are confirming the draft recommendation for warding Featherstone parish as final.

*Final recommendation*

Featherstone Town Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing six wards: North-West and South (each returning three councillors), Central and East (each returning two councillors) and Ackton Pasture and Western Gales Way (each returning one councillor). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Large Map 2.

271 The parish of Crofton is currently served by 13 councillors and is not warded. In the light of our draft recommendations, we proposed to create two new parish wards, East ward and West ward, to reflect the division of the parish between the proposed Crofton, Ryhill & Walton and Featherstone district wards. East ward would broadly comprise the Birkwood Avenue area, while West ward would comprise the remainder of the parish. The boundary between the proposed East and West parish wards would reflect the revised district ward boundary. We proposed that the new East ward return one councillor and the proposed West ward return 12 councillors.

272 We noted that the new East ward would be significantly over-represented. However, as previously discussed, we noted the District Council's intention to address parish boundary anomalies by means of a parish review following the completion of the PER, and were therefore content to put forward these proposals as an interim measure.

273 In response to our draft recommendations, Crofton Parish Council stated that it did not support the creation of an over-represented parish ward in this area. The Parish Council noted 'that this does not seem to be a practical arrangement for what will hopefully be a short period of time, until the parish boundaries can be realigned,' It suggested instead that one of the existing 13 parish councillors could be allocated responsibility for the Birkwood Avenue area.

274 There is no provision in legislation for us to allocate temporary responsibility for the Birkwood Avenue area to an existing parish councillor, as suggested by the Parish Council, since we can only propose dividing a parish between different district wards if we also divide that parish into parish wards. To provide for effective and convenient local government at parish council level we are therefore proposing to include all of Crofton parish in Crofton, Ryhill & Walton ward. Consequently, we are also proposing that Crofton parish remain unwarded.

*Final recommendation*

Crofton Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, as at present, and should not be warded.

275 Normanton parish is currently served by 22 councillors and is divided into four town wards: Altofts, represented by seven councillors, Normanton, represented by seven councillors, Normanton Common, represented by two councillors, and Woodhouse, represented by six councillors.

276 We noted that Eastfield Grove and Hopetown Walk are currently divided between Normanton and Normanton Common parish wards (and the existing Castleford Whitwood and Normanton & Sharlston district wards). In the light of our draft recommendation to adopt the District Council's proposed Normanton ward, which would include both parish wards, we proposed to retain the existing parish ward boundary in this area, subject to a minor amendment to include all of Eastfield Grove and Hopetown Walk in Normanton Common parish ward, together with Moorhouse Close and The Dairies, which are accessed from Eastfield Grove.

277 In response to our draft recommendations, no comments were received from Normanton Town Council or other interested parties. In the light of confirmation of the proposed district wards in this area, we are confirming the draft recommendation for warding Normanton parish as final.

*Final recommendation*

Normanton Town Council should comprise 22 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Altofts (returning seven councillors), Normanton (returning seven councillors), Normanton Common (returning two councillors) and Woodhouse (returning six councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Large Map 2.







## 6 What happens next?

278 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Wakefield and submitted our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 no. 3692).

279 It is now up to The Electoral Commission to decide whether 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 9 September 2003, and The Electoral Commission will normally consider all written representations made to them by that date. They particularly welcome any comments on the first draft of the Order, which will implement the new arrangements.

280 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](mailto:implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk)  
(This address should only be used for this purpose)**



# Appendix A

## Final recommendations for Wakefield: Detailed mapping

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for the Wakefield area.

**Map A1** illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries and indicates the areas that are shown in more detail on the large maps.

The **large maps** illustrate the proposed warding arrangements for Wakefield.



# Appendix B

## First draft of electoral change Order for Wakefield

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### STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

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**2003 No.**

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT, ENGLAND**

### **The City of Wakefield (Electoral Changes) Order 2003**

*Made* - - - -

*2003*

*Coming into force in accordance with article 1(2)*

Whereas the Boundary Committee for England<sup>(a)</sup>, acting pursuant to section 15(4) of the Local Government Act 1992<sup>(b)</sup>, has submitted to the Electoral Commission<sup>(c)</sup> recommendations dated July 2003 on its review of the city<sup>(d)</sup> of Wakefield:

And whereas the Electoral Commission have decided to give effect [with modifications] to those recommendations:

And whereas a period of not less than six weeks has expired since the receipt of those recommendations:

Now, therefore, the Electoral Commission, in exercise of the powers conferred on them by sections 17(e) and 26(f) of the Local Government Act 1992, and of all other powers enabling them in that behalf, hereby make the following Order:

#### **Citation and commencement**

- 1.—(1) This Order may be cited as the City of Wakefield (Electoral Changes) Order 2003.
- (2) This Order shall come into force –
  - (a) for the purpose of proceedings preliminary or relating to any election to be held on the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2004, on 15th October 2003;

- 
- (a) The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, established by the Electoral Commission in accordance with section 14 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (c. 41). The Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001 (S.I. 2001/3962) transferred to the Electoral Commission the functions of the Local Government Commission for England.
- (b) 1992 c.19. This section has been amended by S.I. 2001/3962.
- (c) The Electoral Commission was established by the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (c. 41). The functions of the Secretary of State, under sections 13 to 15 and 17 of the Local Government Act 1992, to the extent that they relate to electoral changes within the meaning of that Act, were transferred with modifications to the Electoral Commission on 1st April 2002 (S.I. 2001/3962).
- (d) The metropolitan district of Wakefield has the status of a city.
- (e) This section has been amended by S.I. 2001/3962 and also otherwise in ways not relevant to this Order.
- (f) This section has been amended by S.I. 2001/3962.

- (b) for all other purposes, on the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2004.

## **Interpretation**

### **2. In this Order –**

“city” means the city of Wakefield;

“existing”, in relation to a ward, means the ward as it exists on the date this Order is made;

any reference to the map is a reference to the map marked “Map referred to in the City of Wakefield (Electoral Changes) Order 2003”, of which prints are available for inspection at –

- (a) the principal office of the Electoral Commission; and
- (b) the offices of Wakefield City Council; and

any reference to a numbered sheet is a reference to the sheet of the map which bears that number.

## **Wards of the city of Wakefield**

### **3.—(1) The existing wards of the city(a) shall be abolished.**

- (2) The city shall be divided into twenty-one wards which shall bear the names set out in the Schedule.
- (3) Each ward shall comprise the area designated on the map by reference to the name of the ward and demarcated by red lines; and the number of councillors to be elected for each ward shall be three.
- (4) Where a boundary is shown on the map as running along a road, railway line, footway, watercourse or similar geographical feature, it shall be treated as running along the centre line of the feature.

## **Elections of the council of the city of Wakefield**

### **4.—(1) Elections of all councillors for all wards of the city shall be held simultaneously on the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2004(b)(c).**

- (2) The councillors holding office for any ward of the city immediately before the fourth day after the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2004 shall retire on that date and the newly elected councillors for those wards shall come into office on that date.
- (3) Of the councillors elected in 2004 one shall retire in 2006, one in 2007 and one in 2008.
- (4) Of the councillors elected in 2004 –
  - (a) the first to retire shall, subject to paragraphs (6) and (7), be the councillor elected by the smallest number of votes; and
  - (b) the second to retire shall, subject to those paragraphs, be the councillor elected by the next smallest number of votes.
- (5) In the case of an equality of votes between any persons elected which makes it uncertain which of them is to retire in any year, the person to retire in that year shall be determined by lot.
- (6) If an election of councillors for any ward is not contested, the person to retire in each year shall be determined by lot.

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(a) See the City of Wakefield (Electoral Arrangements) Order 1980 (S.I. 1980/408).

(b) Article 4 provides for a single election of all the councillors and for reversion to the system of election by thirds, as established by articles 8 and 9(7) of S.I. 1980/408.

(c) For the ordinary day of election of councillors of local government areas, see section 37 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (c.2), amended by section 18(2) of the Representation of the People Act 1985 (c.50) and section 17 of, and paragraphs 1 and 5 of Schedule 3 to, the Greater London Authority Act 1999 (c.29).



- (7) Where under this article any question is to be determined by lot, the lot shall be drawn at the next practicable meeting of the council after the question has arisen and the drawing shall be conducted under the direction of the person presiding at the meeting.

### **Wards of the parish of Featherstone**

- 5.—(1) The existing wards of the parish of Featherstone shall be abolished.
- (2) The parish shall be divided into six parish wards which shall bear the names Ackton Pasture, Central, East, North-West, South and Western Gales Way; and the wards shall comprise the areas designated on sheets 2 and 3 by reference to the name of the ward and demarcated by orange lines.
- (3) The number of councillors to be elected for each of the North-West and South parish wards shall be three, for each of the Central and East parish wards shall be two, and for each of the Ackton Pasture and Western Gales Way parish wards shall be one.

### **Wards of the parish of Normanton**

- 6.—(1) The existing wards of the parish of Normanton shall be abolished.
- (2) The parish shall be divided into four parish wards which shall bear the names Altofts, Normanton, Normanton Common and Woodhouse; and the wards shall comprise the areas designated on sheets 1 and 2 by reference to the name of the ward and demarcated by orange lines.
- (3) The number of councillors to be elected for each of the Altofts and Normanton parish wards shall be seven, for the Woodhouse parish ward shall be six, and for the Normanton Common parish ward shall be two.

### **Maps**

7. Wakefield City Council shall make a print of the map marked “Map referred to in the City of Wakefield (Electoral Changes) Order 2003” available for inspection at its offices by any member of the public at any reasonable time.

### **Electoral registers**

8. The Electoral Registration Officer(a) for the city shall make such rearrangement of, or adaptation of, the register of local government electors as may be necessary for the purposes of, and in consequence of, this Order.

### **Revocation**

9. The City of Wakefield (Electoral Arrangements) Order 1980(b) is revoked, save for articles 8 and 9(7).

Signed by the members of the Electoral Commission

Date

*Pamela Gordon*  
Commissioner

*Glyn Mathias*

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(a) As to electoral registration officers and the register of local government electors, *see* sections 8 to 13 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (c.2).

(b) S.I. 1980/408.

Date

Commissioner

Date

*Neil McIntosh*  
Commissioner

Date

*Karamjit Singh*  
Commissioner

Date

*Sam Younger*  
Commissioner

Date

*Graham Zellick*  
Commissioner

## SCHEDULE

article 3

### NAMES OF WARDS

Ackworth, North Elmsall and Upton	Horbury and South Ossett	Stanley and Outwood East
Airedale and Ferry Fryston	Knottingley	Wakefield East
Altofts and Whitwood	Normanton	Wakefield North
Castleford Central and Glasshoughton	Ossett	Wakefield Rural
Crofton, Ryhill and Walton	Pontefract North	Wakefield South
Featherstone	Pontefract South	Wakefield West
Hemsworth	South Elmsall and South Kirkby	Wrenthorpe and Outwood West

### EXPLANATORY NOTE

*(This note is not part of the Order)*

This Order gives effect, [with modifications], to recommendations by the Boundary Committee for England, a committee of the Electoral Commission, for electoral changes in the city of Wakefield.

The modifications are *indicate the modifications*.

The changes have effect in relation to local government elections to be held on and after the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2004.

Article 3 abolishes the existing wards of the city and provides for the creation of 21 new wards. That article and the Schedule also make provision for the names and areas of, and numbers of councillors for, the new wards.

Article 4 makes provision for a whole council election in 2004 and for reversion to the established system of election by thirds in subsequent years.

Articles 5 and 6 make electoral changes in the parishes of Featherstone and Normanton.

Article 8 obliges the Electoral Registration Officer to make any necessary amendments to the electoral register to reflect the new electoral arrangements.

Article 9 revokes the City of Wakefield (Electoral Arrangements) Order 1980, with the exception of articles 8 and 9(7).

The areas of the new city and parish wards are demarcated on the map described in article 2. Prints of the map may be inspected at all reasonable times at the offices of Wakefield City Council and at the principal office of the Electoral Commission at Trevelyan House, Great Peter Street, London SW1P 2HW.

## Appendix C

# Guide to interpreting the first draft of the electoral change Order

### **Preamble**

This describes the process by which the Order will be made, and under which powers. Text in square brackets will be removed if The Electoral Commission decide not to modify the Final recommendations.

### **Citation and commencement**

This establishes the name of the Order and when it will come into force.

### **Interpretation**

This defines terms that are used in the Order.

### **Wards of the city of Wakefield**

This abolishes the existing wards, and defines the names and areas of the new wards, in conjunction with the map and the schedule.

### **Elections of the council of the city of Wakefield**

This sets the date on which a whole council election will be held to implement the new wards, and the dates on which councillors will retire.

### **Wards of the parish of ...**

This describes how two parishes in Wakefield are being changed.

### **Maps**

This requires Wakefield City Council to make a print of the map available for public inspection.

### **Electoral registers**

This requires the Council to adapt the electoral register to reflect the new wards.

### **Revocation**

This revokes the Order that defines the existing wards, with the exception of the articles that established the system of election by thirds.

### **Explanatory Note**

This explains the purpose of each article. Text in square brackets will be removed if The Electoral Commission decide not to modify the Final recommendations.