Warwickshire

3.38 Four of the six existing constituencies in Warwickshire are within the permitted electorate range. The initial proposals would balance the electorates of the remaining two constituencies by transferring a single ward, Budbrooke, from the Warwick and Leamington constituency to Kenilworth and Southam. The Stratford-on-Avon and Rugby constituencies would be changed only to align with local ward boundaries changes. The proposed Bedworth and North Warwickshire, and Nuneaton constituencies would be wholly unchanged under the initial proposals from their existing form.

3.39 The four largely unchanged constituencies in Warwickshire were supported by all four qualifying parties. The transfer of the Budbrooke ward was supported by the Labour, Liberal Democrat, and Green parties, but opposed by the Conservative Party (BCE-86587), who instead proposed splitting this ward, transferring the Hatton Park area to the Kenilworth and Southam constituency to allow the remainder of the ward to retained in Warwick and Leamington. This counter-proposal generated a significant amount of support among respondents to the public consultations.

3.40 Respondents provided evidence on the 'strong geographical, historical and cultural links' between villages in the Budbrooke ward and the towns of Royal Leamington Spa and Warwick, stressing the shared community between these villages and their two nearest towns (BCE-78118). Correspondingly, these representations argued that these areas have very few, if any, ties to either Kenilworth or Southam. Supporters of the Conservative Party counter-proposal argued that it would allow for strong community ties between the parishes of Barford, Budbrooke and Norton Lindsey, and the rest of the Warwick and Leamington constituency to be respected (Councillor Andrew Day – BCE-79462). Supporters of this counter-proposal also argued that the avoidance of a 'doughnut constituency' should be seen as a significant improvement over the initial proposals (BCE-78118).

3.41 The Assistant Commissioners visited the area in order to assess the viability of this ward split. They observed that the Hatton Park area of the ward appeared to be a distinct community that showed more similarity with rural areas in the Kenilworth and Southam constituency than it did to Warwick town. Evidence gathered on the site visit, however, also showed a clear rural-urban separation between Warwick and the rest of the Budbrooke ward. In particular, the M40 and A46 provide a sizable and distinct boundary between Warwick and population centres such as Barford and Sherbourne. Having considered the evidence collected from representations and their site visit, our Assistant Commissioners concluded that splitting the Budbrooke ward would not meaningfully improve either constituency with regard to the statutory factors. We agree with this assessment, and therefore propose no change to both the Warwick and Leamington, and Kenilworth and Southam constituencies as initially proposed.

3.42 We received some counter-proposals (such as David Murray – BCE-96434, and Benjamin Nunn – BCE-79834) that would significantly alter the composition of constituencies in the sub-region in order to align closer with local authority boundaries. We raised this as a potential alternative approach in the initial proposals report; however, the Assistant Commissioners noted that almost no evidence was received requesting change to the constituencies that were left largely or wholly unchanged in the initial proposals. Our revised proposals therefore retain the initial proposals for the Bedworth and North Warwickshire, Nuneaton, Rugby, and Stratford-on-Avon constituencies.

Coventry

3.43 Two of the three existing constituencies in Coventry have electorates that are within the permitted range; however, as the wards in the city have very high electorates, it was not possible to develop a pattern of constituencies in the borough that involved the transfer of a single ward. Without splitting a ward between constituencies it was therefore necessary to transfer at least two wards between constituencies. We therefore initially proposed to transfer the Lower Stoke ward from Coventry East to Coventry South, with the Binley and Willenhall ward transferring in the opposite direction.

3.44 While the Labour Party supported the initial proposals for Coventry in full, both the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats opposed them and submitted counter-proposals. The Conservative Party (BCE-86587) proposed transferring the Woodlands ward (from the proposed Coventry North West constituency) into Coventry South and transferring the St Michael's ward in the opposite direction. This counter-proposal generated a large amount of support during the consultation process.