

LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND

FINAL
RECOMMENDATIONS
ON THE FUTURE
ELECTORAL
ARRANGEMENTS FOR
CONGLETON
IN CHESHIRE

*Report to the Secretary of State for the
Environment, Transport and the Regions*

March 1998

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for Congleton in Cheshire.

Members of the Commission are:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)

Helena Shovelton (Deputy Chairman)

Peter Brokenshire

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Local Government Commission for England

31 March 1998

Dear Secretary of State

On 3 June 1997 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of the borough of Congleton under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements in December 1997 and undertook a nine-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although we have proposed modifications to boundaries in Congleton Town (see paragraph 75) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Congleton.

We recommend that Congleton Borough Council should be served by 48 councillors representing 20 wards, and that some changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that elections should continue to take place by thirds.

I would like to thank members and officers of the Borough Council and other local people who have contributed to the review. Their co-operation and assistance have been very much appreciated by Commissioners and staff.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Malcolm Grant'.

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Congleton on 3 June 1997. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 2 December 1997, after which we undertook a nine-week period of consultation.

- **This report summarises the representations we have received during consultation on our draft recommendations, and offers our final recommendations to the Secretary of State.**

We found that the existing electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Congleton because:

- **in 12 of the 18 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough, and four wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2002, electoral equality is expected to deteriorate further, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 13 wards, and by more than 20 per cent in five wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figure 1 and paragraphs 74 to 75) are that:

- **Congleton Borough Council should be served by 48 councillors, three more than at present;**
- **there should be 20 wards, compared with 18 at present;**
- **the boundaries of 15 of the existing wards should be modified, while three wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

These recommendations seek to ensure that the number of electors represented by each borough councillor is as nearly as possible the same, having regard to local circumstances.

- **In all 20 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to remain over the next five years, with the number of electors per councillor in only one ward expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average.**

Recommendations are also made for changes to parish and town council electoral arrangements. They provide for:

- **new warding arrangements for Alsager, Congleton, Middlewich and Sandbach town councils and Odd Rode Parish Council.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 12 May 1998:

**The Secretary of State
Department of the Environment,
Transport and the Regions
Local Government Review
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU**

*Figure 1:
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Constituent Areas*

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1 Alsager Central	2	Alsager East borough and parish ward (part); Alsager West borough and parish ward (part)	Map A2
2 Alsager East	3	Alsager East borough and parish ward (part)	Map A2
3 Alsager West	2	Alsager East borough and parish ward (part); Alsager West borough and parish ward (part)	Map A2
4 Astbury	1	Astbury ward (part – the parishes of Smallwood and Newbold Astbury-cum-Moreton); Dane ward (part – the parishes of Hulme Walfield, Somerford and Somerford Booths)	Map 2
5 Brereton	1	Brereton ward (the parishes of Brereton, Bradwall and Moston); Astbury ward (part – Arclid parish)	Map 2
6 Buglawton	2	Buglawton borough and parish ward (part)	Large map
7 Congleton Central	2	Congleton Central borough and parish ward (part); Congleton North borough and parish ward (part); Congleton South borough and parish ward (part); Congleton West borough and parish ward (part)	Large map
8 Congleton North	2	Congleton North borough and parish ward (part)	Large map
9 Congleton North West	2	Congleton North borough and parish ward (part); Congleton Central borough and parish ward (part); Congleton West borough and parish ward (part)	Large map
10 Congleton South	3	Congleton South borough and parish ward (part); Buglawton borough and parish ward (part)	Large map
11 Congleton West	3	Congleton West borough and parish ward (part)	Large map
12 Dane Valley	2	Dane ward (part – the parishes of Cranage, Goostrey, Swettenham and Twemlow)	Map 2
13 Holmes Chapel	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Holmes Chapel parish)	Map 2
14 Lawton	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Betchton, Church Lawton and Hassall)	Map 2

Figure 1 (continued):
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Constituent Areas

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
15	Middlewich Cledford	3	Middlewich Cledford borough and parish ward; Middlewich Kinderton borough and parish ward (part)	Map A3
16	Middlewich Kinderton	3	Middlewich Kinderton borough and parish ward (part)	Map A3
17	Odd Rode	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Odd Rode parish)	Map 2
18	Sandbach East	3	Sandbach East borough and parish ward (part); Sandbach North borough and parish ward (part); Sandbach West borough and parish ward (part)	Map A4
19	Sandbach North	3	Sandbach North borough and parish ward (part)	Map A4
20	Sandbach West	3	Sandbach West borough and parish ward (part)	Map A4

Notes: 1 The borough is entirely parished.

2 Map 2, the maps at Appendix A and the large map at the back of this report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.

1. INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Congleton in Cheshire.

2 In undertaking these reviews, we have had regard to:

- the statutory criteria in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992;
- the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements* in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

3 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (published in March 1996 and supplemented in September 1996), which sets out our approach to the reviews.

4 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 3 June 1997, when we invited proposals for the future electoral arrangements from Congleton Borough Council, and copied the letter to Cheshire County Council, Cheshire Police Authority, the local authority associations, the County Palatine of Chester Association of Parish Councils, parish and town councils in the borough, the Member of Parliament and the Member of the European Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and other publicity, and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations was 1 September 1997. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

5 Stage Three began on 2 December 1997 with the publication of our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Congleton in Cheshire* and ended on 2 February 1998. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2. CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

⁶ The borough of Congleton comprises the towns of Alsager, Congleton, Middlewich and Sandbach and a number of small villages and hamlets set in the south-east Cheshire countryside. The borough has a population of 86,000 covering an area of approximately 20,700 hectares. Three-quarters of the population live in the four towns, each of which, prior to reorganisation in 1974, were either municipal boroughs or urban district councils in their own right. Each town now has its own town council. The remaining electorate resides in the 17 rural parishes, varying in size from some 4,000 electors to 115 electors, which account for approximately three-quarters of the borough's area.

⁷ To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward (the councillor:elector ratio) varies from the borough average in percentage terms has been calculated. In the report this calculation may also be described as 'electoral variance'.

⁸ The Council presently has 45 councillors who are elected from 18 wards, 12 of which are urban and six rural (Map 1 and Figure 3). Of these, 11 wards are each represented by three councillors, five wards each elect two councillors, while the remaining two are each represented by a single councillor. The Council is elected by thirds. The electorate of the borough is 69,714 (February 1997), and each councillor represents an average of 1,549 electors. The Borough Council forecasts that the electorate will increase by nearly 4 per cent to 72,863 by the year 2002, which would change the average number of electors per councillor to 1,619.

⁹ Since the last electoral review was completed in 1975 by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), there has been a substantial increase in population in the borough, with around 22 per cent more electors than two decades ago. However, these changes have been unevenly spread across the borough, with

particular growth in Middlewich and Holmes Chapel. As a result, the number of electors per councillor in 12 of the 18 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, and in four wards by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Holmes Chapel ward, in which the number of electors per councillor is 47 per cent above the borough average.

Map 1:
Existing Wards in Congleton



KEY	
EXISTING WARD BOUNDARY	—————
EXISTING PARISH BOUNDARY	- - - - -

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Key to Wards

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Alsager East | 7 Congleton North | 13 Middlewich Cledford |
| 2 Alsager West | 8 Congleton South | 14 Middlewich Kinderton |
| 3 Astbury | 9 Congleton West | 15 Odd Rode |
| 4 Brereton | 10 Dane | 16 Sandbach East |
| 5 Buglawton | 11 Holmes Chapel | 17 Sandbach North |
| 6 Congleton Central | 12 Lawton | 18 Sandbach West |

Figure 2:
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1997)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Alsager East	3	4,097	1,366	-12	4,099	1,366	-16
2 Alsager West	3	5,711	1,904	23	5,991	1,997	23
3 Astbury	1	1,022	1,022	-34	1,060	1,060	-35
4 Brereton	1	1,270	1,270	-18	1,298	1,298	-20
5 Buglawton	2	2,822	1,411	-9	3,041	1,521	-6
6 Congleton Central	2	2,838	1,419	-8	2,849	1,425	-12
7 Congleton North	3	4,075	1,358	-12	4,237	1,412	-13
8 Congleton South	3	4,973	1,658	7	5,185	1,728	7
9 Congleton West	3	5,504	1,835	18	5,693	1,898	17
10 Dane	3	3,236	1,079	-30	3,561	1,187	-27
11 Holmes Chapel	2	4,550	2,275	47	4,616	2,308	43
12 Lawton	2	2,680	1,340	-14	2,680	1,340	-17
13 Middlewich Cledford	2	3,725	1,863	20	3,791	1,896	17
14 Middlewich Kinderton	3	5,313	1,771	14	6,060	2,020	25
15 Odd Rode	3	4,514	1,505	-3	4,569	1,523	-6
16 Sandbach East	3	3,982	1,327	-14	4,045	1,348	-17
17 Sandbach North	3	4,989	1,663	7	5,014	1,671	3
18 Sandbach West	3	4,413	1,471	-5	5,074	1,691	4
Total	45	69,714	—	—	72,863	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,549	—	—	1,619	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Congleton Borough Council's submission.

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 borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, electors in Astbury ward are relatively over-represented by 34 per cent, while electors in Holmes Chapel ward are relatively under-represented by 47 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

10 During Stage One, we received representations from Congleton Borough Council, Congleton Borough Council Labour Group, Congleton Borough Council Conservative Group, three parish and town councils and a borough and town councillor. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in the report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Congleton in Cheshire*. We proposed that:

- (a) Congleton Borough Council should be served by 48 councillors, three more than at present;
- (b) there should be 20 wards, compared with 18 at present;
- (c) the boundaries of 15 of the existing wards should be modified, while three wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- (d) there should be new warding arrangements for Alsager, Congleton, Middlewich and Sandbach town councils and Odd Rode Parish Council.

Draft Recommendation

Congleton Borough Council should comprise 48 councillors, serving 20 wards. Elections should continue to take place by thirds.

11 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in all of the 20 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was expected to continue over the next five years, with the number of electors per councillor in only one ward expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average by 2002.

12 Our draft recommendations are summarised at Appendix B.

4. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

13 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 12 representations were received. A list of respondents is available on request from the Commission's offices.

Congleton Borough Council

14 The Borough Council welcomed our draft recommendations, and noted that we had largely endorsed the majority of its proposals. However, it noted that we had departed from the Council's proposals in two areas, and made further submissions in respect of those two areas.

15 First, it was prepared to accept our draft recommendations in Alsager and Lawton provided that we confirmed our draft recommendation not to transfer the properties in the Linley Lane area from Alsager East ward to Lawton ward. It argued that this area is an integral part of Alsager Town, and has little affinity with Lawton ward. Also, it considered that the proposed Alsager North ward should be renamed Alsager Central ward, which it considered would better reflect the geographic location of that ward in the town.

16 Second, it opposed our draft recommendation that the area to the west of the River Dane form a separate single-member ward, with Buglawton being retained as a two-member ward. It opposed the creation of single-member wards in urban communities, which it considered to be only acceptable in sparsely populated rural areas. It further indicated that there were currently no other single-member wards in urban communities in the borough. It contended that community affinities in the area would be better served by the proposed Buglawton and Lower Heath wards being combined to form a three-member ward, as proposed in its Stage One submission.

Congleton Borough Council Conservative Group

17 The Conservative Group supported our draft recommendations for the borough as a whole,

particularly the proposal to create a single-member ward for the area west of the River Dane. It agreed that it was not appropriate that this area become part of a larger Buglawton ward, as the area has little affinity with, and was geographically separate from, Buglawton. However, it considered that the ward name should be modified from Congleton West Heath ward to Congleton Lower Heath ward.

Congleton Borough Council Labour Group

18 The Labour Group considered that there was little justification for increasing the council size to 48, and argued that this was contrary to the views outlined in our *Guidance*. It also noted that our conclusions were based on the view that the Labour Group's proposals reduced rural representation, but maintained that this was equally the case under our draft recommendations.

19 The Labour Group argued that Alsager should be divided between two wards, each represented by three councillors. However, it contended that if we maintained that there should be seven councillors representing the town, it had no objections to our proposed boundaries. In Congleton, it expressed opposition to our proposed ward boundaries, and preferred its initial scheme for 13 councillors, detailed in its initial submission. It argued that its proposals caused minimal disruption to the existing arrangements, and were supported by Congleton Town Council. However, it commented that were we to confirm our draft recommendations, it was opposed to the proposed Congleton West Heath ward. While it agreed that Buglawton should be separately represented from the Lower Heath area, it opposed our draft recommendation on the basis that single-member wards should not be created in urban areas. It argued that the proposed Congleton West Heath ward should be combined with the proposed Congleton Central ward to form two two-member wards.

20 The Labour Group opposed our proposals for the existing wards of Astbury, Brereton, Dane and Odd Rode. It argued that the proposed Astbury

and Brereton wards would each cover large rural areas comprising several parishes, and would cause difficulties for a single councillor to represent. In particular, it noted that the proposed Astbury ward would comprise two distinct parts, each covering an area of some 10 square miles, and would be linked only by a narrow strip of a quarter of a mile. In relation to Odd Rode ward, it disagreed that its proposals would impinge on warding arrangements in the rural area, as it was not proposing changes to parished areas. It argued that there is an affinity between the Scholar Green and Mount Pleasant parish wards of Odd Rode and Newbold Astbury-cum-Moreton parish.

21 The Labour Group reiterated its preference for its original proposals for Middlewich, and argued that the larger level of electoral inequality in its scheme was caused by the increase in council size. It argued that the Trent and Mersey Canal formed a more natural boundary, and that there was no justification for departing from that boundary, in order to rectify an electoral imbalance caused by additional councillors in other parts of the borough. Similarly, it preferred its original proposals in Sandbach, although it indicated that it had no serious objections to our draft recommendation. It endorsed our draft recommendations for Holmes Chapel ward.

Parish and Town Councils

22 We received submissions from six parish and town councils at Stage Three. Alsager Town Council supported our draft recommendation at borough ward level, although it considered that the proposed Alsager North ward should be renamed Alsager Central ward. It also argued that there should be 14 town councillors to represent the area at parish level, which would give a similar breakdown to borough representation. Hassall Parish Council agreed that the council size should be increased to 48, and that it supported our draft recommendations in respect of Lawton ward. Church Lawton Parish Council also supported our draft recommendation for Lawton ward to remain a largely rural ward.

23 Middlewich Town Council indicated that it was pleased with the proposed adjustments to its ward boundaries, which it agreed would allow fairer representation for the two Middlewich wards.

However, it argued that in view of the transfer of the borough's housing stock to a Housing Association, the number of councillors representing the borough should be reduced rather than increased. Odd Rode Parish Council supported our proposal that each of its three wards in future be represented by five parish councillors. Twemlow Parish Council expressed disappointment at the loss of rural representation under our draft recommendations. It accepted that there was an imbalance in the proportion of electors to councillors in the rural areas, but considered that this was justified given the sparse population and size of those areas.

Other Representations

24 A further three submissions were received at Stage Three, all from local councillors. Councillor Hough supported our draft recommendation for Alsager ward. However, he indicated that he did not support the suggestion made by the Borough Council and Alsager Town Council that the proposed Alsager North ward be renamed Alsager Central ward. However, he agreed that Alsager town should comprise 14 town councillors. In Congleton town, he supported our proposal that the area to the west of the River Dane be represented by a separate ward to Buglawton, but considered that the proposed ward be renamed Congleton Lower Heath ward.

25 Two borough councillors expressed their support for the majority of our draft recommendations in Congleton town, except for the proposed Congleton West Heath and Congleton Central wards. They argued that the proposed ward boundaries for those two wards did not adequately reflect community identities in the area, and would result in the creation of a single-member ward in an urban area. They noted that our proposed ward boundaries resulted in the Lower Heath area of Congleton being divided between the two wards, and that the proposed Congleton Central ward would become "an enormous sprawl" covering a sizeable area of land in a predominantly urban area. Both councillors considered that the area covered by those two wards should be divided between two two-member wards, along similar lines to the proposal made by the Labour Group.

5. ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

26 As indicated previously, the Commission's prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Congleton is to achieve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria set out in the Local Government Act 1992 and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the ratio of electors to councillors being "as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough".

27 However, our function is not merely arithmetical. First, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on assumptions as to changes in the number and distribution of local government electors likely to take place within the ensuing five years. Second, we must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries, and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken. Third, we must consider the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the interests and identities of local communities.

28 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which provides for 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.

29 In our March 1996 *Guidance*, we expressed the view that "proposals for changes in electoral arrangements should therefore be based on variations in each ward of no more than plus or minus 10 per cent from the average councillor:elector ratio for the authority, having regard to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates. Imbalances in excess of plus or minus 20 per cent may be acceptable, but only in highly exceptional circumstances ... and will have to be justified in full." However, as emphasised in our September 1996 supplement to the *Guidance*,

while we accept that absolute equality of representation is likely to be unattainable, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, such equality should be the starting point in any electoral review.

Electorate Projections

30 During Stage One, the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2002, projecting an increase of some 4 per cent over the next five years from 69,714 to 72,863. Substantial growth was projected for the areas covered by the existing Middlewich Kinderton and Sandbach West wards. The Borough 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. In our draft recommendations report, we accepted that this was an inexact science and, having given consideration to projected electorates, were content that the Borough Council's figures represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at that time.

31 We received no comments on the Council's electorate projections at Stage Three, and remain satisfied that they provide the best estimates presently available.

Council Size

32 Our March 1996 *Guidance* indicated that we would normally expect the number of councillors serving a district or borough council to be in the range of 30 to 60.

33 Congleton Borough Council is at present served by 45 councillors. At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed an increase in council size to 48. This view was supported by a local councillor and the Conservative Group, which commented that the increase would "safeguard the rural areas in what is considered a rural authority". However, the

Labour Group were in favour of retaining the present number of councillors. While all three submissions noted that substantial growth in Holmes Chapel and Middlewich over the last 20 years justified increasing their representation by one councillor in each case, the Labour Group considered that this could be offset by reducing the rural area's representation by two councillors.

34 In our draft recommendations report, we considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received. We concluded that we were not persuaded that the proposed reduction in the number of councillors representing the rural area would satisfactorily secure effective and convenient local government in that area, and that, in our judgement, the statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would best be met by a council size of 48.

35 At Stage Three, our proposal to increase the council size was opposed by the Labour Group and Middlewich Town Council. It was argued that there was little justification for increasing the council size, which was contrary to the views set out in our *Guidance*. Furthermore, the Labour Group argued that its proposals for a continuing council size of 45, which would result in a large Congleton Rural ward, to be represented by three councillors, would secure far more effective representation for the rural area than three single-member wards. It considered that three councillors would be better at representing the diverse interests within large rural areas than single councillors.

36 We have considered the views in relation to council size, but are not persuaded that there is sufficiently persuasive a case to warrant a departure from our draft recommendation on council size. We remain satisfied that the best balance of the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would be met by a council size of 48, and that the proposed reduction in the number of councillors to represent the rural area would fail to satisfactorily reflect constituent communities and would not secure effective and convenient local government for that area.

Electoral Arrangements

37 Having considered all representations received during Stage Three of the review, we have further considered our draft recommendations. While we are substantially endorsing our draft recommendations in the light of views expressed at Stage Three, we consider that a changes is required to the Congleton town area, in order to provide for a scheme which would secure a better balance between the achievement of electoral equality and the need to reflect community identities in the area.

38 The following sections outline the Commission's analysis and final recommendations for the future electoral arrangements for Congleton, which are summarised in Figures 1 and 4 and illustrated on Map 2. Appendix A contains detailed mapping of boundary changes proposed by the Commission, while the map at the back of the report illustrates the final recommendations for Congleton town. The following wards are considered in turn:

- (a) the two Alsager wards and Lawton ward;
- (b) the four Congleton wards and Buglawton ward;
- (c) Holmes Chapel ward;
- (d) the two Middlewich wards;
- (e) the three Sandbach wards;
- (f) Odd Rode ward;
- (g) Astbury, Brereton and Dane wards.

Alsager East, Alsager West and Lawton wards

39 Alsager is currently divided into two wards, Alsager East and Alsager West, each represented by three councillors. Lawton ward comprises the parishes of Church Lawton, Betchton and Hassall, and is represented by two councillors. Alsager East and Lawton wards have 12 per cent and 14 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively, while Alsager West ward has 23 per cent more electors per councillor than the average. This level of electoral inequality is projected to deteriorate further by 2002.

40 At Stage One, the Borough Council, the Labour Group and Councillor Hough proposed changes to the existing warding arrangements in Alsager and Lawton. While all three schemes would improve electoral equality in the area, we noted that the Borough Council had achieved this though merging part of Alsager town with the rural Lawton ward, and were not persuaded that this would satisfactorily reflect the interests and identities of those areas. Of the other two schemes, we noted that the key distinction was in relation to the number of councillors representing Alsager. We noted that the Labour Group assumed a continuing council size of 45 members, and that this had been achieved by a reduction in the number of councillors representing the rural area. However, given our draft recommendation that the borough be represented by 48 councillors, we considered that Alsager was entitled to seven councillors. We therefore endorsed Councillor Hough's proposed warding arrangements for Alsager to be represented by three wards, except for the proposed transfer of Linley Lane from Alsager East to Lawton ward.

41 During Stage Three, our draft recommendation was supported by the Borough Council, the Conservative Group, Alsager Town Council and the parish councils of Church Lawton and Hassall. However, the Borough Council and the Town Council considered that the proposed Alsager North ward should be renamed Alsager Central ward, and argued that this would better reflect the geographic location of the ward in the town. This was, however, opposed by Councillor Hough, who considered that Alsager North was a more accurate description of the ward than Alsager Central. The Labour Group argued that its preferred option was for two wards, each to be represented by three councillors. Nevertheless, it considered that if we confirmed our draft recommendation for seven councillors to represent the town, it had no objections to our proposed boundaries.

42 Having given careful consideration to representations received at Stage Three, we are content to confirm our draft recommendation for Alsager to be represented by three wards and for no change to Lawton ward. We have noted the Labour Group's preference for its proposed ward boundaries outlined at Stage One. However, this proposed warding arrangement assumes 45

councillors and, as indicated earlier, we consider that this scheme would adversely impact on effective and convenient local government in the rural area. Accordingly, we are satisfied that the boundaries proposed in our draft recommendations report would represent the best balance between the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

43 We have noted that there have been differing views in respect of the appropriate name of one of the proposed Alsager wards. While Councillor Hough has indicated his support for Alsager North ward, the Borough Council and the Town Council expressed their support for the ward to be named Alsager Central ward. We have considered the views expressed, and have decided to propose that the ward be renamed Alsager Central ward. This would reflect the view of the majority of submissions, and would appear to better reflect the geographic position of the ward in the town.

44 Our final recommendation would provide for improved electoral equality, resulting in the number of electors per councillor varying by less than 8 per cent in all three wards. This electoral equality is projected to deteriorate marginally by 2002, with the number of electors per councillor in Lawton ward expected to vary by 12 per cent from the average. The proposals are summarised in Figures 1 and 4 and illustrated on Map A2 at Appendix A.

Congleton Central, Congleton North, Congleton South, Congleton West and Buglawton wards

45 Congleton town is divided into five wards, and is represented by 13 councillors. Under current arrangements, Buglawton, Congleton Central and Congleton North wards have 9 per cent, 8 per cent and 12 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively, while Congleton South and Congleton West wards have 7 per cent and 18 per cent more electors per councillor than the average. This electoral imbalance is not projected to change significantly over the next five years.

46 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed that the number of councillors for the town should be increased from 13 to 14, with significant modifications to all existing ward boundaries in

order to produce four three-member wards and one two-member ward. Its scheme was supported by the Conservative Group, and Councillor Hough, except for the proposed three-member Buglawton ward. They argued that the area to the west of the River Dane had little affinity with the Buglawton area, and should therefore be represented separately, with the boundary following the River Dane. The Labour Group proposed that Congleton should continue to be represented by 13 councillors, and that the ward boundaries should be largely based on the existing ward boundaries.

47 In our draft recommendations report, we noted that both schemes resulted in improved electoral equality but that, while the Borough Council's scheme would provide for a substantial re-warding of all ward boundaries, it also appeared to better reflect communities in the area. In particular, we noted that the proposed ward boundaries would unite properties in the centre of the town, provide separate representation for the Bromley Farm Estate and unite areas either side of Macclesfield Road. However, while endorsing the Borough Council's scheme as the basis for our warding proposals, we considered that there was merit in Buglawton being separately represented from the Lower Heath area of Congleton town. We also proposed a number of further minor boundary changes.

48 During Stage Three, our draft recommendations were supported by the Conservative Group and Councillor Hough, although both considered that the proposed Congleton West Heath ward should be renamed Congleton Lower Heath ward. However, our draft recommendation was opposed by the Borough Council, the Labour Group and two local councillors, all of whom expressed opposition to the creation of single-member wards in urban communities. It was argued that single-member wards are only acceptable in sparsely populated areas, and that there are no other single-member wards in urban communities in the borough. It was also argued that the proposed ward would have little shared community identity, as it is divided by the Macclesfield Road.

49 We note that there are differing views in relation to the most appropriate warding arrangements in

the Congleton area. The Borough Council argued that the communities of Buglawton and the Lower Heath area would be better represented by being combined to form a single three-member ward. This view, however, drew little support from other respondents, all of whom maintained that the area to the west of the River Dane had little affinity with, and was geographically separate from, Buglawton. While the Labour Group continued to support its initial proposed warding, it considered that if we were to broadly confirm our draft recommendations in Congleton town, we should reconsider our proposals for Congleton Central and Congleton West Heath wards. It argued that the proposed three-member ward would cover a larger part of the town, and that it would be preferable for the proposed ward to be combined with the proposed Congleton West Heath. It also maintained that this proposal would enable the Lower Heath area to be contained wholly within the proposed Congleton North West ward.

50 Having regard to the representations received at Stage Three, we are content to confirm most of our draft recommendations for Congleton town, which we consider represent the best balance between electoral equality and reflecting the interests and identities of communities. However, in the light of representations received, and in particular the strong reaction to the proposal to create a single-member ward in the town, we have decided not to endorse our draft recommendation for the proposed Congleton West Heath ward. In examining the various alternative warding arrangements proposed, we remain of the view that the Lower Heath and Buglawton areas should not be combined within a single ward. We consider that these areas are physically separated from each other, and would appear to have little shared affinity. However, we are persuaded that there is merit in the Labour Group's proposal for two two-member wards, although we are modifying the boundary to follow the line of Lawton Street until it meets the proposed Congleton North ward. We consider that this proposal would represent a better balance between electoral equality and reflecting community identities in the town. In particular, it would unite the Lower Heath area within one ward, reduce the size of the proposed Congleton Central ward, and continue to provide separate representation for Buglawton.

51 Overall, our draft recommendations would provide improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying by no more than 9 per cent from the borough average in all wards. All wards would remain within 10 per cent of the average by 2002. These proposed ward boundaries are detailed in Figures 1 and 4 and are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Holmes Chapel ward

52 Currently Holmes Chapel ward is represented by two councillors. As a result of considerable residential development, the electorate of the ward has risen sharply, resulting in the number of electors per councillor being 47 per cent above the borough average. This means that, on average, a single councillor for Holmes Chapel ward represents 2,275 electors, compared to the borough average of 1,549.

53 At Stage One, on account of the substantial growth, the Borough Council and the Labour Group proposed that Holmes Chapel ward should in future be represented by three councillors. It was argued that this proposal would resolve the current electoral imbalance in Holmes Chapel ward, while retaining existing boundaries, and would therefore preserve the local identity of the village and its community. Accordingly, our draft recommendation was that Holmes Chapel ward should in future be represented by three councillors. This would provide for improved electoral equality, resulting in there being 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average now (1 per cent by 2002).

54 During Stage Three, our draft recommendations drew the support of the Borough Council, the Conservative Group and the Labour Group. No other representations were received. We are therefore content to confirm as final our draft recommendations, which we consider represent the best balance between securing equality of representation and the statutory criteria.

Middlewich Cledford and Middlewich Kinderton wards

55 At present, Middlewich is divided between two wards: Middlewich Cledford ward, which is

represented by three councillors; and Middlewich Kinderton ward, which is represented by two councillors. The electorate of the town has significantly increased over the past 10 years, from some 7,300 electors in 1987 to some 9,000 in 1997. This growth has caused the area to become substantially under-represented, with the number of electors per councillor in Middlewich Cledford and Middlewich Kinderton wards being 20 per cent and 14 per cent above the borough average respectively.

56 At Stage One, the Borough Council, the Labour Group and Middlewich Town Council all argued that Middlewich should in future be represented by six councillors, and proposed modifications to the existing ward boundary between the two wards in order to secure a better level of electoral representation. We noted that the boundaries proposed by the Borough Council and the Labour Group were broadly similar, although the Labour Group's proposed warding arrangements were based on a continuing council size of 45. Assuming 48 councillors, the Labour Group's proposals would result in the number of electors per councillor in Middlewich Cledford and Middlewich Kinderton wards varying by 6 and 13 per cent from the borough average respectively (5 per cent and 12 per cent by 2002). We therefore endorsed the Borough Council's proposals for Middlewich in our draft recommendations report, which we considered provided the better level of electoral equality in the town.

57 During Stage Three, the Borough Council, the Conservative Group and Middlewich Town Council endorsed our draft recommendation for changes to Middlewich wards, which, it was agreed, would allow fairer representation for the two Middlewich wards. However, the Labour Group indicated that it preferred its initial proposals for changes to Middlewich wards, and that the higher level of electoral inequality was caused by the increase in council size. It argued that the Trent and Mersey Canal formed a more natural boundary, and that there was no justification for departing from that boundary in order to rectify an electoral imbalance caused by additional councillors in other parts of the borough.

58 In the light of representations received at Stage Three, we are content to confirm our draft

recommendations for Middlewich, which have met with broad support at Stage Three. We have noted the Labour Group's preference for its original proposals but, given our conclusions on council size, do not consider that they would represent a better balance between the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Details of the proposed ward boundaries are detailed in Figures 1 and 4 and illustrated on Map A3 at Appendix A.

Sandbach East, Sandbach North and Sandbach West wards

59 The town of Sandbach is currently divided between three wards – Sandbach East, Sandbach North and Sandbach West – each returning three councillors. Sandbach North and Sandbach West wards have reasonable electoral equality, varying from the borough average by 7 per cent and 5 per cent respectively. However, the number of electors per councillor in Sandbach East ward is 14 per cent below the borough average (17 per cent by 2002).

60 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed that the boundaries of all three wards should be modified in order to transfer electors from both Sandbach North and Sandbach West wards to Sandbach East ward. It indicated that its warding arrangement was supported by Sandbach Town Council. The Labour Group submitted an alternative warding arrangement for Sandbach, which proposed no change to Sandbach North ward, but proposed the transfer of a larger area from Sandbach West ward to Sandbach East ward. In our draft recommendations report, we endorsed the Borough Council's warding arrangements, which we considered would represent a better balance of our statutory criteria and the need to secure electoral equality. We noted that this scheme would produce the better level of electoral equality, and had the support of Sandbach Town Council.

61 During Stage Three, the Borough Council and the Conservative Group expressed support for our draft recommendations for Sandbach Town. However, the Labour Group argued that it preferred its initial warding arrangements for Sandbach, although: had no serious objections to our proposals. No other representations were received.

62 In the light of the representations received, we are content to confirm our draft recommendations

as final. We consider that these proposed warding arrangements would provide the best balance between securing electoral equality and the statutory criteria. These proposals are detailed in Figures 1 and 4, and are illustrated on Map A4.

Odd Rode ward

63 At present, Odd Rode ward comprises Odd Rode parish and is represented by three councillors. The current ward has 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average, a level of electoral equality that is projected to deteriorate marginally over the next five years.

64 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed that there should be no change to the existing electoral arrangements for Odd Rode ward. Assuming 48 councillors, its scheme would provide for the number of electors per councillor varying by 4 per cent from the borough average, becoming equal to the average by 2002. In its submission, it indicated that its proposal was supported by Odd Rode Parish Council. However, the Labour Group proposed that Odd Rode ward should be enlarged by including Newbold Astbury-cum-Moreton parish from Astbury ward.

65 In our draft recommendations report, we concluded that we had not been sufficiently persuaded that any changes to the warding arrangements would strike a better balance between securing equality of representation and the statutory criteria. We noted that the Labour Group's proposals were based on a continuing council size of 45 councillors, and that, assuming 48 councillors, the number of electors per councillor in its revised Odd Rode ward would vary by more than 10 per cent, both now and in 2002. We also noted that its proposal to transfer parishes from Astbury ward would impinge upon the warding arrangements in the rural area, and require the endorsement of its proposed warding in the rural area. We therefore recommended that there should be no change to the existing electoral arrangements for Odd Rode ward.

66 During Stage Three, our draft recommendation was supported by the Borough Council and the Conservative Group. However, the Labour Group expressed opposition to our proposal, and considered that we should endorse its initial

proposals. It disagreed that its proposals would impinge on warding arrangements in the rural area, as it was not proposing changes to parished areas. It also argued that there was an affinity between the Scholar Green and Mount Pleasant wards of Odd Rode and Newbold Astbury-cum-Moreton parish.

⁶⁷ Having given careful consideration to the responses received at Stage Three, we are content to confirm our draft recommendation as final. We have noted the Labour Group's arguments for its initial proposals, but remain satisfied with the conclusions outlined in our draft recommendations report. We are not persuaded that the Labour Group's proposed warding arrangements for the rural area would satisfactorily meet the needs of the constituent local communities or secure effective and convenient local government. Accordingly, we confirm that there should be no change to the existing warding arrangements for Odd Rode ward. This proposal is detailed in Figures 1 and 4, and illustrated on Map 2.

Astbury, Brereton and Dane wards

⁶⁸ The three wards of Astbury, Brereton and Dane currently comprise the majority of the rural area. All three are significantly over-represented, with Astbury, Brereton and Dane wards having 34 per cent, 18 per cent and 30 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average. This electoral inequality is not projected to improve over the next five years.

⁶⁹ At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed that there should be three new rural wards to cover this area. It proposed that the existing Dane ward be divided, with the parishes of Cranage, Goostrey, Swettenham and Twemlow forming one ward, to be represented by two councillors; that the parishes of Hulme Walfield, Somerford and Somerford Booths form a new ward with the parishes of Newbold Astbury-cum-Moreton and Smallwood, to be represented by one councillor; and that Arclid parish be transferred from Astbury ward to Brereton ward, which would continue to be represented by one councillor. However, the Labour Group proposed that Newbold Astbury-cum-Moreton parish should be transferred from Astbury ward to Odd Rode ward, and that the parishes of Arclid and Smallwood be transferred to Lawton ward, with the remainder of the parishes

forming a new Congleton Rural ward, which would be represented by three councillors.

⁷⁰ In our draft recommendations report, we concluded that the Borough Council's proposed warding arrangements appeared to better reflect the interests and identities of communities in the area. We noted that its proposals would reduce the size of the existing Dane ward, and would provide for three new wards which closely reflected the existing warding arrangements. In examining the Labour Group's proposal, we noted that the proposed Congleton Rural ward would cover a substantial rural area, and did not consider that the ward would satisfactorily reflect communities in the area or secure effective and convenient local government.

⁷¹ During Stage Three, the Borough Council and the Conservative Group supported our draft recommendations. However, the Labour Group opposed our proposals in respect of the existing wards of Astbury, Brereton, Dane and Odd Rode wards. It argued that the proposed Astbury and Brereton wards would each cover large rural areas and comprise several parishes, and would cause difficulties for a single councillor to represent. In particular, it noted that the proposed Astbury ward would prove difficult to represent effectively, given its size and shape.

⁷² On the evidence received at Stage Three, we are content to confirm our draft recommendations for Astbury, Brereton and Dane Valley wards. We have noted the Labour Group's opposition, but remain persuaded that its proposed Congleton Rural ward would not represent a better balance between the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria than our draft recommendations. In our judgement, the interests and identities of the constituent communities within the rural area would be better served by three single-member wards rather than one large three-member ward. Our final recommendations would provide for much improved electoral equality, and would result in the number of electors per councillor varying by no more than 7 per cent in all three wards. By 2002, the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 5 per cent from the average. These proposals are detailed in Figures 1 and 4 and illustrated on Map 2.

Electoral Cycle

73 In our draft recommendations report, we proposed that the present system of elections by thirds in Congleton should be retained. No representations were received at Stage Three, and we have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations as final.

Conclusions

74 Having considered carefully all the evidence and representations received in response to our consultation report, we have concluded that:

- (a) Congleton Borough Council should be represented by 48 councillors, rather than 45 as at present;
- (b) there should be 20 wards, compared with 18 at present;
- (c) the boundaries of 15 of the existing wards should be modified;
- (d) elections should continue to take place by thirds.

75 We have decided substantially to endorse our draft recommendations, subject to modifying the proposed boundary between the proposed

Congleton Central and Congleton West Heath wards to provide for two two-member wards.

76 Figure 3 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1997 and 2002 electorate figures.

77 As Figure 3 shows, our recommendations would reduce the number of wards with electoral variances greater than 10 per cent from the borough average from 12 to none. This improved level of electoral equality is expected to be retained over the next five years. Under these proposals, the average number of electors per councillor would reduce from 1,549 to 1,452. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Congleton Borough Council should comprise 48 councillors serving 20 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 4, and illustrated on Map 2, Appendix A and the large map at the back of the report. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

*Figure 3:
Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements*

	1997 electorate		2002 projected electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	45	48	45	48
Number of wards	18	20	18	20
Average number of electors per councillor	1,549	1,452	1,619	1,518
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	12	0	13	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	4	0	5	0

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

78 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that, if a parish is to be divided between different borough wards, it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. Accordingly, we propose a number of consequential parish and town ward changes, as detailed below.

79 In our draft recommendations report, we proposed that Congleton Town Council should in future comprise 20 town councillors, and that the number of wards should be increased from five to six. We further proposed that the boundaries of the new wards should be modified to reflect proposed changes to their borough wards. However, as a result of a boundary change to borough wards, we are modifying our draft recommendation.

Final Recommendation

Congleton Town Council should comprise 20 town councillors representing six wards, with the new wards of Congleton West and Congleton South returning four town councillors each and the new wards of Buglawton, Congleton Central, Congleton North and Congleton North West returning three town councillors each. The new town wards should be coterminous with the proposed borough wards, as illustrated in the map at the back of the report.

80 In our draft recommendations report, we proposed that Alsager Town Council should in future comprise 12 town councillors, and that the number of wards should be increased from two to three. We also proposed that the boundaries of the new wards should be modified to reflect proposed changes to their borough wards. At Stage Three, the Borough Council, Alsager Town Council and Councillor Hough argued that there should be 14 town councillors to represent the town. In the light of those views, we are persuaded to modify our draft recommendation.

Final Recommendation

Alsager Town Council should comprise 14 town councillors representing three wards, with Alsager East ward returning six town councillors, and Alsager Central and West wards each returning four town councillors. The new town wards should be modified to reflect the proposed borough wards, as illustrated on Map A2 at Appendix A.

81 In our draft recommendations report, we proposed that Middlewich Town Council should continue to comprise 12 town councillors representing two wards. We also proposed that the boundary between Middlewich Cledford and Middlewich Kinderton wards should be modified to reflect proposed changes to their borough wards. We have received no evidence at Stage Three to persuade us to move away from this view.

Final Recommendation

Middlewich Town Council should continue to comprise 12 town councillors representing two wards, each returning six town councillors. The new town wards should be modified to reflect the proposed borough wards, as illustrated on Map A3 at Appendix A.

82 In our draft recommendations report, we proposed that Sandbach Town Council should continue to comprise 18 town councillors representing three wards. We also proposed that the boundaries of the new wards should be modified to reflect proposed changes to their borough wards. We have received no evidence at Stage Three to persuade us to move away from this view.

Final Recommendation

Sandbach Town Council should continue to comprise 18 town councillors representing three wards, each returning six town councillors. The new town wards should be modified to reflect the proposed borough wards, as illustrated on Map A4 at Appendix A.

83 In our draft recommendations report, we proposed that Odd Rode Parish Council should continue to comprise 15 parish councillors representing three wards, but that each ward should return five parish councillors. We have received no evidence at Stage Three to persuade us to move away from this view.

Final Recommendation

Odd Rode Parish Council should comprise 15 town councillors representing three wards, each returning five parish councillors.

84 In our draft recommendations report we proposed that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of parish and town councils in the borough. We have not received any evidence to persuade us to move away from this proposal.

Final Recommendation

Elections for parish and town councils should continue to be held at the same time as elections for principal authorities.

Map 2:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Congleton



KEY	
PROPOSED WARD BOUNDARY	—————
EXISTING PARISH BOUNDARY	- - - - -

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Key to Wards

- | | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Alsager Central | 8 Congleton North | 15 Middlewich Cledford |
| 2 Alsager East | 9 Congleton North West | 16 Middlewich Kinderton |
| 3 Alsager West | 10 Congleton South | 17 Odd Rode |
| 4 Astbury | 11 Congleton West | 18 Sandbach East |
| 5 Brereton | 12 Dane Valley | 19 Sandbach North |
| 6 Buglawton | 13 Holmes Chapel | 20 Sandbach West |
| 7 Congleton Central | 14 Lawton | |

Figure 4:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Congleton

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1997)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Alsager Central	2	2,834	1,417	-2	2,834	1,417	-7
2 Alsager East	3	4,162	1,387	-4	4,176	1,392	-8
3 Alsager West	2	2,812	1,406	-3	3,092	1,546	2
4 Astbury	1	1,451	1,451	0	1,451	1,451	-4
5 Brereton	1	1,369	1,369	-6	1,435	1,435	-5
6 Buglawton	2	2,646	1,323	-9	2,728	1,364	-10
7 Congleton Central	2	2,811	1,406	-3	3,192	1,596	5
8 Congleton North	2	2,776	1,388	-4	2,802	1,401	-8
9 Congleton North West	2	3,004	1,502	3	3,064	1,532	1
10 Congleton South	3	4,644	1,548	7	4,888	1,629	7
11 Congleton West	3	4,331	1,444	-1	4,326	1,442	-5
12 Dane Valley	2	2,708	1,354	-7	3,027	1,514	0
13 Holmes Chapel	3	4,550	1,517	4	4,616	1,539	1
14 Lawton	2	2,680	1,340	-8	2,680	1,340	-12
15 Middlewich Cledford	3	4,314	1,438	-1	4,920	1,640	8
16 Middlewich Kinderton	3	4,724	1,575	8	4,924	1,641	8
17 Odd Rode	3	4,514	1,505	4	4,569	1,523	0
18 Sandbach East	3	4,680	1,560	7	4,706	1,569	3

Figure 4 (continued):
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Congleton

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1997)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
19 Sandbach North	3	4,701	1,567	8	4,748	1,583	4
20 Sandbach West	3	4,003	1,334	-8	4,685	1,562	3
Totals	48	69,714	—	—	72,863	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,452	—	—	1,518	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Congleton Borough Council's submission.

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 borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

6. NEXT STEPS

85 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Congleton and submitted our final recommendations to the Secretary of State, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992.

86 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an order. Such an order will not be made earlier than six weeks from the date that our recommendations are submitted to the Secretary of State.

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

The Secretary of State
Department of the Environment,
Transport and the Regions
Local Government Review
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for Congleton: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for the Congleton area.

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the borough and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail in Maps A2, A3, A4 and the large map inserted at the back of the report.

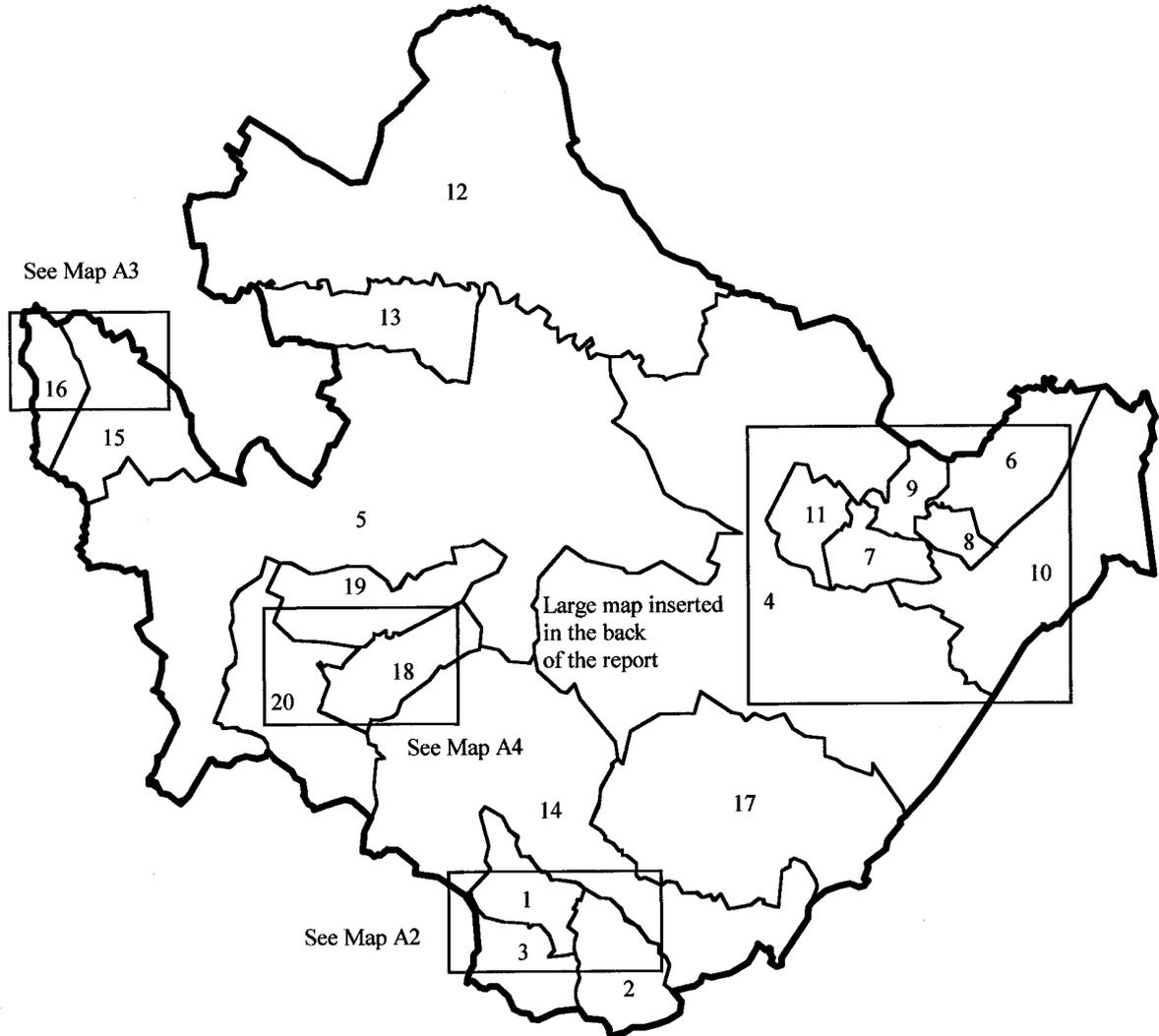
Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding arrangements in Alsager.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed boundary change between Middlewich Cledford and Middlewich Kinderton wards.

Map A4 illustrates the proposed ward boundaries for Sandbach East, Sandbach North and Sandbach West wards.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the Commission's proposed warding arrangements for Congleton town.

Map A1:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Congleton: Key Map

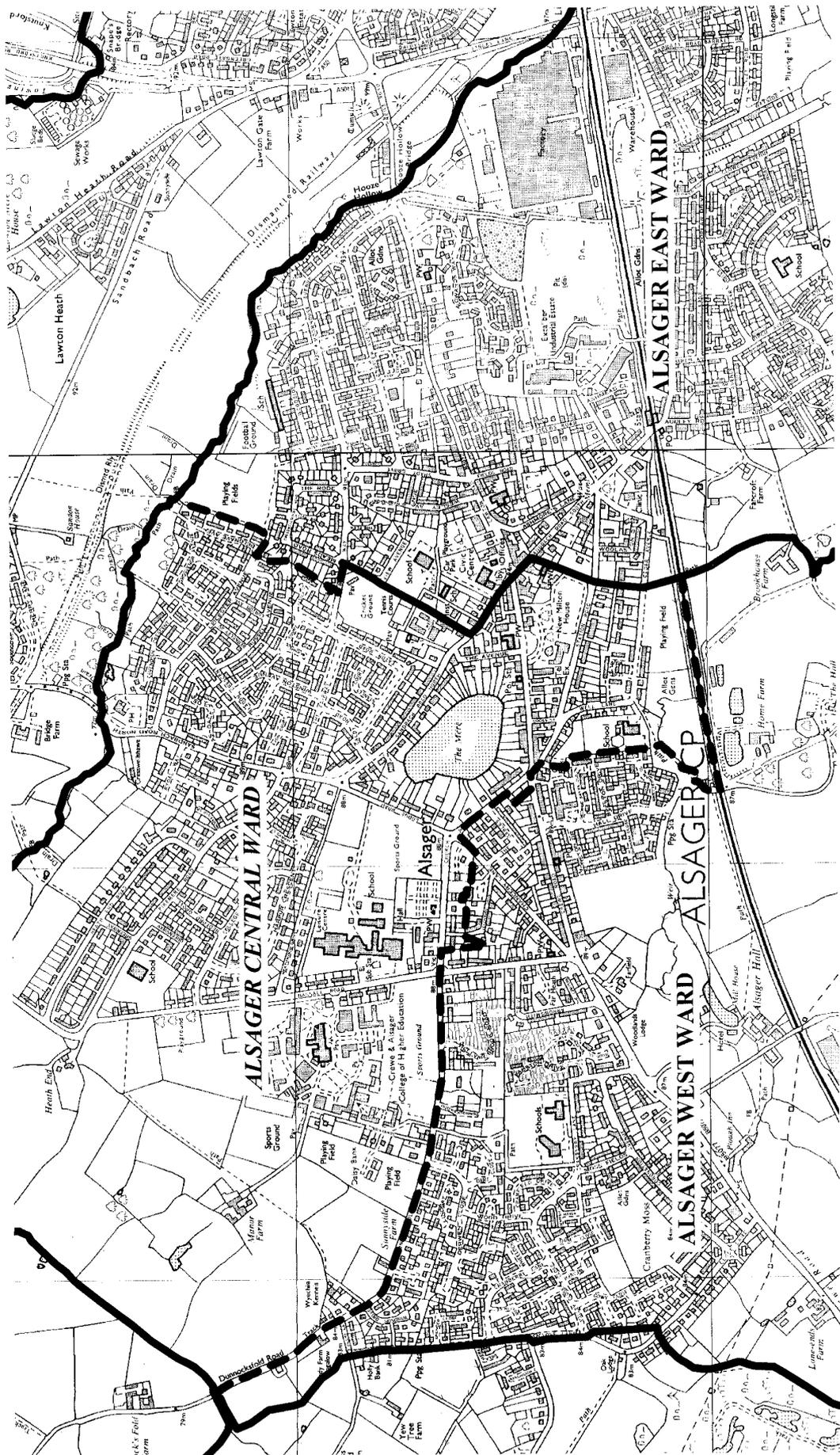


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Key to Wards

- | | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Alsager Central | 8 Congleton North | 15 Middlewich Cledford |
| 2 Alsager East | 9 Congleton North West | 16 Middlewich Kinderton |
| 3 Alsager West | 10 Congleton South | 17 Odd Rode |
| 4 Astbury | 11 Congleton West | 18 Sandbach East |
| 5 Brereton | 12 Dane Valley | 19 Sandbach North |
| 6 Buglawton | 13 Holmes Chapel | 20 Sandbach West |
| 7 Congleton Central | 14 Lawton | |

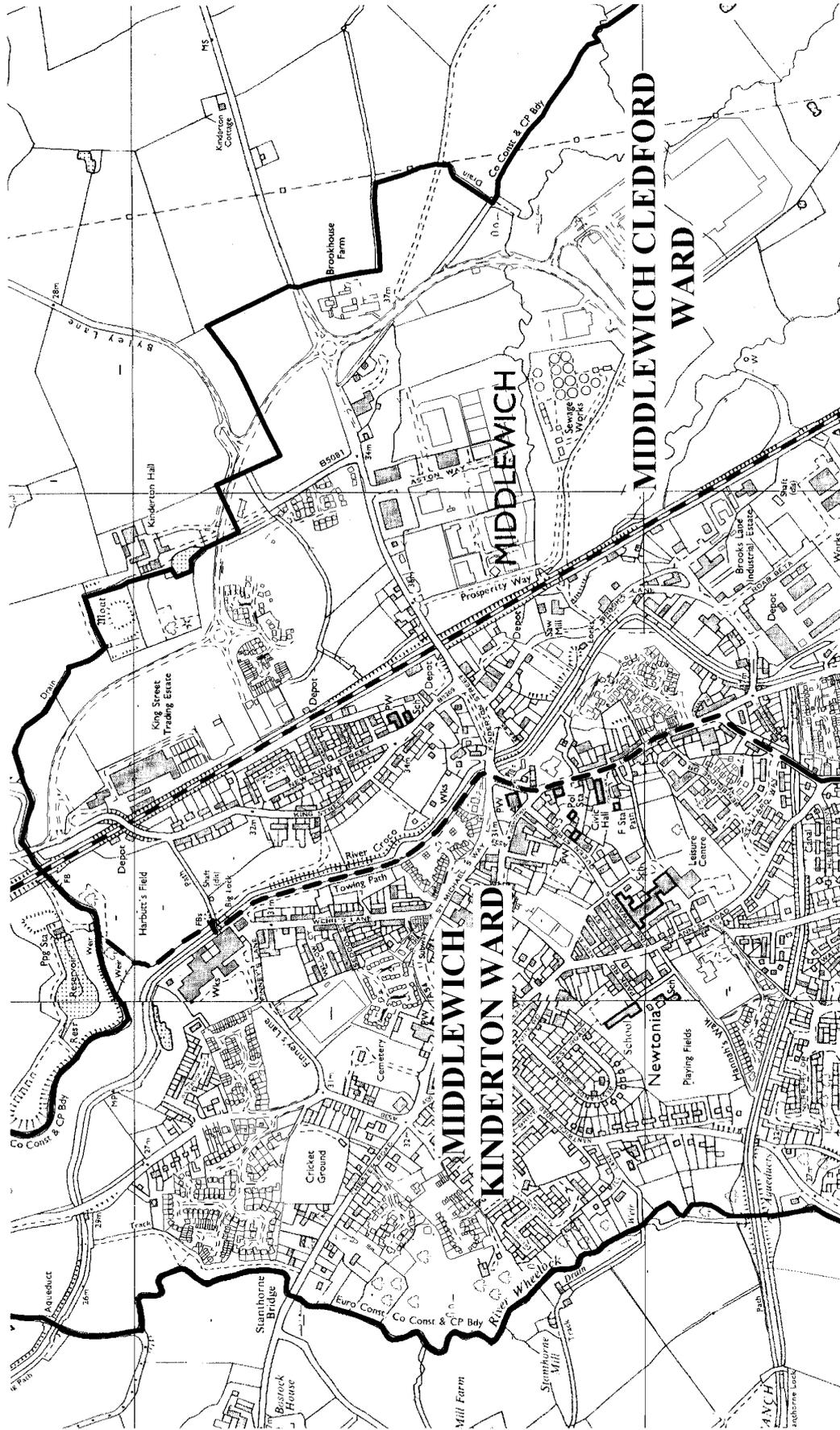
Map A2:
 Proposed Warding Arrangements in Alsager



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KEY
— EXISTING WARD BOUNDARY
— PROPOSED WARD BOUNDARY
— PROPOSED WARD NAME
ALSAGER CENTRAL WARD

Map A3:
Proposed Warding Arrangements in Middleswich



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KEY
 ——— EXISTING WARD BOUNDARY
 - - - - PROPOSED WARD BOUNDARY

APPENDIX B

Draft Recommendations for Congleton:

Figure B1:

The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1 Alsager East	3	Alsager East borough and parish ward (part)
2 Alsager North	2	Alsager East borough and parish ward (part); Alsager West borough and parish ward (part)
3 Alsager West	2	Alsager East borough and parish ward (part); Alsager West borough and parish ward (part)
4 Astbury	1	Astbury ward (part – the parishes of Smallwood and Newbold Astbury-cum-Moreton); Dane ward (part – the parishes of Hulme Walfield, Somerford and Somerford Booths)
5 Brereton	1	Brereton ward (the parishes of Brereton, Bradwall and Moston); Astbury ward (part – Arclid parish)
6 Buglawton	2	Buglawton borough and parish ward (part)
7 Congleton Central	3	Congleton Central borough and parish ward (part); Congleton North borough and parish ward (part); Congleton South borough and parish ward (part); Congleton West borough and parish ward (part)
8 Congleton North	2	Congleton North borough and parish ward (part)
9 Congleton South	3	Congleton South borough and parish ward (part); Buglawton borough and parish ward (part)
10 Congleton West	3	Congleton West borough and parish ward (part)
11 Congleton West Heath	1	Congleton North borough and parish ward (part); Congleton Central borough and parish ward (part); Congleton West borough and parish ward (part)
12 Dane Valley	2	Dane ward (part – the parishes of Cranage, Goostrey, Swettenham and Twemlow)
13 Holmes Chapel	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Holmes Chapel parish)
14 Lawton	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Betchton, Church Lawton and Hassall)

continued overleaf

*Figure B1 (continued):
The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Constituent Areas*

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
15 Middlewich Cledford	3	Middlewich Cledford borough and parish ward; Middlewich Kinderton borough and parish ward (part)
16 Middlewich Kinderton	3	Middlewich Kinderton borough and parish ward (part)
17 Odd Rode	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Odd Rode parish)
18 Sandbach East	3	Sandbach East borough and parish ward (part); Sandbach North borough and parish ward (part); Sandbach West borough and parish ward (part)
19 Sandbach North	3	Sandbach North borough and parish ward (part)
20 Sandbach West	3	Sandbach West borough and parish ward (part)

Figure B2:
The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Congleton

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1997)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Alsager East	3	4,162	1,387	-4	4,176	1,392	-8
2 Alsager North	2	2,834	1,417	-2	2,834	1,417	-7
3 Alsager West	2	2,812	1,406	-3	3,092	1,546	2
4 Astbury	1	1,451	1,451	0	1,451	1,451	-4
5 Brereton	1	1,369	1,369	-6	1,435	1,435	-5
6 Buglawton	2	2,646	1,323	-9	2,728	1,364	-10
7 Congleton Central	3	4,370	1,457	0	4,811	1,604	6
8 Congleton North	2	2,776	1,388	-4	2,802	1,401	-8
9 Congleton South	3	4,644	1,548	7	4,888	1,629	7
10 Congleton West	3	4,331	1,444	-1	4,326	1,442	-5
11 Congleton West Heath	1	1,445	1,445	-1	1,445	1,445	-5
12 Dane Valley	2	2,708	1,354	-7	3,027	1,514	0
13 Holmes Chapel	3	4,550	1,517	4	4,616	1,539	1
14 Lawton	2	2,680	1,340	-8	2,680	1,340	-12
15 Middlewich Cledford	3	4,314	1,438	-1	4,920	1,640	8
16 Middlewich Kinderton	3	4,724	1,575	8	4,924	1,641	8
17 Odd Rode	3	4,514	1,505	4	4,569	1,523	0
18 Sandbach East	3	4,680	1,560	7	4,706	1,569	3

continued overleaf

Figure B2 (continued):
 The Commission's Draft Recommendations: The Number of Electors per Councillor

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1997)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
19 Sandbach North	3	4,701	1,567	8	4,748	1,583	4
20 Sandbach West	3	4,003	1,334	-8	4,685	1,562	3
Totals	48	69,714	—	—	72,863	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,452	—	—	1,518	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Congleton Borough Council's submission.

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 borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

