

LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT  
COMMISSION  
FOR ENGLAND

FINAL  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
ON THE FUTURE  
ELECTORAL  
ARRANGEMENTS FOR  
ELLESMERE PORT &  
NESTON 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 Ellesmere Port & Neston in Cheshire.

Members of the Commission are:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)

Helena Shovelton (Deputy Chairman)

Peter Brokenshire

Professor Michael Clarke

Robin Gray

Bob Scruton


David Thomas OBE

Mike Bailey (Acting Chief Executive)

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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 Ellesmere Port & Neston under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 4 November 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 some modifications have been made (see paragraph 105) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Ellesmere Port & Neston.

We recommend that Ellesmere Port & Neston Borough Council should be served by 43 councillors representing 19 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

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT  
Chairman



# SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Ellesmere Port & Neston on 3 June 1997. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 4 November 1997, after which we undertook a nine-week period of consultation.

- **This report summarises the representations we 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 Ellesmere Port & Neston 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, with seven wards varying by 20 per cent or more from the average;**
- **by 2002, electoral equality is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor projected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 13 wards, and by more than 20 per cent in seven wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figure 1 and paragraph 105) are that:

- **Ellesmere Port & Neston Borough Council should be served by 43 councillors, compared with 41 as at present;**
- **there should be 19 wards, one more than at present;**
- **the boundaries of all the existing wards should be modified;**
- **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 17 of the 19 wards, the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **By 2002, the number of electors per councillor is projected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average in 18 of the 19 wards.**

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 11 May 1998:

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

*Figure 1:  
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary*

<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
1 Burton & Ness	1	Burton & Ness ward (part); Little Neston ward (part)	Maps 2 and A2
2 Central	2	Central ward (part); Wolverham ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
3 Grange	3	Grange ward; Central ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
4 Groves	2	Groves ward (part); Sutton ward (part)	Maps 2 and A4 and large map
5 Ledsham	3	Ledsham ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
6 Little Neston	2	Little Neston ward (part); Neston ward (part)	Maps 2, A2 and A3
7 Neston	2	Neston ward (part)	Maps 2 and A3
8 Parkgate	2	Parkgate ward (part)	Maps 2 and A3
9 Pooltown	2	Pooltown ward; Whitby ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
10 Rivacre	2	Rivacre ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
11 Riverside	2	Riverside ward (part); Burton & Ness ward (part); Parkgate ward (part)	Maps 2, A2 and A3
12 Rossmore	3	Rossmore ward; Rivacre ward (part); Westminster ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
13 Stanlow & Wolverham	3	Stanlow ward (part – including Ince parish); Wolverham ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
14 Strawberry Fields	2	Groves ward (part); Sutton ward (part)	Map 2 and A4 and large map
15 Sutton	3	Sutton ward (part)	Map 2 and A4 and large map
16 Sutton Green & Manor	2	Sutton ward (part); Groves ward (part); Ledsham ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
17 Westminster	2	Westminster ward (part); Stanlow ward (part)	Map 2 and large map



*Figure 1 (continued):  
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary*

<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
18 Whitby	3	Whitby ward (part); Central ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
19 Willaston & Thornton	2	Willaston & Thornton ward; Westminster ward (part)	Map 2 and large map

*Note: Ellesmere Port & Neston has one parish council, which is Ince in the current Stanlow ward.*



# 1. INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Ellesmere Port & Neston 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; and
- 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 Ellesmere Port & Neston 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, Ince Parish Council, 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. At the start of the review and following publication of our draft recommendations, we published a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review more widely. 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 4 November 1997 with the publication of our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Ellesmere Port & Neston in Cheshire*, and ended on 5 January 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

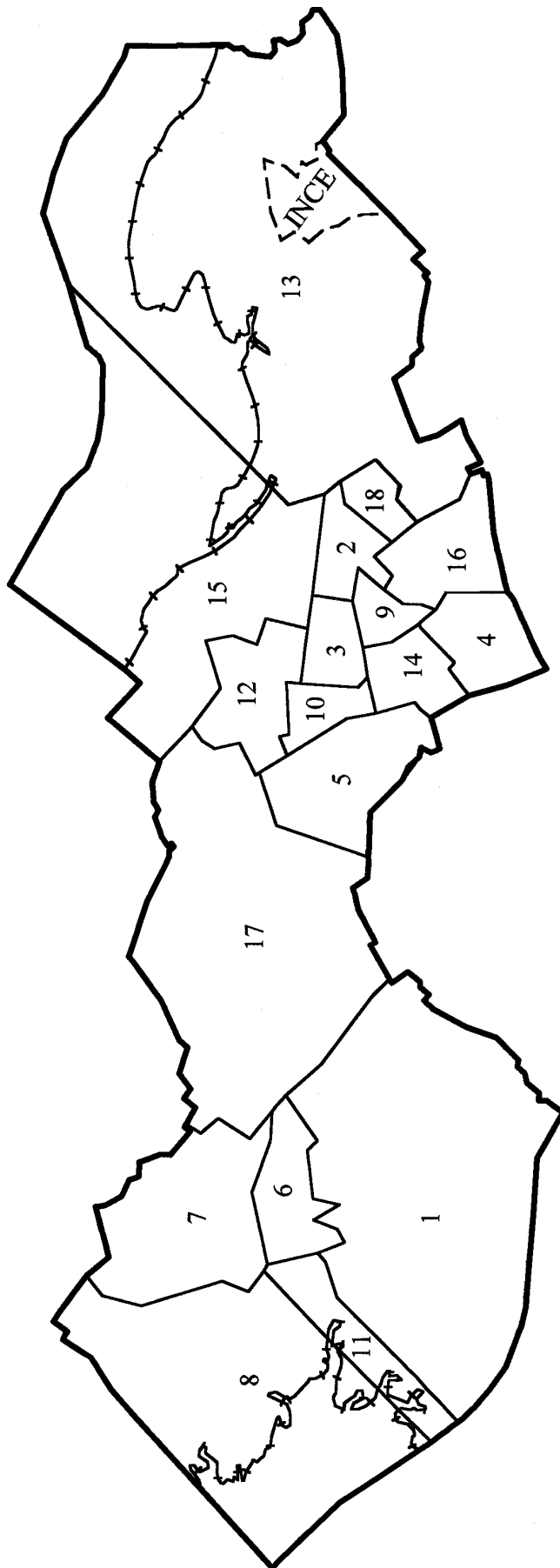
<sup>6</sup> The borough of Ellesmere Port & Neston covers an area of some 8,500 hectares and extends from the River Mersey to the River Dee. It is bounded by the Chester City area to its south, Vale Royal borough to its east, and the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral to its north. The principal urban area of the borough is the town of Ellesmere Port, which is situated at the point where the Manchester Ship Canal and the River Mersey join the Shropshire Union Canal. Ellesmere Port is the base for various industries, including the production of petroleum products, chemicals and vehicles. In contrast to this, the borough also has many smaller settlements and rural areas. It contains one parish, Ince, which is situated in the east of the borough.

<sup>7</sup> 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 average for the borough in percentage terms, has been calculated. In the report this calculation may also be described as 'electoral variance'.

<sup>8</sup> The Borough Council currently has 41 councillors elected from 18 wards (Map 1 and Figure 2). Seven wards are each represented by three councillors, nine wards elect two councillors, while the remaining two elect a single councillor each. The Council is elected by thirds. The electorate of the borough is 63,526 (February 1997) and each councillor represents an average of 1,549 electors. The Borough Council forecasts that the electorate will increase to 65,031 by the year 2002, which would change the average number of electors per councillor to 1,586 (Figure 2).

<sup>9</sup> Due to demographic and other changes since the last electoral review was completed in 1975 by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), 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 seven wards by more than 20 per cent. The most significant electoral imbalance is in Groves ward in which the number of electors per councillor is 106 per cent above the borough average.

Map 1:  
Existing Wards in Ellesmere Port & Neston



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Key to Wards

1	Burton and Ness	7	Neston	13	Stanlow
2	Central	8	Parkgate	14	Sutton
3	Grange	9	Pooltown	15	Westminster
4	Groves	10	Rivacre	16	Whitby
5	Ledsham	11	Riverside	17	Willaston and Thornton
6	Little Neston	12	Rossmore	18	Wolverham

KEY	---
EXISTING WARD BOUNDARY	---
EXISTING PARISH BOUNDARY	- - - -
MEAN HIGH WATER	+ + + +

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 Burton & Ness	1	2,402	2,402	55	2,415	2,415	52
2 Central	3	3,537	1,179	-24	3,687	1,229	-23
3 Grange	3	3,584	1,195	-23	3,584	1,195	-25
4 Groves	2	6,371	3,186	106	6,661	3,331	110
5 Ledsham	3	5,934	1,978	28	6,203	2,068	30
6 Little Neston	2	2,800	1,400	-10	2,810	1,405	-11
7 Neston	2	3,027	1,514	-2	3,080	1,540	-3
8 Parkgate	2	3,131	1,566	1	3,194	1,597	1
9 Pooltown	2	2,562	1,281	-17	2,562	1,281	-19
10 Rivacre	3	3,478	1,159	-25	3,524	1,175	-26
11 Riverside	1	1,767	1,767	14	1,767	1,767	11
12 Rossmore	3	4,476	1,492	-4	4,499	1,500	-5
13 Stanlow	2	2,576	1,288	-17	2,576	1,288	-19
14 Sutton	3	5,183	1,728	12	5,414	1,805	14
15 Westminster	2	2,737	1,369	-12	2,737	1,369	-14
16 Whitby	3	4,478	1,493	-4	4,795	1,598	1
17 Willaston & Thornton	2	3,386	1,693	9	3,426	1,713	8
18 Wolverham	2	2,097	1,049	-32	2,097	1,049	-34
<b>Totals</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>63,526</b>	—	—	<b>65,031</b>	—	—
<b>Averages</b>	—	—	<b>1,549</b>	—	—	<b>1,586</b>	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Ellesmere Port & Neston 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, in 1997, electors in Wolverham ward were relatively over-represented by 32 per cent, while electors in Ledsham ward were relatively under-represented by 28 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.





### 3. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

10 During Stage One, we received representations on electoral arrangements for the whole borough from Ellesmere Port & Neston Borough Council, Ellesmere Port & Neston Liberal Democrats, Ellesmere Port & Neston Conservative Association, Ellesmere Port & Neston Borough Council's Conservative Group and Ellesmere Port & Neston Constituency Labour Party. Two further representations were received from Neston & Parkgate Labour Party and Councillor Chrimes. 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 Ellesmere Port & Neston in Cheshire*. We proposed that:

- (a) Ellesmere Port & Neston Borough Council should be served by 43 councillors representing 19 wards;
- (b) the boundaries of all the existing wards should be modified.

#### **Draft Recommendation**

Ellesmere Port & Neston Borough Council should comprise 43 councillors, serving 19 wards. Elections should continue to be held by thirds.

11 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 18 of the 19 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was expected to be maintained for the period to 2002.

12 Our draft recommendations are summarised at Appendix B.



## 4. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

13 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 14 representations were received. A list of respondents is available on request from the Commission's offices.

### **Ellesmere Port & Neston Borough Council**

14 The Borough Council welcomed most of our draft recommendations and stated that "in a significant number of cases the Council is of the opinion that these draft recommendations are an improvement on the submissions made by the Borough Council". It considered that a council size of 43 was quite acceptable, but preferred an increase in the number of wards to 20. The Borough Council reiterated its Stage One proposal to create a single-member Manor ward comprising the parts of Sutton and Groves wards to the west of the A41, rather than combine the area with the Sutton Green area to form a two-member Sutton Green & Manor ward. It argued that the Sutton Green area is an integral part of the Ledsham community, and that its proposed ward would unite areas, all of which are virtually new housing. It also reiterated its preference for a three-member Ledsham ward containing that part of the current ward to the south of Ledsham Road.

15 The Borough Council expressed serious reservations about our proposal that Childer Thornton should be combined with part of the current Ledsham ward to form a new Ledsham & Thornton ward. It argued that there is no community identity or common interest between these two areas, and that the residents of Childer Thornton generally thought of themselves as a separate settlement. In this area, the Borough Council proposed to retain the existing ward structure for Willaston & Thornton, subject to the inclusion of a small area from Westminster ward as proposed in our draft recommendations.

16 With the remainder of the proposed Ledsham & Thornton ward, the Borough Council proposed

to create a new single-member Berwick ward containing the area to the north of Ledsham Road. The Borough Council also proposed a minor modification to the boundary between Rossmore and Westminster wards.

### **Cheshire County Council**

17 The County Council noted that "no radical change is proposed for Ellesmere Port & Neston and it therefore raises no objection to what has been proposed by the Commission". However, it supported the Borough Council's further representation concerning its proposed wards of Manor, Ledsham, Berwick and Willaston & Thornton.

### **Ellesmere Port & Neston Liberal Democrats**

18 Ellesmere Port & Neston Liberal Democrats accepted our draft recommendations for 14 of the 19 proposed wards. While the Liberal Democrats were content to support our draft recommendation for two new wards of Groves East and Groves West, it considered that these wards should be named Groves and Strawberry Fields respectively.

19 As with the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats' main concerns were the proposed Willaston & Hooton, Ledsham & Thornton and Sutton Green & Manor wards. It argued that to merge part of Willaston & Thornton ward with part of Ledsham ward would create "an artificial ward". It reiterated its Stage One proposal for a new Berwick ward for the area north of Ledsham Road on the basis that it had a different character from the rest of Ledsham ward. The Liberal Democrats argued that they were content to accept our proposed Sutton Green & Manor ward, but would also be satisfied with a single-member Manor ward, if this would in turn enable the creation of a new Berwick ward.

## **Ellesmere Port & Neston Conservative Association**

20 The Ellesmere Port & Neston Conservative Association affirmed its preference for single-member wards, but noted that as the Commission was not minded to propose them in this area, it should further review its proposed wards of Ledsham & Thornton, Sutton, Whitby and Sutton Green & Manor. In particular, the Association expressed concern over the merger of the Sutton Green area with the Manor Farm and Backford Cross developments. It argued that the proposal would merge older development with new properties with which they have “no common denominator” or direct link by road. It proposed that a separate Manor ward, represented by a single councillor, be created, with the Sutton Green area remaining linked to the other parts of Ledsham ward. The Association argued that Sutton ward should be divided into two, with a Sutton ward for the north-western area, and a two-member ward for the remainder. It argued that Whitby ward should also be divided into a single-member Stanney ward in the south and a two-member ward (or two single-member wards) for the remainder.

## **Ellesmere Port & Neston Constituency Labour Party**

21 Ellesmere Port & Neston Constituency Labour Party found that most of the proposed wards in our draft recommendations were “quite acceptable”, but objected to our proposed wards for the area to the west of the A41 (the wards of Sutton Green & Manor, Ledsham & Thornton and Willaston & Hooton). In this area it supported the Borough Council’s Stage Three submission. In particular, it argued that Sutton Green, formed part of a well-established community with the area to its north, and that it could see no reason why Childer Thornton should be removed from the current Willaston & Thornton ward.

## **Andrew Miller MP**

22 Mr Andrew Miller MP stated that “in general the Commission should be applauded for its attention to fine detail of the ward boundaries”, and that he largely supported our draft

recommendations. However, he disagreed with the proposals for the two wards of Sutton Green & Manor and Ledsham & Thornton. He supported the Borough Council’s submission for these areas, arguing that they adhere to the Commission’s guidelines and the interests of the local community.

## **Other Representations**

23 We received a further eight submissions during Stage Three. Councillor Mrs Hayward, who represents the Groves & Whitby Electoral Division on the County Council, supported our draft recommendations for the new wards of Groves East and Groves West, and our proposed changes to Whitby ward. However, she opposed our draft recommendation for a new Sutton Green & Manor ward. She argued that the Borough Council’s proposal for a single-member Manor ward had more merit. She also objected to our draft recommendation to transfer Childer Thornton from Willaston & Thornton ward into a new Ledsham & Thornton ward. She argued that the areas do not share a common interest and that Childer Thornton has much closer links with Hooton and Willaston. She supported the Borough Council’s proposals for Willaston & Thornton ward, a three-member Ledsham ward and a new single-member Berwick ward.

24 One local resident opposed any change to Willaston & Thornton ward. Another two local residents objected to our proposed Sutton Green & Manor ward, arguing that these two areas have no common interest. Instead, they supported the Borough Council’s proposal for a single-member Manor ward and a three-member Ledsham ward.

25 We also received a borough-wide scheme from two local residents, Mr Anderson and Mr Eardley, which proposed a mixture of single- and two-member wards, resulting in 27 wards represented by 43 councillors. These submissions supported our draft recommendations for Central, Pooltown, Rivacre and Willaston & Hooton wards; made no comments in relation to the Neston area; and put forward a minor boundary amendment to the proposed Groves West ward and its renaming as Strawberry Fields ward. The proposals would retain separate wards for Stanlow and Wolverham,

and would divide each of our proposed Grange, Sutton, Sutton Green & Manor, Groves West and Whitby wards into two wards. Westminster ward would be extended westwards to Overpool Road, and a new Thornton ward comprising Childer Thornton and the western part of Rossmore ward would be created. The remainder of our proposed Rossmore ward would form a new Overpool & Rossmore ward.

<sup>26</sup> With regard to the Neston area, our draft recommendations were supported by Councillor Angel, but he objected to our proposals for the area immediately to the west of the A41, where he supported the Borough Council's proposals. One other resident wrote to us during Stage Three expressing a strong preference for single-member wards throughout.



## 5. ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

27 As indicated previously, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Ellesmere Port & Neston 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”.

28 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.

29 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 is that such flexibility must be kept to a minimum, consistent with the statutory criteria.

30 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

31 Ellesmere Port & Neston Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the period 1997 to 2002, projecting an increase in the electorate of 1,505 (some 2 per cent) over the five-year period, from 63,526 to 65,031. It expected the most significant growth to be in the wards of Central, Groves, Ledsham, Sutton and Whitby. The Borough Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period. Advice from the Borough Council has been obtained on the likely effect on electorates of ward boundary changes. In our draft recommendations report, we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to projected electorates, were content that they represent the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

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

### Council Size

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

34 At present, Ellesmere Port & Neston Borough is represented by 41 councillors. During Stage One, the Borough Council proposed an increase in council size to 44; the Liberal Democrats proposed an increase of one to 42; and both the

Conservative Association and the Conservative Group proposed retaining the current number of 41. 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 the statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would be best met by a council size of 43, and invited further comments.

35 During Stage Three, the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats, Ellesmere Port & Neston Constituency Labour Party, Mr Eardley and Mr Anderson supported an increased council size of 43, and we received no proposals for alternative council sizes. Having further considered the evidence surrounding the issue of council size, we confirm as final our draft recommendation for a council size of 43.

## Electoral Arrangements

36 During Stage One, we received three separate borough-wide schemes for the future electoral arrangements of Ellesmere Port and Neston. In developing our draft recommendations, we came to the following conclusions.

37 We noted that there was a general consensus locally that there should be no radical change to council size for the borough. The Conservatives proposed no change (41 councillors), the Liberal Democrats proposed an increase of one, and the Borough Council, an increase of three. We endorsed this approach by proposing an increase of just two councillors.

38 The three submissions offered different approaches to ward size. While the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats proposed a mixture of single- and multi-member wards, the Conservatives proposed a pattern consisting solely of single-member wards. The current arrangements provide for a mixture of single- and multi-member wards, with 41 councillors representing a total of 18 wards. Therefore, the Conservatives' proposals would represent a significant departure from current practice. We stated in our *Guidance* that there may be some benefits in terms of clarity and accountability in a structure of single-member wards, but we also recognise that there are champions for multi-

member wards, and the Borough Council argued that such a structure "helps to deliver a better standard of representation to electors". We considered that it would be inappropriate to adopt a prescriptive approach to ward size in any area. Under the current legislation, the overriding objective of any review must be to achieve the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, and that balance will often be achieved by single-member wards in some areas and two- or three-member wards in others.

39 It was therefore the proposals which achieved the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria which formed the basis for our draft recommendations. In relation to electoral equality, all three proposals would have achieved an improvement over the current arrangements. All three addressed this issue by proposing increases in representation for the areas that have undergone growth since the last review (such as current Burton & Ness, Groves and Sutton wards), and by reducing representation for areas which have witnessed a relative decline (such as the current Stanlow and Wolverham wards). We considered this approach to be the most appropriate for this particular area.

40 In overall terms, we received insufficient evidence to be confident about the degree to which the Conservatives proposals would improve electoral equality. At the time of preparing our draft recommendations, the Commission had not received estimates of the number of electors for each ward. Further, while the Conservatives forecast that only two of their proposed wards would have electoral variances over 10 per cent from the borough average by 2002, we were at that stage unclear as to why their electorate projections differed from those of the Borough Council.

41 The Liberal Democrats proposed 21 wards, of which eight wards would have an electoral variance in excess of 10 per cent from the borough average currently, and nine wards would by 2002. The Borough Council's proposals, however, would have achieved a better level of electoral equality overall, with three wards having electoral variances in excess of 10 per cent from the borough average currently, reducing to two by 2002.

42 In relation to the statutory criteria, we did not receive evidence that the current structure fails to provide effective and convenient



local government in the area, or that alternative arrangements would improve the current situation. We therefore came to no firm conclusions on this issue.

43 We also considered which of the three proposals would best reflect community identities and interests in the area. Community affinities in any area are not clear cut, and often differ between residents of the same street. We recognised that the town of Ellesmere Port consists of many small traditional communities such as Whitby, Little Sutton, Great Sutton and Wolverham, but the boundaries of these areas have been obscured over time by development. In addition, while residents may have an affinity with these traditional communities, they may also have an affinity with much smaller areas, such as their housing estate or their street.

44 The approach of the Borough Council and Liberal Democrats differed from that of the Conservatives. While the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats, by retaining a mixture of single-, two- and three-member wards, were able to define ward areas of between 1,250 and 4,800 electors, the Conservatives attempted to define ward areas of around 1,500 electors throughout the borough. We considered that the Conservatives approach may not best reflect community identities and interests. Communities do not always match the average number of electors per councillor, and therefore it would appear that the Conservatives were faced with a choice of dividing communities or achieving poor levels of electoral equality. We considered that for some settlements, such as Burton & Ness or Parkgate, a single-member ward with around 1,500 electors may best reflect community identities; in others, such as Willaston or the Grange estate, the Conservatives had proposed an artificial division of the community in order to secure single-member wards. The Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats, on the other hand, appeared to have been able to better reflect community identities and interests by retaining flexibility in ward size. We concluded that their proposals, on the whole, united communities of a similar nature, and made effective use of natural boundaries, such as main roads and railway lines.

45 We concluded that of the three schemes, the Borough Council's provided the best basis for our draft recommendations. It would have significantly improved electoral equality throughout the

borough, and appeared to best reflect the statutory criteria. However, we proposed further modifications where we considered that a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria could be achieved.

46 We have paid attention to the representations received during Stage Three. From these submissions, a number of considerations emerged which informed us when formulating our final recommendations.

47 First, we have welcomed the very positive response to our draft recommendations. Respondents, including the Borough Council, Liberal Democrats and Conservatives, have all made positive proposals for change to the present electoral arrangements at Stage Three.

48 Second, there is some measure of agreement on the preferred council size. Most respondents who put forward borough-wide schemes, were content with the Commission's proposal for a council of 43 members. Although we are generally cautious about any increase in council size, the borough has been subject to growth of some 15 per cent in its electorate since the last review, and is expected to see further growth of 2 per cent by 2002.

49 Third, although the Conservative Association reaffirmed its preference for single-member wards, most respondents preferred a continuation of the current ward structure containing one-, two- and three-member wards for the borough. We acknowledged this local preference and proposed that a mixed-member ward pattern should continue.

50 Fourth, respondents have asked that we take into account established communities. We have sought to achieve this, while also seeking electoral equality across the borough, taking into account the developments which are expected to occur.

51 Having considered all representations received during Stage Three of the review, we have reviewed our draft recommendations. While we are endorsing the major part of them, in the light of those views expressed at Stage Three, we consider that some changes are required to provide a scheme which would secure a better balance between the achievement of electoral equality and the need to reflect community identities in the area.

52 The following sections outline the Commission's analysis and final recommendations for the future electoral arrangements for Ellesmere Port & Neston, which are summarised in Figures 1 and 4 and illustrated in Map 2, at Appendix A and on the large map at the back of the report. The following wards, based on existing borough wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Parkgate ward;
- (b) Riverside and Burton & Ness wards;
- (c) Little Neston and Neston wards;
- (d) Willaston & Thornton ward;
- (e) Groves and Sutton wards;
- (f) Ledsham ward;
- (g) Westminster ward;
- (h) Rivacre and Rossmore wards;
- (i) Grange and Central wards;
- (j) Pooltown and Whitby wards;
- (k) Stanlow and Wolverham wards.

### **Parkgate ward**

53 Parkgate ward covers the settlements of Parkgate and Moorside, together with the western part of Neston. At present the ward is represented by two councillors and provides reasonable electoral equality, with 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average on both the 1997 electoral register and in 2002. At Stage One, the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats, and the Labour Party proposed no change, while the Conservatives proposed the division of the ward into two single-member wards.

54 Our draft recommendation was to retain the current ward, subject to one minor modification to the boundary in order to transfer those properties south of Wirral Way to Riverside ward, reducing the electorate of Parkgate ward by 20.

55 Our draft recommendation drew support from the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats, Ellesmere Port & Neston Constituency Labour Party, Andrew Miller MP and Councillor Angel. Cheshire County Council raised no objection to

the proposal, while the Conservative Association and one resident affirmed their preference for single-member wards.

56 Having considered the responses received, we are satisfied that our draft recommendation should be confirmed as final. Under a council size of 43, the number of electors per councillor in the modified Parkgate ward would be 5 per cent above the borough average on the 1997 electorate and by 2002.

### **Riverside and Burton & Ness wards**

57 The wards of Riverside and Burton & Ness cover the western half of Little Neston and the villages of Burton and Ness. Under the current arrangements, the number of electors per councillor is 14 per cent above the borough average in Riverside ward (11 per cent by 2002), and 55 per cent above the borough average in Burton & Ness ward (52 per cent by 2002). At Stage One, the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats and Neston & Parkgate Constituency Labour Party proposed that the Greenfields estate be transferred from Burton & Ness ward to Riverside ward, while the Conservatives proposed that the estate should form the basis of a single-member ward.

58 In our draft recommendations report, we proposed the transfer of Greenfields estate from Burton & Ness ward to Riverside ward. In addition, to improve electoral equality in the proposed Burton & Ness ward, we proposed the transfer of the Furrocks Lane estate from Little Neston ward.

59 At Stage Three, the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats, Neston & Parkgate Constituency Labour Party, Andrew Miller MP and Councillor Angel supported our proposals. Cheshire County Council raised no objection to the proposals, while the Conservative Association and one resident affirmed their preference for single-member wards. In the light of the representations received, again we are satisfied that our draft recommendations should be confirmed as final. Riverside ward would initially have 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (3 per cent by 2002), and Burton & Ness ward would have 6 per cent fewer than the borough average (8 per cent by 2002).

## **Little Neston and Neston wards**

60 Little Neston and Neston wards cover the eastern parts of both settlements. The two wards currently have 10 per cent and 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (11 per cent and 3 per cent by 2002). At Stage One, the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats and Neston & Parkgate Constituency Labour Party proposed no change, while the Conservatives proposed the creation of three single-member wards.

61 In our draft recommendations report we proposed to retain the current arrangements subject to two minor boundary amendments. As outlined above, we proposed that the Furrocks Lane development be transferred from Little Neston ward to Burton & Ness ward. In order to improve electoral equality in Little Neston ward, we also proposed transferring 212 electors from Neston ward to Little Neston ward by moving the Little Neston ward boundary northwards to the rear of properties on Hinderton Road.

62 The Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats, Ellesmere Port & Neston Constituency Labour Party, Andrew Miller MP and Councillor Angel supported this proposal during Stage Three. Cheshire County Council raised no objection to the proposal, while the Conservative Association and one resident affirmed their preference for single-member wards. Accordingly, we are minded to confirm our draft recommendation as final. This would result in the number of electors per councillor for Little Neston and Neston wards initially being 2 per cent and 5 per cent below the borough average respectively (4 per cent and 5 per cent below by 2002).

## **Willaston & Thornton ward**

63 Willaston & Thornton ward is situated in the centre of the borough and comprises the three settlements of Willaston, Childer Thornton and Hooton. It is bordered to the north by the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral and to the south by Chester City Council. At present, the ward has 9 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (8 per cent by 2002). At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed that the area east of the A41 be transferred to Rossmore ward, and that the ward be extended southwards to include the part of Ledsham ward north of Ledsham Road. The Liberal Democrats proposed

no change, while the Conservatives proposed two wards of Willaston East and Willaston West, and that Thornton join with parts of Hooton village and Rossmore ward in a new Thornton ward.

64 In our draft recommendations report, we stated that we considered that the current ward of Willaston & Thornton reflects community ties well, but that the level of electoral equality could be improved. To avoid dividing its constituent settlements, we considered that it would be preferable to transfer a whole settlement from the current ward. We therefore proposed that Childer Thornton be transferred from Willaston & Thornton ward and be merged with part of the existing Ledsham ward. In addition, we proposed a minor boundary change between the existing Willaston & Thornton and Westminster wards, transferring nine electors. The resultant Willaston & Hooton ward would initially have 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (2 per cent by 2002).

65 During Stage Three, this proposal was opposed by the Borough Council, Cheshire County Council, Ellesmere Port & Neston Constituency Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats, Andrew Miller MP, Councillor Mrs Hayward, Councillor Angel and two local residents. Ellesmere Port & Neston Conservative Association and one local resident affirmed their preference for single-member wards, while Mr Eardley and Mr Anderson supported our proposed Willaston & Hooton ward, but argued that Childer Thornton should be merged with part of Rossmore ward. It was argued by the Borough Council and others that Childer Thornton is generally regarded as a long-established and separate community, with links to Willaston but not with Ellesmere Port. The Borough Council supported our proposal to transfer the nine electors west of the M53 from Westminster ward, but argued that the only real solution for the rest of this area would be to retain the existing Willaston & Thornton ward.

66 As indicated above, we recognised in our draft recommendations report that the current Willaston & Thornton ward reflects community identities well. This view appears to have widespread support locally, judging by the opposition to change during Stage Three. We are also persuaded that Childer Thornton has a greater affinity with the villages of Hooton and Willaston than the town of Ellesmere Port, and we have concluded that on balance, there

is sufficient evidence to endorse the proposal put forward by the Borough Council for the area largely to retain its existing structure, subject to the inclusion of an area east of the M53 motorway from Westminster ward.

67 The revised Willaston & Thornton ward would have 15 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average initially (14 per cent by 2002). This electoral inequality is far from desirable. However, we have concluded that this is unavoidable if Childer Thornton is to be acknowledged as a separate settlement, and part of a rural ward rather than part of an Ellesmere Port ward, thereby ensuring that community ties and common interests in this area are not divided.

### **Groves and Sutton wards**

68 The number of electors per councillor in the wards of Sutton and Groves is 12 per cent and 106 per cent above the borough average respectively (14 per cent and 110 per cent by 2002). Groves ward has the worst electoral imbalance in the borough as it has expanded dramatically since the last review, particularly as a result of the Strawberry Fields development.

69 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed that the parts of Sutton and Groves wards to the west of the A41 form a new Manor ward; that the rest of Groves ward be divided into two wards; and that Sutton ward continue to be represented by three councillors. The Conservatives proposed eight single-member wards: The Glens, Manor Farm and Backford Cross wards would broadly cover the area to the west of the A41; Sutton, Sutton Church and Summertrees wards would cover the existing Sutton ward to the east of the A41; and Groves ward, to the east of the A41 would be divided between Hope Farm, Strawberry Fields and Groves wards. The Liberal Democrats proposed that the area west of the A41 be merged with the southern part of Ledsham ward, and a new ward be created for Strawberry Fields, with the remainder forming a revised Groves ward. A revised Sutton ward would be formed from the area east of the A41.

70 In our draft recommendations report we broadly supported the Liberal Democrats' proposal to combine the southern part of Ledsham ward with the parts of Sutton and Groves wards to the west of the A41 to create a new Sutton Green &

Manor ward. With regard to the remainder of the existing Groves ward, we proposed to divide it between two new wards of Groves East and Groves West, as proposed by the Borough Council. We proposed to retain the existing Sutton ward, subject to two minor boundary amendments.

71 During Stage Three, the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats, Ellesmere Port & Neston Constituency Labour Party, Andrew Miller MP and Councillor Angel supported our proposed Sutton ward, while Cheshire County Council raised no objection to the proposal. The Borough Council stated that though it was "somewhat surprised" by the proposal to transfer the properties on the north side of Hope Farm Road to Groves East and Groves West wards, it considered this proposal an improvement on their own suggestion at Stage One. The Conservative Association opposed our draft recommendation for a revised Sutton ward. It argued that "the Commission's proposed three-member ward perpetuates the existing situation and does not reflect the dissimilar composition of the area". While it respected the fact that the Commission had opted for limited change, it argued that the proposed ward should be divided into two new wards. It proposed that a single-member Sutton ward should cover the north-western part of the current ward, with a new two-member ward for the southern part of the ward. Mr Eardley and Mr Anderson supported the Conservative Association's view, while a local resident argued for single-member wards throughout.

72 At draft recommendation stage, we were not persuaded of the case for dividing Sutton ward to the east of the A41, other than the minor alteration in the Hope Farm Road area. We consider that the proposals for Sutton ward suggested by the Conservative Association, Mr Eardley and Mr Anderson represent a workable alternative to our proposals. Broadly, they would provide separate representation for the local authority housing in the north-west of the current ward from the predominantly owner-occupied development in the south. We recognise, however, that our proposal has the support of the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats and the local Member of Parliament, largely reflects the current ward, would provide a ward with strong, clear boundaries and give a good level of electoral equality. On balance, therefore, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendation as final.

73 During Stage Three, the Borough Council, the Conservative Association, Ellesmere Port & Neston Constituency Labour Party, Andrew Miller MP, Councillor Mrs Hayward and Councillor Angel opposed our draft recommendation for a new Sutton Green & Manor ward, represented by two councillors. In their Stage One proposals, the Borough Council and the Conservatives proposed a single-member Manor ward, based on the new estates of Manor Farm and Backford Cross, rather than combining them with the more established area of Sutton Green. Their proposed Manor ward while initially having 24 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average, would improve to 9 per cent more than average by 2002. Mr Eardley and Mr Anderson, proposed the creation of two single-member wards of Green Lane and Manor Farm & Backford Cross, rather than combining them to create a two-member Sutton Green & Manor ward. The Liberal Democrats were pleased that their proposal for a Sutton Green & Manor ward was accepted and requested that we confirm our draft recommendation as final, although they were concerned that this would not be at the cost of the creation of a new Berwick ward further north.

74 We have given further consideration to our draft recommendations in this area. We recognise the desire locally to provide separate representation for the Manor Farm and Backford Cross estates. However, under the Borough Council's alternative proposal to create a single-member Manor ward, the Manor Farm development would be divided between two wards. Shepides Close, Sunhill Avenue, Lyneal Avenue and part of Foxall Way constitute part of the current Ledsham ward (and polling district PC). Were these areas to be added to the proposed Manor ward in order to unite the Manor Farm estate in one ward, the electorate of the new ward would increase by 362 to 1,488. Further, the draft register for 1998 shows that the ward would now have almost 1,600 electors, and by 2002, would be likely to have nearer 2,000. We consider the only viable method of reducing such a high degree of electoral inequality is to combine the Manor Farm and Backford Cross developments with part of Ledsham ward. We recognise that, while this would bring together more established development with the newer estates to their south, such a proposal does have the support of the Liberal Democrats and would provide a reasonable level of electoral equality by 2002.

75 The Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats, Ellesmere Port & Neston Constituency Labour Party, Andrew Miller MP and Councillor Mrs Hayward supported our proposed Groves East and Groves West wards. Mr Eardley and Mr Anderson argued that our proposed Groves East ward, with the addition of Halton Road, should be divided between two single-member wards, Hope Farm & Woodlands and Groves. The Liberal Democrats proposed that Groves East and Groves West wards should be renamed Groves ward and Strawberry Fields ward respectively. Mr Eardley and Mr Anderson also supported Groves West ward being renamed Strawberry Fields ward.

76 Having given further consideration to the warding arrangements in this area, we have not been persuaded to change our draft recommendations. While we recognise that the proposal by Mr Eardley and Mr Anderson for two single-member wards instead of a two-member Groves East ward would be workable, we note that our proposal has widespread support and would provide a reasonable level of electoral equality. However, we consider that there is a case for altering the proposed ward names to better reflect local identity. We therefore concur with the Liberal Democrats that Groves East ward should be named Groves ward, and that Groves West ward be named Strawberry Fields ward.

77 Under our proposals, Groves ward would have 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (7 per cent by 2002), and Strawberry Fields ward would be approximately equal to the borough average (2 per cent fewer by 2002). Sutton ward would have 5 per cent more electors per councillor (2 per cent more by 2002).

### **Ledsham ward**

78 Ledsham ward consists of parts of Little Sutton and Great Sutton west of the A41 Chester Road. The ward currently has three councillors representing 5,934 electors which is 28 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (30 per cent by 2002). At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed that the area north of Ledsham Road be transferred from Ledsham ward to Willaston & Thornton ward, and that the remainder form a revised Ledsham ward. The Conservatives proposed the ward's division into four single-member wards, and the Liberal Democrats into three new wards.

79 As discussed above, our draft recommendation was for the combination of Childer Thornton with most of Ledsham ward, thus creating a Ledsham & Thornton ward. We also proposed a merger of the southern part of the ward with the parts of the existing wards of Sutton and Groves to the west of the A41, to create a two-member Sutton Green & Manor ward, largely based on the Liberal Democrats' proposed Manor ward.

80 At Stage Three, the Borough Council, Cheshire County Council, the Liberal Democrats, Ellesmere Port & Neston Constituency Labour Party, Andrew Miller MP, Councillor Mrs Hayward and Councillor Angel opposed the merger of Childer Thornton with part of Ledsham ward and opposed the creation of a two-member Sutton Green & Manor ward. The Conservative Association also opposed our proposal for a two-member Sutton Green & Manor ward, while the Liberal Democrats opposed any merger of Childer Thornton with part of Ledsham ward, but supported the creation of a two-member Sutton Green & Manor ward. As outlined above, in the light of these representations, we reconsidered our draft recommendation, and decided that, while we should confirm our draft recommendation for a new Sutton Green & Manor ward, Childer Thornton should remain part of a rural Willaston & Thornton ward.

81 At Stage Three, the Borough Council proposed dividing the current Ledsham ward into a new single-member Berwick ward for the area to the north of Ledsham Road, and a three-member Ledsham ward for the area to the south. These wards would initially have 7 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (8 per cent more and 1 per cent more by 2002). This proposal was supported by Ellesmere Port & Neston Constituency Labour Party, Andrew Miller MP, Councillor Mrs Hayward and Councillor Angel. The Liberal Democrats supported the creation of a new single-member Berwick ward, and stated "we were disappointed that our original proposal for the creation of this ward was not accepted". The Conservative Association made no specific reference to this area, but stated a preference for single-member wards. Mr Eardley and Mr Anderson proposed that a two-member Ledsham ward be created for the area north of Wetherby Way, and a single-member ward for The Glens.

82 The confirmation of our draft recommendation for a new Sutton Green & Manor ward, with Childer Thornton remaining part of a rural Willaston & Thornton ward, constrains the options in this area. With the removal of Childer Thornton, a renamed Ledsham ward would have 4,410 electors and if represented by three councillors, would have approximately equal to the borough average number of electors per councillor. It is clear, however that there is some local support for the creation of a single-member Berwick ward for the part of the ward to the north of Ledsham Road. The area comprises a mixture of 1950s residential housing with newer development, whereas the area to its south was largely built in the 1970s. Such a change, however, would not provide as good electoral equality. Berwick ward would have some 7 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (8 per cent more by 2002). The revised Ledsham ward (polling district PB) would have 3 per cent more electors per councillor (1 per cent more by 2002). In addition, these areas currently form part of the same ward (Ledsham ward) and the creation of a single-member ward for Berwick would not reflect the warding pattern in the rest of the town. We have therefore not been persuaded to create a new Berwick ward. We have also concluded that we should confirm our draft recommendations as final, subject to the retention of Childer Thornton in a Willaston & Thornton ward, and the consequent renaming of the ward as Ledsham. This proposal is detailed in Figures 1 and 4 and illustrated in the large map at the back of the report.

### **Westminster ward**

83 Westminster ward, which comprises the old town of Ellesmere Port, the Rother Drive estate and the Rossmore industrial estate, currently has 12 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (14 per cent by 2002). At Stage One, the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats proposed that the ward remain unchanged, while the Conservatives suggested that it be divided into two wards. In our draft recommendations report, we proposed that the current ward be retained, subject to two minor boundary amendments: the transfer of an area to the east of the M53 containing nine electors to our proposed Willaston & Thornton ward, and the extension of the ward's eastern boundary to the M53 to unite the Meadow Lane industrial estate in one ward.

84 At Stage Three, the Borough Council, Ellesmere Port & Neston Constituency Labour Party, Andrew Miller MP and Councillor Angel supported our draft recommendation, together with the Borough Council's proposal for a further minor boundary amendment between Westminster ward and Rossmore ward. The Council proposed that the 12 electors of Shallacres be transferred from Westminster ward to Rossmore ward, as these properties are physically attached to those in the neighbouring ward. The Liberal Democrats supported our draft recommendations, and Cheshire County Council raised no objection. The Conservative Association reiterated its preference for single-member wards. Mr Eardley and Mr Anderson supported our draft recommendations, subject to the ward being extended westwards to Overpool Road.

85 There would appear to be significant support for largely retaining the current Westminster ward, and we welcome the support of the Borough Council for the Commission's proposed minor change to the ward's boundary with Willaston & Thornton ward as being an improvement on its initial proposal. We have carefully considered Mr Eardley and Mr Anderson's proposal to expand Westminster ward westwards to Overpool Road. We have concluded, however, that such a change would not best reflect community identities in the area, as Overpool Road appears to act as a focus for the areas either side of it. We consider that there is some merit in the Borough Council's proposed further minor boundary modification. Shallacres contains 12 electors who are physically separated from the rest of the ward by Rossmore Industrial Estate, and this area appears to have some affinity with the area immediately to its west.

86 Having considered the responses received, we are satisfied that our draft recommendation, subject to the minor boundary change as proposed by the Borough Council, should be confirmed as final. Westminster ward would initially have 8 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (10 per cent by 2002).

### **Rivacre and Rossmore wards**

87 Rivacre and Rossmore wards have 25 per cent and 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (26 per cent and 5 per cent by 2002). At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed that part of Willaston & Thornton ward

be transferred to Rossmore ward, and that part of Rivacre ward be transferred to Grange ward. The Conservatives proposed dividing the area into six single-member wards, and the Liberal Democrats proposed no change.

88 In our draft recommendations report, we proposed the transfer of that part of Rivacre ward north of the railway line to Rossmore ward. We considered this change would provide a more identifiable boundary for both wards, would better reflect community identities and provide better electoral equality.

89 During Stage Three, the Borough Council, Ellesmere Port & Neston Constituency Labour Party, Ellesmere Port & Neston Liberal Democrats, Andrew Miller MP and Councillor Angel supported our draft recommendations in this area. The Borough Council proposed a minor boundary amendment transferring 12 electors from Westminster ward to Rossmore ward, as outlined above. Cheshire County Council raised no objection to the proposal, while the Conservative Association and one resident affirmed their preference for single-member wards. Mr Eardley and Mr Anderson proposed that Childer Thornton be merged with the western part of our proposed Rossmore ward, to form a new Thornton ward, and that a new Overpool & Rossmore ward should comprise the rest of our proposed Rossmore ward, less the area to the east of Overpool Road. However, they supported our proposed Rivacre ward.

90 After considering the representations received, we remain satisfied that our draft recommendations, subject to the minor boundary amendment as proposed by the Borough Council, should be confirmed as final. Consequently, Rossmore ward and Rivacre ward, would initially have 11 per cent and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (9 per cent and 2 per cent more by 2002). These proposals are detailed in Figures 1 and 4, and outlined in the large map at the back of the report.

### **Central and Grange wards**

91 Central and Grange wards cover some of the older and more established parts of Ellesmere Port town centre. These wards are significantly over-represented with 24 per cent and 23 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average

respectively (23 per cent and 25 per cent by 2002). At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed to transfer areas from Wolverham ward and Rivacre wards to Grange ward. The Liberal Democrats proposed that Grange ward remain unchanged and that the area south of Stanney Lane be transferred from Central ward to Pooltown ward. The Conservatives proposed that Central and Grange wards be divided into five single-member wards.

92 In our draft recommendations report, we proposed that the area to the west of Flatt Lane be transferred from Central ward to Grange ward, resulting in the number of electors per councillor for Grange ward initially being 1 per cent fewer than the borough average (3 per cent fewer by 2002). We agreed with the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives that the area to the south of Stanney Lane should be transferred from Central ward, but considered that it should form part of a revised Whitby ward. We largely supported the Borough Council's proposal to transfer part of Wolverham ward to Central ward to provide better electoral equality for the revised ward. In addition, we proposed a minor realignment in the north-east of the ward so that the boundary would follow the M53 motorway. The resultant Central ward would contain 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor both now and in 2002, and would be represented by two councillors (one fewer than at present).

93 During Stage Three, the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats, Ellesmere Port & Neston Constituency Labour Party, Andrew Miller MP, Councillor Mrs Hayward and Councillor Angel supported our draft recommendations in this area. Mr Eardley and Mr Anderson supported our proposed Central ward, but argued that our proposed Grange ward should be divided into two wards – a single-member College ward and a two-member Grange ward, with 10 per cent more and 7 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (8 per cent more and 9 per cent fewer by 2002).

94 Following further consideration to the warding arrangements in this area, we have concluded that our draft recommendations should be confirmed as final. The proposals have significant support locally and would provide a good level of electoral equality. These proposals are detailed in Figures 1 and 4, and illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

## **Pooltown and Whitby wards**

95 The number of electors per councillor in Pooltown and Whitby wards are 17 per cent and 4 per cent fewer than the borough average respectively (19 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more by 2002). Due to extensive housing development taking place in the south of the ward (at Stanney Oaks), Whitby ward has the highest projected growth in the borough.

96 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed transferring the area to the west of the A5032 from Whitby ward to Pooltown ward. The Liberal Democrats proposed that the area to the south of Stanney Lane be transferred from Central ward to Pooltown ward, while the Conservatives agreed with the Liberal Democrats' boundary amendment but proposed dividing the area between five single-member wards.

97 We considered that the Borough Council's proposals would achieve a reasonable level of electoral equality and reflect the statutory criteria well, and proposed the transfer of the area to the west of the A5032 from Whitby ward to Pooltown ward. We also agreed with the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives that the area to the south of Stanney Lane should be transferred from Central ward but, as outlined above, proposed it should form part of a revised Whitby ward.

98 At Stage Three, the Borough Council supported our draft recommendations, along with the Liberal Democrats, the Ellesmere Port & Neston Constituency Labour Party, Andrew Miller MP, Councillor Mrs Hayward and Councillor Angel. Councillor Mrs Hayward commented that both the changes proposed "will be beneficial to electors as they protect communities and make good sense geographically". Cheshire County Council raised no objection to these proposals.

99 The Conservative Association and a local resident expressed their support for single-member wards. The Association, argued that the proposed Whitby ward "mixes new and old properties" and that the south-eastern part would make an ideal single-member ward, to be called Stanney. It considered that the remainder of the area could form either a two-member ward or two single-member wards. Mr Eardley and Mr Anderson agreed with the Conservative Association's



proposals for a single-member Stanney ward and argued that the remainder of the proposed ward should form a two-member Whitby ward. Mr Eardley argued that the new development in the south of the proposed ward is distinct, but is not large enough to form a separate ward and therefore he proposed that it be merged with the area to its north to form a single-member ward.

<sup>100</sup> We recognise the merit in affording the Stanney Oaks development separate representation. The area is distinct from the rest of Whitby ward, wholly containing new housing and with its main access being from the A5117. The 1997 Register of Electors shows that the Stanney Oaks area contains only 329 electors, and therefore the Conservatives proposed to unite it with a more established area to its north. It is this proposal that concerned us. We consider that the area to the east of Thirlmere Road has a greater affinity with the other areas on Woodland Road, than with the Stanney Oaks development to its south. We also consider that creating a single-member ward for an area under development is likely to lead to significant electoral inequality over time. Our proposed Whitby ward, on the other hand, could distribute the additional workload caused by an increase in electors between three councillors.

<sup>101</sup> After careful consideration of the representations received, we have concluded that our draft recommendations should be confirmed as final. Pooltown and Whitby wards would initially have 4 per cent more and 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (both having 2 per cent more by 2002). These proposals are detailed in Figures 1 and 4, and illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

### **Stanlow and Wolverham wards**

<sup>102</sup> Stanlow and Wolverham wards are currently significantly over-represented, with 17 per cent and 32 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively. At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed that the western part of Wolverham ward be transferred to Central ward (as outlined above), while the remainder be merged with Stanlow ward to form a three-member Stanlow & Wolverham ward. The Liberal Democrats proposed no change to either ward, except that Wolverham ward should in future be

represented by one councillor. However, the Conservatives proposed three single-member wards. In our draft recommendations report, we accepted the Borough Council's proposals, subject to the inclusion of South Road in a revised Stanlow & Wolverham ward, as outlined above.

<sup>103</sup> During Stage Three, the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats, Ellesmere Port & Neston Constituency Labour Party, Andrew Miller MP and Councillor Angel supported our draft recommendations for this area. Cheshire County Council raised no objection, while the Conservative Association and one local resident affirmed their preference for single-member wards. Mr Eardley and Mr Anderson proposed retaining separate wards for Stanlow ward and Wolverham wards. After considering the representations received, we remain satisfied that our draft recommendations would achieve the best balance between the need for electoral equality and the statutory criteria, and should be confirmed as final. The proposed Stanlow & Wolverham ward would initially have 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (7 per cent fewer by 2002). These proposals are detailed in Figures 1 and 4 and outlined on the large map at the back of the report.

## **Electoral Cycle**

<sup>104</sup> In our draft recommendations report, we proposed that the present system of elections by thirds in Ellesmere Port & Neston be retained. At Stage Three, we did not receive any submissions commenting on this proposal. Accordingly, we confirm our draft recommendation as final.

## **Conclusions**

<sup>105</sup> Having considered carefully all the evidence and representations received in response to our consultation report, we have concluded that there should be an increase in council size from 41 to 43; that there should be 19 wards, one more than at present; that the boundaries of all the existing wards should be modified; and that elections should continue to be held by thirds. We have decided substantially to endorse our draft recommendations, subject to the amendments in the following areas:

(a) the village of Childer Thornton should be

retained in its present ward of Willaston & Thornton, rather than be merged with Ledsham ward;

- (b) the boundary between Westminster and Rossmore should be modified so that Shallacres forms part of Rossmore ward; and
- (c) Groves East and Groves West wards should be renamed Groves and Strawberry Fields wards respectively to better reflect their constituent communities.

<sup>106</sup> 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. As Figure 3 shows, our recommendations would reduce the number of wards with electoral variances of more than 10 per cent from the borough average from 12 to two, which would reduce further to one by 2002. Under these proposals, the average number of electors per councillor would decrease from 1,549 to 1,477. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

### Final Recommendation

Ellesmere Port & Neston Borough Council should comprise 43 councillors serving 19 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 4, and illustrated in Map 2, at Appendix A and in the large map at the back of the report. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

## Parish Council Electoral Arrangements

<sup>107</sup> Throughout this review, we received no proposals for change to Ince Parish Council's electoral arrangements. We are not proposing any change to the electoral cycle of the parish council.

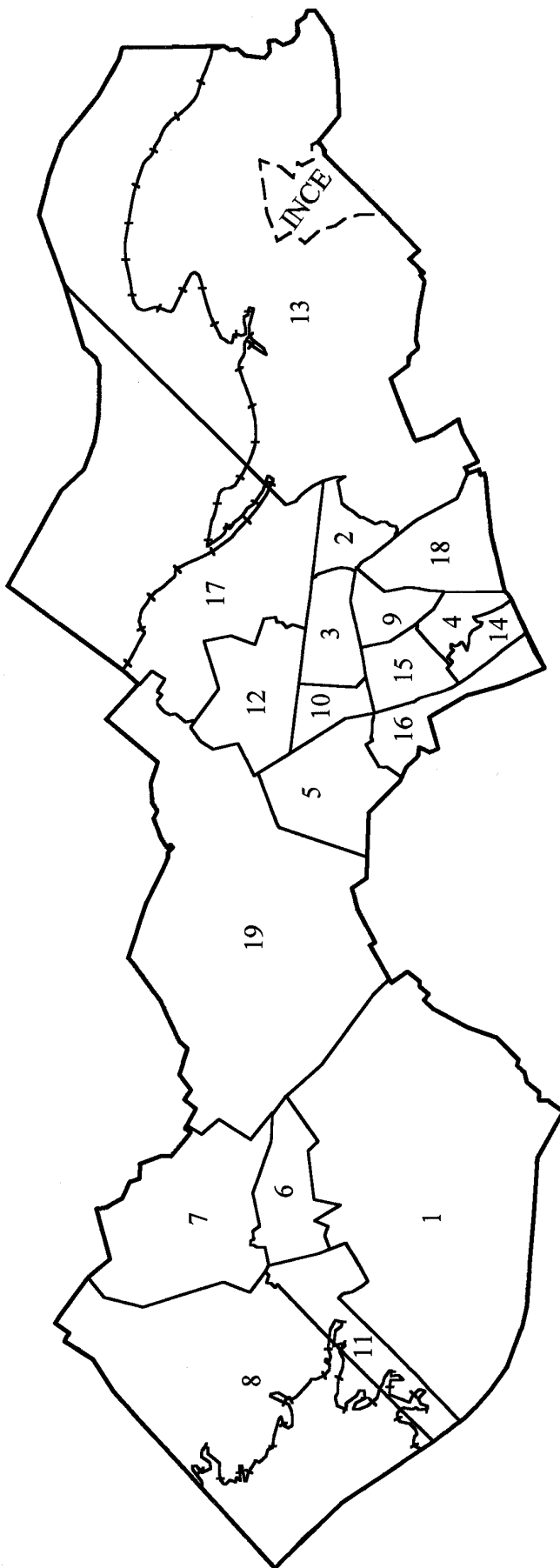
### Final Recommendation

Elections for Ince Parish Council should continue to be held at the same time as elections for the principal authority.

*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	41	43	41	43
Number of wards	18	19	18	19
Average number of electors per councillor	1,549	1,477	1,586	1,512
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	12	2	13	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	7	0	7	0

Map 2:  
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Ellesmere Port & Neston



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Key to Wards

- |    |                       |    |                        |
|----|-----------------------|----|------------------------|
| 1  | Burton and Ness       | 14 | Strawberry Fields      |
| 2  | Central               | 15 | Sutton                 |
| 3  | Grange                | 16 | Sutton Green and Manor |
| 4  | Groves                | 17 | Westminster            |
| 5  | Ledsham               | 18 | Whitby                 |
| 6  | Little Neston         | 19 | Willaston and Thornton |
| 7  | Neston                |    |                        |
| 8  | Parkegate             |    |                        |
| 9  | Pooltown              |    |                        |
| 10 | Rivacre               |    |                        |
| 11 | Riverside             |    |                        |
| 12 | Rossmore              |    |                        |
| 13 | Stanlow and Wolverham |    |                        |

**KEY**

PROPOSED WARD BOUNDARY ———

EXISTING PARISH BOUNDARY - - -

MEAN HIGH WATER —+—

Figure 4:  
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Ellesmere Port & Neston

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 Burton & Ness	1	1,384	1,384	-6	1,397	1,397	-8
2 Central	2	2,939	1,470	-1	2,982	1,491	-1
3 Grange	3	4,382	1,461	-1	4,395	1,465	-3
4 Groves	2	2,826	1,413	-4	2,826	1,413	-7
5 Ledsham	3	4,410	1,470	0	4,679	1,560	3
6 Little Neston	2	2,887	1,444	-2	2,897	1,449	-4
7 Neston	2	2,815	1,408	-5	2,868	1,434	-5
8 Parkgate	2	3,111	1,556	5	3,174	1,587	5
9 Pooltown	2	3,074	1,537	4	3,074	1,537	2
10 Rivacre	2	3,054	1,527	3	3,073	1,537	2
11 Riverside	2	2,930	1,465	-1	2,930	1,465	-3
12 Rossmore	3	4,900	1,633	11	4,950	1,650	9
13 Stanlow & Wolverham	3	4,224	1,408	-5	4,224	1,408	-7
14 Strawberry Fields	2	2,955	1,478	0	2,955	1,478	-2
15 Sutton	3	4,647	1,549	5	4,647	1,549	2
16 Sutton Green & Manor	2	2,650	1,325	-10	3,171	1,586	5
17 Westminster	2	2,728	1,364	-8	2,728	1,364	-10
18 Whitby	3	4,215	1,405	-5	4,626	1,542	2
19 Willaston & Thornton	2	3,395	1,698	15	3,435	1,718	14
<b>Totals</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>63,526</b>	—	—	<b>65,031</b>	—	—
<b>Averages</b>	—	—	<b>1,477</b>	—	—	<b>1,512</b>	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Ellesmere Port & Neston 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

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

109 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.

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

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



# APPENDIX A

## Final Recommendations for Ellesmere Port & Neston: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for the Ellesmere Port & Neston area.

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

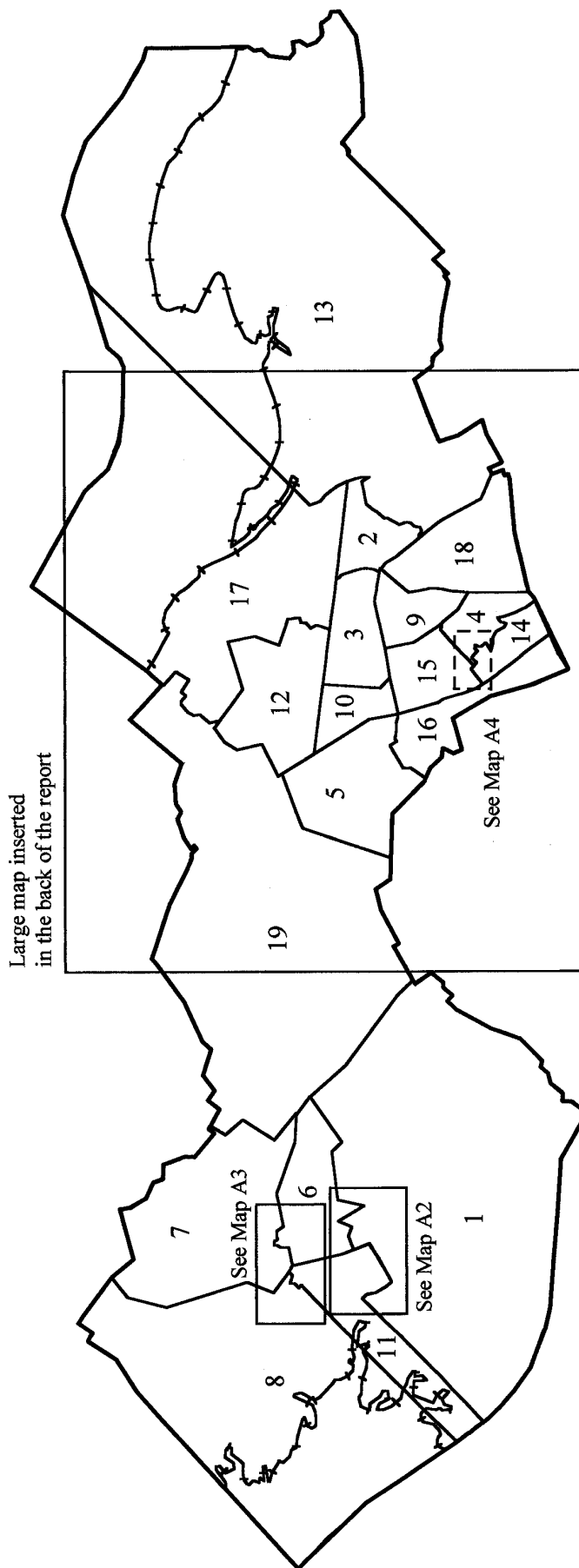
**Map A2** illustrates the proposed ward boundary changes between Burton & Ness, Riverside and Little Neston wards.

**Map A3** illustrates the proposed ward boundary changes between Little Neston and Neston wards and Parkgate and Riverside wards.

**Map A4** illustrates part of the proposed ward boundary between Sutton ward and Groves and Strawberry Fields wards.

The **large map** inserted at the back of the report illustrates our proposed warding arrangements for the Ellesmere Port, Childer Thornton and Hooton areas.

Map A1:  
 The Commission's Final Recommendations for Ellesmere Port & Neston: Key Map



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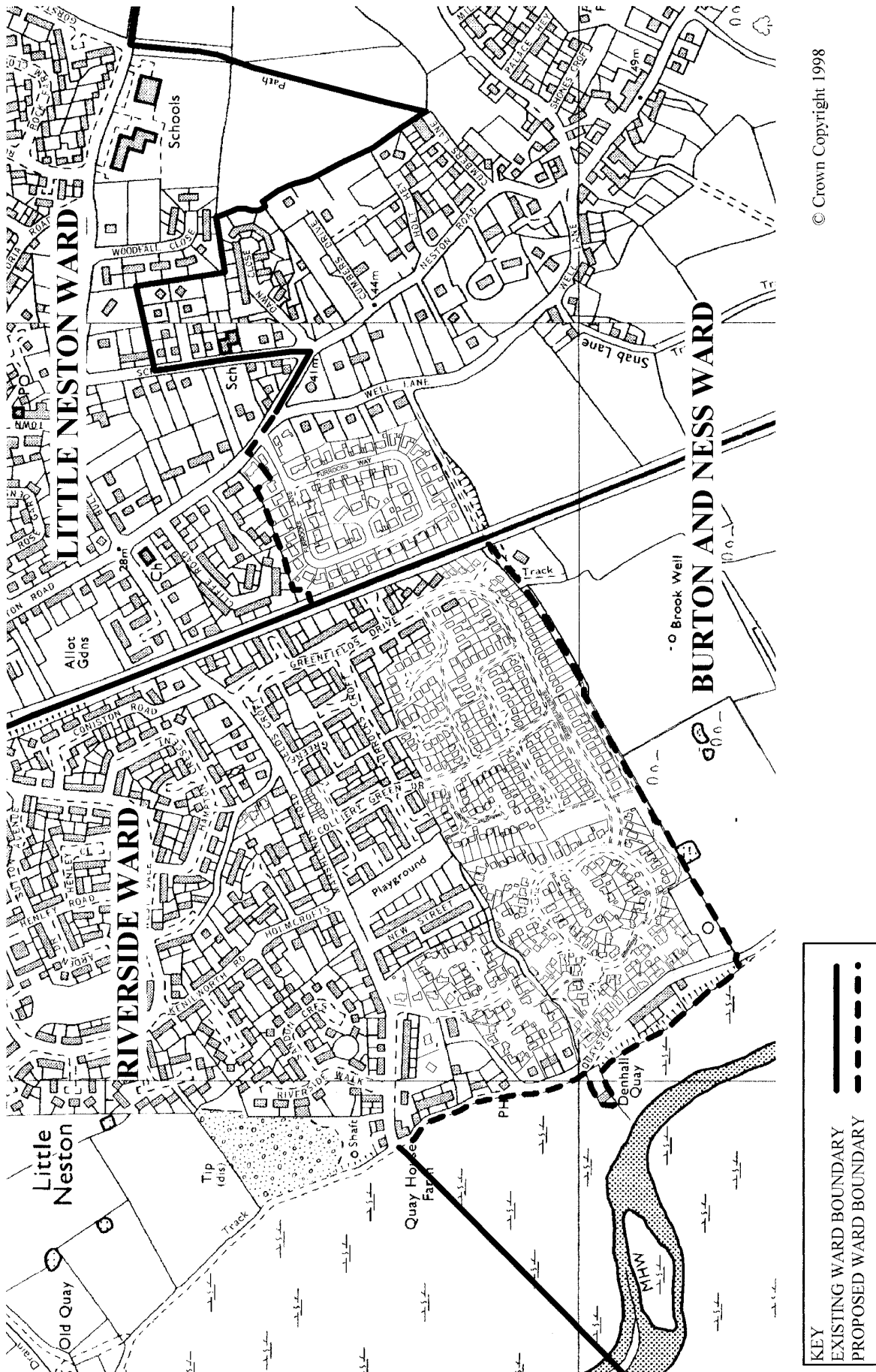
Key to Wards

- |   |                 |    |                       |    |                        |
|---|-----------------|----|-----------------------|----|------------------------|
| 1 | Burton and Ness | 8  | Parkgate              | 14 | Strawberry Fields      |
| 2 | Central         | 9  | Pooltown              | 15 | Sutton                 |
| 3 | Grange          | 10 | Rivacre               | 16 | Sutton Green and Manor |
| 4 | Groves          | 11 | Riverside             | 17 | Westminster            |
| 5 | Ledsham         | 12 | Rossmore              | 18 | Whitby                 |
| 6 | Little Neston   | 13 | Stanlow and Wolverham | 19 | Willaston and Thornton |
| 7 | Neston          |    |                       |    |                        |

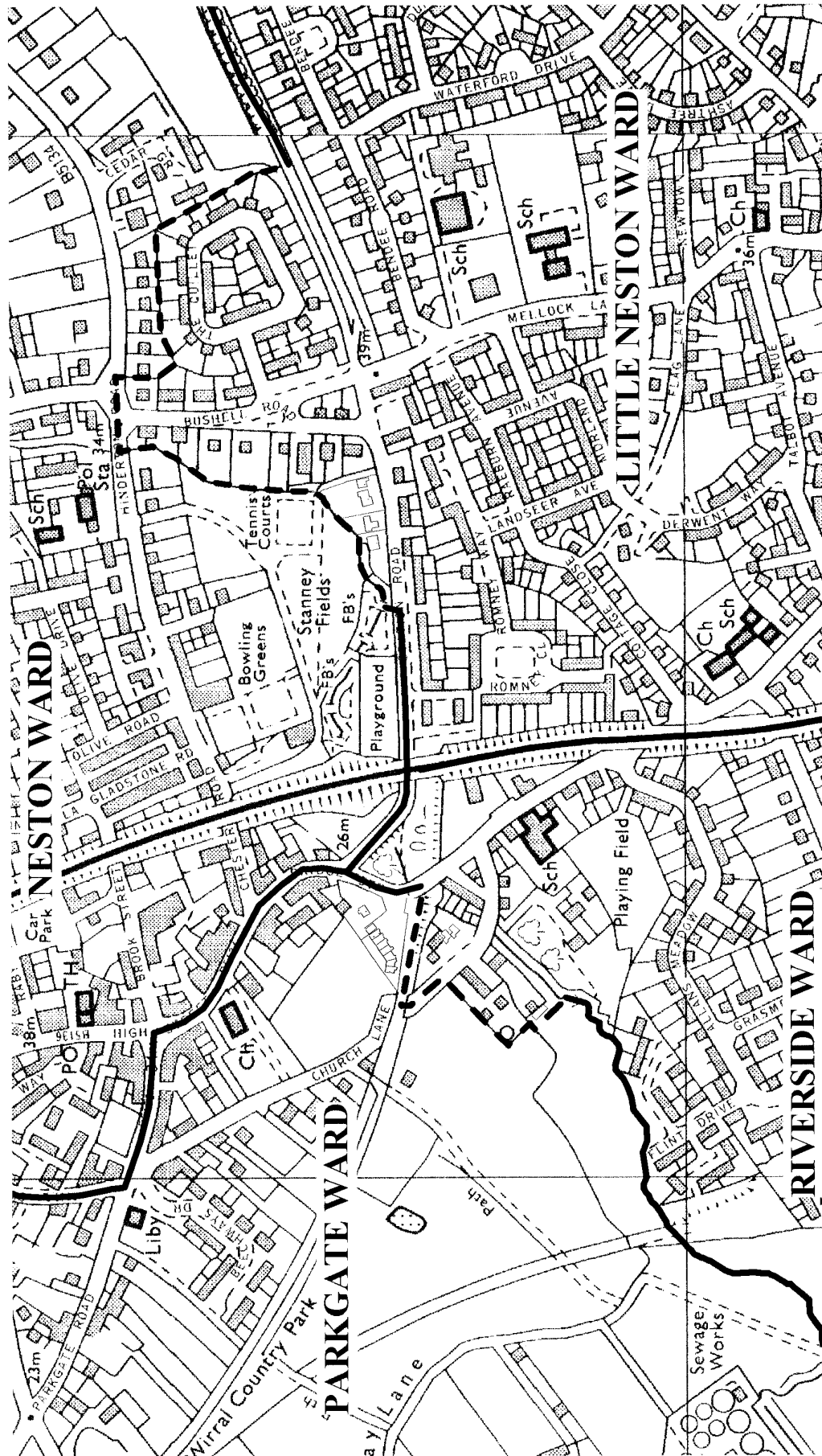


Map A2:

Proposed Boundary Changes Between Burton & Ness and Riverside and Little Neston Wards

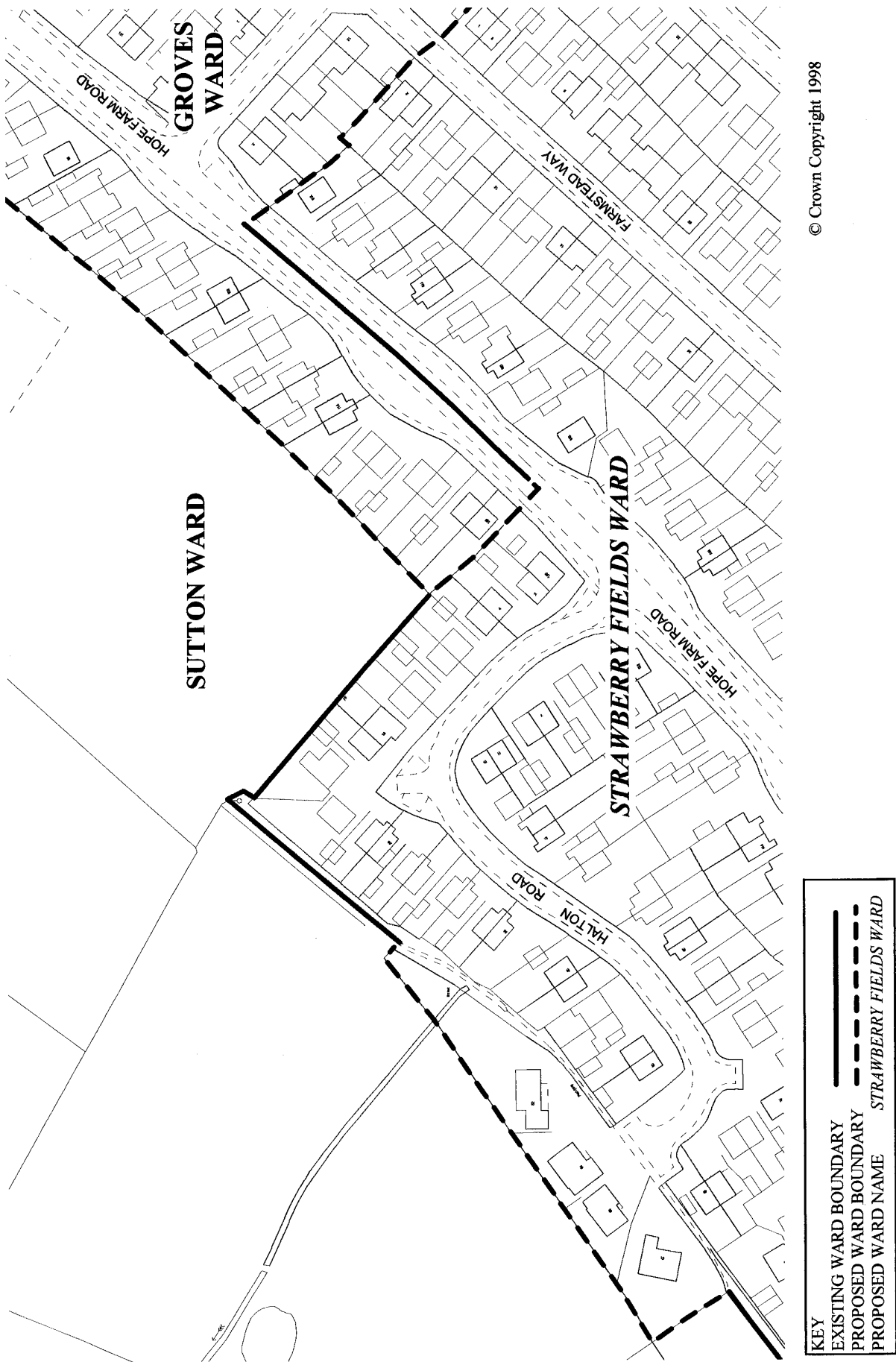


Map A3:  
 Proposed Boundary Changes Between Little Neston and Neston Wards and Parkgate and Riverside Wards



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Map A4:  
*Proposed Ward Boundaries of Sutton, Groves and Strawberry Fields Wards*



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# APPENDIX B

## Draft Recommendations for Ellesmere Port & Neston:

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

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>
1	Burton & Ness	1	Burton & Ness ward (part); Little Neston ward (part)
2	Central	2	Central ward (part); Wolverham ward (part)
3	Grange	3	Grange ward; Central ward (part)
4	Groves East	2	Groves ward (part); Sutton ward (part)
5	Groves West	2	Groves ward (part); Sutton ward (part)
6	Ledsham & Thornton	3	Ledsham ward (part); Willaston & Thornton ward (part)
7	Little Neston	2	Little Neston ward (part); Neston ward (part)
8	Neston	2	Neston ward (part)
9	Parkgate	2	Parkgate ward (part)
10	Pooltown	2	Pooltown ward; Whitby ward (part)
11	Rivacre	2	Rivacre ward (part)
12	Riverside	2	Riverside ward (part); Burton & Ness ward (part); Parkgate ward (part)
13	Rossmore	3	Rossmore ward; Rivacre ward (part)
14	Stanlow & Wolverham	3	Stanlow ward (part – including Ince parish); Wolverham ward (part)
15	Sutton	3	Sutton ward (part)
16	Sutton Green & Manor	2	Sutton ward (part); Groves ward (part); Ledsham ward (part)
17	Westminster	2	Westminster ward (part); Stanlow ward (part)

*continued overleaf*

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

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>
18	Whitby	3	Whitby ward (part); Central ward (part)
19	Willaston & Hooton	2	Willaston & Thornton ward (part); Westminster ward (part)

*Note: The borough of Ellesmere Port & Neston has one parish, which is Ince in the current Stanlow ward.*

Figure B2:

*The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Ellesmere Port & Neston*

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 Burton & Ness	1	1,384	1,384	-6	1,397	1,397	-8
2 Central	2	2,939	1,470	-1	2,982	1,491	-1
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6 Ledsham & Thornton	3	4,760	1,587	7	5,029	1,676	11
7 Little Neston	2	2,887	1,444	-2	2,897	1,449	-4
8 Neston	2	2,815	1,408	-5	2,868	1,434	-5
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10 Pooltown	2	3,074	1,537	4	3,074	1,537	2
11 Rivacre	2	3,054	1,527	3	3,073	1,537	2
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18 Whitby	3	4,215	1,405	-5	4,626	1,542	2
19 Willaston & Hooton	2	3,045	1,523	3	3,085	1,543	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>63,526</b>	—	—	<b>65,031</b>	—	—
<b>Averages</b>	—	—	<b>1,477</b>	—	—	<b>1,512</b>	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Ellesmere Port & Neston 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.

