

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Oldham

February 2003

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What is The Boundary Committee for England?

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

Members of the Committee are:

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

Archie Gall (Director)

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

Summary

We began a review of the electoral arrangements for Oldham on 14 May 2002.

- **This report summarises the submissions we received during the first stage of the review, and makes draft recommendations for change.**

We found that the current arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Oldham:

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

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 151–152) are that:

- **Oldham Borough Council should have 60 councillors, the same as at present;**
- **there should be 20 wards, the same as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 18 of the existing wards should be modified, and two wards should retain their existing boundaries.**

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

- **In all of the proposed 20 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 6% from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 6% from the average for the borough in 2006.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for Shaw & Crompton parish;**
- **a number of minor modifications to the parish ward boundaries of Saddleworth parish.**

This report sets out our draft recommendations on which comments are invited.

- **We will consult on these proposals for eight weeks from 25 February 2003. We take this consultation very seriously. We may decide to move away from our draft recommendations in the light of comments or suggestions that we receive. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission which will be responsible for implementing change to local authority electoral arrangements.**

- **The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. It will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to us at the address below by 22 April 2003:

**Team Leader
Oldham Review
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

Table 1: Draft recommendations: summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Large map reference
1	Alexandra	3	Part of Alexandra ward; part of Lees ward; part of St Paul's ward	4
2	Chadderton Central	3	Part of Chadderton Central ward; part of Chadderton South ward	2
3	Chadderton North	3	<i>Unchanged</i> - Chadderton North ward	2
4	Chadderton South	3	Part of Chadderton Central ward; part of Chadderton South ward	2
5	Coldhurst	3	Part of Coldhurst ward; part of Royton South ward; part of St Paul's ward; part of Werneth ward	2, 3 & 4
6	Crompton	3	Part of Shaw & Crompton parish (the proposed North and West parish wards)	1 & 3
7	Failsworth East	3	Part of Failsworth East ward; part of Failsworth West ward; part of Hollinwood ward; part of St Paul's ward	2 & 4
8	Failsworth West	3	Part of Failsworth East ward; part of Failsworth West ward	2
9	Hollinwood	3	Part of Hollinwood ward; part of St Paul's ward	2 & 4
10	Lees & Saddleworth West	3	Part of Saddleworth parish (the proposed Springhead Lower parish ward); part of Lees ward; part of St Mary's ward	3 & 4
11	Royton North	3	Part of Shaw & Crompton parish (the proposed Fir Lane parish ward); part of Royton North ward	2 & 3
12	Royton South	3	Part of Coldhurst ward; part of Royton North ward; part of Royton South ward	2 & 3
13	Saddleworth North	3	Part of Saddleworth parish (the proposed Delph, Dobcross and Springhead Higher parish wards)	1, 3 & 5
14	Saddleworth South	3	Part of Saddleworth parish (the proposed Greenfield and Uppermill parish wards)	3, 4 & 5
15	St James'	3	St James' ward; Part of Waterhead ward	3
16	St Mary's	3	Part of Alexandra ward; part of Lees ward; part of St Mary's ward; part of St Paul's ward	3 & 4
17	St Paul's	3	Part of Alexandra ward; part of St Paul's ward	4

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Large map reference
18	Shaw	3	<i>Unchanged</i> - part of Shaw & Crompton parish (the proposed East and South parish wards)	1 & 3
19	Waterhead	3	Part of St Mary's ward; part of Waterhead ward	3 & 4
20	Werneth	3	Part of St Paul's ward; part of Werneth ward	2 & 4

Notes:

- 1) *Saddleworth and Shaw & Crompton are the only parished parts of the borough, as indicated above.*
- 2) *The wards on the above table are illustrated on Map 2 and the large maps.*
- 3) *We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors.*

Table 2: Draft recommendations for Oldham

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Alexandra	3	7,543	2,514	-6	7,617	2,539	-5
2	Chadderton Central	3	7,826	2,609	-2	8,159	2,720	1
3	Chadderton North	3	8,157	2,719	2	8,012	2,671	0
4	Chadderton South	3	8,104	2,701	2	7,976	2,659	-1
5	Coldhurst	3	7,992	2,664	0	8,033	2,678	0
6	Crompton	3	8,257	2,752	3	8,146	2,715	1
7	Failsworth East	3	7,813	2,604	-2	7,842	2,614	-2
8	Failsworth West	3	8,017	2,672	0	7,935	2,645	-1
9	Hollinwood	3	7,798	2,599	-2	7,966	2,655	-1
10	Lees & Saddleworth West	3	8,346	2,782	5	8,524	2,841	6
11	Royton North	3	8,403	2,801	5	8,306	2,769	3
12	Royton South	3	8,213	2,738	3	8,408	2,803	5
13	Saddleworth North	3	7,510	2,503	-6	7,858	2,619	-2
14	Saddleworth South	3	7,514	2,505	-6	7,699	2,566	-4
15	St James'	3	8,039	2,680	1	8,245	2,748	3
16	St Mary's	3	8,109	2,703	2	8,003	2,668	0
17	St Paul's	3	7,846	2,615	-2	7,964	2,655	-1
18	Shaw	3	8,078	2,693	1	8,007	2,669	0
19	Waterhead	3	8,407	2,802	5	8,314	2,771	3
20	Werneth	3	7,691	2,564	-4	7,759	2,586	-3
	Totals	60	159,663	-	-	160,773	-	-
	Averages	-	-	2,661	-	-	2,680	-

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

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

1 Introduction

1 This report contains our proposals for the electoral arrangements for the borough of Oldham, on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the 10 metropolitan boroughs in Greater Manchester as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. The programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to finish in 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Oldham. Oldham's last review was carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission, which reported to the Secretary of State in July 1977 (Report no. 229).

3 In carrying out these metropolitan reviews we must have regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3692), i.e. the need to:
 - reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
 - secure effective and convenient local government; and
 - achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of Oldham is being conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Periodic Electoral Reviews* (Published by The Electoral Commission in July 2002). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review.

5 Our task is to make recommendations to The Electoral Commission on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also propose changes to the electoral arrangements for parish and town councils in the borough.

6 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, as far as possible, equal representation across the borough as a whole. Schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10% in any ward will have to be fully justified. Any imbalances of 20% or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

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

8 Under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 there is no limit on the number of councillors which can be returned from each metropolitan borough ward. However, the figure must be divisible by three. In practice, all metropolitan borough wards currently return three councillors. Where our recommendation is for multi-member wards, we believe that the number of councillors to be returned from each ward should not exceed three, other than in very exceptional circumstances. Numbers in excess of three could result in an unacceptable dilution

of accountability to the electorate and we have not, to date, prescribed any wards with more than three councillors.

9 The review is in four stages (see Table 3).

Table 3: Stages of the review

Stage	Description
One	Submission of proposals to us
Two	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	Final deliberation and report to The Electoral Commission

10 Stage One began on 14 May 2002, when we wrote to Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Greater Manchester Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Greater Manchester Local Councils Association, parish and town councils in the borough, Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, Members of the European Parliament for the North-West Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 16 September 2002.

11 At Stage Two we considered all the submissions received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

12 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 25 February 2003 and will end on 22 April 2003, involves publishing the draft proposals in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.**

13 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to modify them, and submit final recommendations to The Electoral Commission. It will then be for it to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If The Electoral Commission accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, it will make an Order. The Electoral Commission will determine when any changes come into effect.

2 Current electoral arrangements

14 The borough of Oldham is situated in the north-east of Greater Manchester, bordered by the metropolitan authorities of Rochdale to the north, Kirklees to the north-east, Tameside to the south and Manchester to the south-west, and the borough of High Peak in Derbyshire to the south-east. The borough includes the historic townships of Chadderton, Crompton (Shaw), Failsworth, Lees, Oldham, Royton and the more rural Saddleworth area to the east; it has a population of 219,762 and covers an area of 14,112 hectares. The western area of Oldham is historically part of Lancashire, whereas Saddleworth is historically part of Yorkshire.

15 The main industries of the borough include healthcare products manufacturing, food and clothing manufacturing and commercial vehicle assembly together with electronic and aircraft component manufacturing. Oldham's scenery and good transportation network make it an ideal location for tourists, as do its shopping centres and entertainment, which include art galleries and museums. The borough contains two parishes, but Oldham town itself is unparished.

16 The electorate of the borough is 159,663 (December 2001), which is projected to rise to 160,773 by 2006. The Council presently has 60 members who are elected from 20 wards. All wards are three-member wards.

17 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,661 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,680 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in six of the 20 wards varies by more than 10% from the borough average and one ward by more than 30%. The worst imbalance is in Saddleworth East ward where each councillor represents 31% more electors than the borough average.

18 To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated 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. In the text which follows this calculation may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

Map 1: Existing wards in Oldham

Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Alexandra	3	7,043	2,348	-12	6,884	2,295	-14
2	Chadderton Central	3	8,444	2,815	6	8,769	2,923	9
3	Chadderton North	3	8,157	2,719	2	8,012	2,671	0
4	Chadderton South	3	7,486	2,495	-6	7,366	2,455	-8
5	Coldhurst	3	7,988	2,663	0	8,029	2,676	0
6	Crompton	3	8,613	2,871	8	8,496	2,832	6
7	Failsworth East	3	8,204	2,735	3	8,208	2,736	2
8	Failsworth West	3	7,415	2,472	-7	7,332	2,444	-9
9	Hollinwood	3	6,581	2,194	-18	6,800	2,267	-15
10	Lees	3	7,518	2,506	-6	7,776	2,592	-3
11	Royton North	3	8,232	2,744	3	8,139	2,713	1
12	Royton South	3	8,017	2,672	0	8,214	2,738	2
13	Saddleworth East	3	10,492	3,497	31	10,695	3,565	33
14	Saddleworth West	3	9,008	3,003	13	9,365	3,122	16
15	St James'	3	6,371	2,124	-20	6,605	2,202	-18
16	St Mary's	3	7,417	2,472	-7	7,395	2,465	-8
17	St Paul's	3	7,747	2,582	-3	7,866	2,622	-2
18	Shaw	3	8,078	2,693	1	8,007	2,669	0
19	Waterhead	3	9,494	3,165	19	9,383	3,128	17
20	Werneth	3	7,358	2,453	-8	7,432	2,477	-8
	Totals	60	159,663	—	—	160,773	—	—
	Average	—	—	2,661	—	—	2,680	—

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

Note: *The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in St James' ward were relatively over-represented by 20%, while electors in Saddleworth East ward were relatively under-represented by 31%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.*

3 Submissions received

19 At the start of the review, members of the public and other interested parties were invited to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council and its constituent parish councils.

20 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the BCE visited the area and met officers and members from the Borough Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 22 representations during Stage One, including borough-wide schemes from Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council and the Borough Council Labour Group. All of these representations may be inspected at our offices and those of the Borough Council.

Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council

21 Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council (the Borough Council) proposed a council of 60 members, as at present, serving 20 wards. It proposed amendments to 13 existing wards. Under the Borough Council's proposals, electoral equality would improve, with no ward varying by more than 10% from the borough average by 2006.

22 The Borough Council stated that it placed a 'great deal of importance in achieving electoral equality' and 'on maintaining and promoting community identity and interests'. It also noted that its proposals would 'have minimum impact on current Area Committee boundaries'.

Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council Labour Group

23 The Borough Council Labour Group (the Labour Group) also proposed to retain a 60-member council representing 20 wards, putting forward amendments to 14 existing wards and two new ward names. Its proposals for eight of these wards in the north and west of the borough were identical to those put forward by the Borough Council. Under its proposals, no ward would vary by more than 10% from the borough average by 2006.

Member of Parliament

24 One submission was received from a Member of Parliament. David Heyes MP (Ashton-under-Lyne) commented on the three existing wards which form part of his constituency. He supported the Borough Council's and the Labour Group's proposed Hollinwood ward. He also supported the Labour Group's proposed Failsworth East and Failsworth West wards, considering that they would improve electoral equality while providing for a better reflection of community identities and interests.

Parish and town councils

25 We received a submission from one parish council. Saddleworth Parish Council supported the Borough Council's proposals for the Saddleworth area.

Other representations

26 A further 18 representations were received from the local police authority, two community associations and 15 local residents. Greater Manchester Police proposed modifications to six existing wards in the Oldham unparished area and in Saddleworth parish. These amendments were based 'purely on a police perspective'. They stated that they had 'not taken into account electoral equality of voters or councillors or in detail any [civil] parish boundaries', but had considered 'modern community boundaries, schools and church parishes.'

27 Chadderton Historical Society supported the retention of the existing council size of 60. It proposed that part of the existing Coldhurst ward be included in Chadderton North ward to better reflect community identities and interests in the area, and also put forward consequential amendments to improve electoral equality in the wards of Chadderton Central, Chadderton North and Chadderton South. Saddleworth White Rose Society (the White Rose Society) put forward its own proposals based on a 60-member council for the existing Lees, Saddleworth East and Saddleworth West wards. It considered that these proposals would better reflect community identities and interests in the area while providing for improved electoral equality.

28 14 representations were received from local residents in Saddleworth parish. Two respondents put forward alternative warding proposals in this area. 11 proforma letters noted the under-representation of the existing Saddleworth East and Saddleworth West wards, but considered that any proposal for change should properly reflect community identities and interests in the parish. 12 of the respondents for this area expressed various views on Saddleworth's status as part of the historic county of Yorkshire. A local resident commented on local debate as to whether or not Saddleworth belonged in Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council.

29 Finally, a resident of Shaw & Crompton parish put forward alternative names for Crompton and Shaw wards, and proposed that the parish be renamed Crompton.

4 Analysis and draft recommendations

30 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Oldham and welcome comments from all those interested relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, ward names, and parish council electoral arrangements. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

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

32 In relation to Schedule 11, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on estimated changes in the number and distribution of local government electors likely to take place over the next five years. We must also have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

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

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

Electorate forecasts

35 Since 1975 there has been a 2% decrease in the electorate of Oldham borough. The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 1% from 159,663 to 160,773 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in Chadderton Central, Hollinwood, Lees, Saddleworth East, Saddleworth West, and St James' wards, but also predicts a decline in the electorate of nine wards, most notably Alexandra, Chadderton North, Chadderton South, Crompton and Waterhead wards. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to unitary development plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

36 We know that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having considered the Borough Council's figures, accept that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council size

37 Oldham Borough Council presently has 60 members. In September 2001, it adopted a new constitution setting out a leader and cabinet committee system of political management.

38 At Stage One, we received two representations in relation to council size. The Borough Council proposed to retain a council of 60 members, which they argued provided a 'well run council, striving to achieve continuous improvement in the delivery of national and local priorities through the enabling and delivery of local services to the people of the borough.' It provided examples of its current aims and achievements in areas such as education, social services and housing. The Borough Council considered that it had 'successfully modernised its political management arrangements in a way which has brought real improvements to the Authority's strategic direction.'

39 The Labour Group also submitted proposals based on a 60-member council, serving 20 wards, but did not provide any argumentation in support of the existing council size. We further note that the Chadderton Historical Society, David Heyes MP and the White Rose Society based their proposals upon the retention of a 60-member council, and that no proposals for alternative council sizes were put forward. However, having carefully considered the proposals regarding council size received during Stage One, we decided that we required further argumentation and evidence as to how the existing 60-member council would secure effective and convenient local government for Oldham.

40 Accordingly, we requested additional information from the Borough Council. It stated that it had developed its new political management structure with the existing number of members in mind. Indeed, the Borough Council emphasised that it had a 'very clear and explicit focus on the different roles of councillors ... and the number of councillors needed to ensure that all these roles can be discharged effectively.' It considered that the council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees and other institutions were of optimum size. In the view of the Borough Council, to reduce the number of members would therefore hamper the effectiveness of the council 'to the extent that both the political management and representational roles ... [would be] put at risk,' and 'might also militate against innovative ways of working.'

41 In support of this view, the Borough Council detailed the roles of members within the new political management system and outlined their internal and external commitments, estimating that there had been 'an increase of member meetings of some 58% over the previous structure.' It considered that all councillors, not just those in the Cabinet, 'have significant roles to play in a modernised structure.' The Borough Council noted in this context the following responsibilities of non-executive members in particular: policy review and development in Overview and Scrutiny Committees; membership of Ordinary and Standards Committees; membership of the six Area Committees, to which it is expected that more decision-making and financial powers will be devolved; the wider community leadership role exercised by councillors; and membership of external local, regional and national bodies. The Borough Council also considered that 'there must be enough councillors to share the workload and represent all sections of society ... to attract younger councillors in particular.'

42 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, and are grateful for the co-operation from the Borough Council in providing further evidence and argumentation. We consider that it has put forward a good case for retaining the existing number of councillors based on the evidence provided of councillors' internal and external commitments under the new political management structure. Further, we note that these new structures have been developed with the existing 60-member council in mind. While the number of meetings has increased by 58%, we are content with the argumentation provided by the Borough Council that this increase has been absorbed by councillors under the new political management structure. We have also been persuaded that to reduce the number of councillors would reduce the effectiveness of the council, adversely affecting the quality of services that it provides and its

aim of reflecting a wide cross-section of the community. Finally, we note that we have not received any opposition to the proposed retention of a 60-member council, nor any proposals for an alternative council size.

43 Having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we therefore conclude that the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 60 members.

Electoral arrangements

44 We have given careful consideration to the representations received at Stage One, including the borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council and the Labour Group. We note that both schemes would provide for improved levels of electoral equality and that there was consensus between the two schemes in eight wards. We further note that the Borough Council had undertaken a consultation exercise involving parish councils and local residents.

45 In the north and west of the borough (the Chadderton, Royton and Shaw & Crompton areas) we note the consensus between the Borough Council and the Labour Group, and consider that their proposals would generally best achieve electoral equality, reflect community identities and interests and provide effective and convenient local government. However, we are proposing minor amendments to the proposed Crompton, Royton North and Royton South wards to better reflect community identities and further improve electoral equality. To the south-west we also propose adopting the the Labour Group and David Heyes MP's proposed Failsworth East and Failsworth West wards, subject to minor amendments, considering that they would provide for improved levels of electoral equality in this part of the borough.

46 In the east of the borough, we propose to adopt the White Rose Society's scheme, subject to minor amendments to provide for more clearly defined ward boundaries, as we consider these better resolve the current under-representation of this part of the borough than any of the other proposals received. We also consider that Saddleworth White Rose Society's proposals would divide Saddleworth parish between borough wards in a manner most consistent with the reflection of community identities and interests, particularly in the partly parished Lees urban area. It is worth noting that we are unable to propose changes to the external boundaries of local authorities and could not therefore give further consideration to the respondents' views on Saddleworth being part of Yorkshire.

47 In the town of Oldham there was little consensus between the Borough Council and the Labour Group, except with regard to the proposed Hollinwood ward. We have generally based our draft recommendations on the Borough Council's proposals, subject to amendments. We consider that its scheme would generally provide a better balance between the statutory criteria of good electoral equality and respecting local communities in this area than the current arrangements or other schemes submitted at Stage One. In particular, we were not convinced that the Labour Group's proposed Central and Saddleworth North wards would adequately reflect community identities and interests in those areas. This in turn limited the extent to which its other proposals could be given consideration. Further, there is no provision in legislation for us to take into account the effect of our proposals on ward eligibility for regeneration funding, as also suggested by the Labour Group. While we note Greater Manchester Police's proposals for Oldham and Saddleworth, they did not take into account our objective of improving electoral equality. This limited the extent to which their proposals could be given consideration.

48 In the south of the town we are putting forward substantial amendments to the Borough Council's proposed Alexandra and St Paul's wards. We consider that our amendments would better reflect community identities in the Bardsley and Glodwick areas, while facilitating both our proposals for the Saddleworth area and improvements in electoral equality in the Borough Council's proposed Hollinwood, St Mary's and Werneth wards. In the north of the Oldham unparished area, we propose further amendments to the Borough Council's proposed St

Mary's, St James' and Waterhead wards to improve electoral equality in St Mary's ward and better reflect community identities in the Moorhey area. Finally, we propose minor amendments to the proposed wards of Chadderton Central, Chadderton South, Coldhurst, Failsworth East, Hollinwood and Royton South, which would have a minimal effect on electoral equality, while in our view providing for more clearly defined ward boundaries.

49 We note the view of the Borough Council that its proposals sought to minimise changes to ward boundaries that would disrupt the existing Area Committees of Chadderton, East Oldham, Failsworth & Hollinwood, Saddleworth & Lees, Shaw & Royton and West Oldham. It argued that the Area Committees reflected community identities and interests in those areas and contributed to effective and convenient local government. Similarly, Chadderton Historical Society considered that 'the "historic townships" within the ... borough: Chadderton; Crompton (Shaw); Failsworth; Lees; Royton; Saddleworth, should be treated as entities in any revision of electoral boundaries, and their historic boundaries respected wherever this is possible.'

50 We acknowledge that the aim of achieving the best possible electoral equality and the requirement that metropolitan authorities be represented by a pattern of three-member wards are constraining factors in securing a completely accurate reflection of communities within the borough. In those cases where our proposals do breach the boundaries of Area Committees or of historic townships (as defined by the existing wards), we have done so either to achieve better electoral equality across the borough as a whole, or in our judgement to better reflect community identities and provide for more clearly defined ward boundaries.

51 For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- a) Lees, Saddleworth East and Saddleworth West wards
- b) Alexandra and St Mary's wards
- c) St James' and Waterhead wards
- d) Hollinwood and St Paul's wards
- e) Coldhurst and Werneth wards
- f) Failsworth East and Failsworth West wards
- g) Chadderton Central, Chadderton North and Chadderton South wards
- h) Crompton and Shaw wards
- i) Royton North and Royton South wards.

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

Lees, Saddleworth East and Saddleworth West wards

53 Lees, Saddleworth East and Saddleworth West wards lie in the east of the borough. Lees ward comprises part of the Oldham unparished area to the west of Saddleworth parish. Saddleworth East ward comprises the Greenfield, Uppermill and Dobcross parish wards of Saddleworth parish, while Saddleworth West ward comprises the Delph, Springhead Higher and Springhead Lower parish wards of Saddleworth parish. Under the existing electoral arrangements, Saddleworth East and Saddleworth West wards have councillor:elector ratios 31% and 13% above the borough average respectively (33% and 16% above by 2006). Lees ward has a councillor:elector ratio 6% below the borough average (3% below by 2006).

54 At Stage One, Oldham Borough Council proposed modifications to these wards to improve electoral equality, stating that 'Saddleworth is currently too big for two wards and too small for three wards.' It therefore proposed transferring the village of Grasscroft (polling district 69 and part of polling district 71) from the existing Saddleworth East ward to a revised Saddleworth West ward. The revised ward boundary would run to the east of Grasscroft village along the

borough boundary, to the north of the cricket ground, up Well-I-Hole Road before running along the railway line, running to the north of the Shaw Hall area and Springfield Farm and then rejoining the existing boundary. The Borough Council also proposed to transfer part of the Springhead area of Saddleworth parish adjoining the Lees unparished area, comprising polling districts 77 and 78, from the existing Saddleworth West ward to its proposed Lees ward. The proposed boundary would run up Hirons Lane, up Radcliffe Street, across the north of The Meadows before following the River Wood Brook to Wood Brook Road. It would follow this road and Den Lane to the existing boundary. The Alt/Pitses area (polling district 65) would be transferred out of the existing Lees ward to its proposed Alexandra ward. Its proposed boundary would run up B6194 Lees New Road and along the River Medlock, before running to the north of Coverham Avenue and Manor Road and rejoining the existing boundary.

55 Under Oldham Borough Council's proposals, Lees, Saddleworth East and Saddleworth West wards would have councillor:elector ratios 3%, 7% and 4% above the borough average respectively (4%, 9% and 7% above by 2006)

56 The Labour Group proposed a revised Saddleworth East ward and new Saddleworth North and Saddleworth South wards. It proposed that Saddleworth East ward broadly comprise the Diggle, Greenfield and Uppermill areas of Saddleworth parish, and part of the Grasscroft area of the parish. Its proposed boundary with its proposed Saddleworth North and Saddleworth South wards would run to the west of the properties along Mossley Road, across the golf course, to the east of Ryefield Drive and then north to meet the existing boundary at Lark Hill Lane. The Labour Group's proposed Saddleworth North ward would comprise the Delph, Denshaw and Dobcross areas of Saddleworth parish together with the majority of the existing Waterhead ward (part of the Oldham unparished area) to the north of Herbert Street and Sharples Hall Street. The proposed ward boundary would run down Ripponden Road, to the north of the properties along Herbert Street, down Sharples Hall Street and then along Huddersfield Road, before following the existing boundary of Waterhead ward north along Medlock Valley Way. At Wotherhead Hill, it would run along the existing boundary southwards until it reached the Thurston Clough area, where it would follow Oldham Road southwards. It would then veer south before the Star Inn to join Burnedge Lane at The Nook, before passing to the north of Springfield Farm and joining the proposed boundary with Saddleworth East already described.

57 The Labour Group's proposed Saddleworth South ward would be 'created by a logical combination of polling districts at the southern end of Saddleworth,' comprising the Springhead area of Saddleworth parish, the remaining part of the Grasscroft area of the parish, and a small part of the Oldham unparished area currently in Lees ward. Saddleworth South ward's boundaries with the Labour Group's proposed Saddleworth East and Saddleworth North wards have already been discussed, and its boundary with Lees ward would be the same as under the existing arrangements between the existing Lees and Saddleworth West wards, except that part of polling district 60 would be transferred to Saddleworth South. Its proposed boundary would therefore run down Huddersfield Road, to the north of properties along Dovecoat Lane and then to the east of the properties along Stamford Road before rejoining the existing boundary. This represents one of the two changes made to its proposed Lees ward. The second modification would be the transfer of part of polling district 3 (broadly comprising the Fenny Hill area) into the proposed ward from Alexandra ward. Its proposed boundary would run along Snipe Clough, along Alexandra Road, then Abbey Hills Road, before rejoining the existing boundary. The Labour Group emphasised the importance of retaining the Alt and Holts areas in Lees ward to retain its regeneration status.

58 Under the Labour Group's proposals, Lees, Saddleworth North and Saddleworth South wards would have councillor:elector ratios 2%, 5% and 4% above the borough average respectively (5%, 7% and 4% above by 2006). Saddleworth East ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 4% below the borough average (2% below by 2006).

59 Greater Manchester Police put forward proposals for revised Lees and Saddleworth West wards. Their proposed Lees ward 'would bring Springhead, Grotton and Austerlands into one ward with greater affinity and proximity to Oldham than Saddleworth and Uppermill.' The east boundary of the proposed ward would run from Lower Quick Edge Farm, to Platting Road, along Platting Road to Huddersfield Road (A62), then west along this road to Higher Turf Lane before running west to the existing boundary at Austerlands Cricket Club. The southern boundary of their proposed Saddleworth West ward would run from Platting Road West to Higher Turf Lane, to Austerlands Cricket Club. Its eastern boundary would run from Platting Road, east along Huddersfield Road and along to Wall Hill Road. It would then run to the south of Wall Hill Road to Uppermill viaduct and then along the railway line to Standedge. They stated that 'this would place Dobcross, Diggle, Delph and Denshaw in one ward, Saddleworth West, balancing the two Saddleworth wards'. Their proposed Saddleworth East ward 'would contain Grasscroft, Greenfield and Uppermill.' Greater Manchester Police did not provide any electorate figures for their proposals.

60 Saddleworth Parish Council stated that, with the exception of one parish councillor, all its councillors felt that the Borough Council's proposals were 'the best option for Saddleworth and members voted that we accept the proposal.'

61 Saddleworth White Rose Society proposed new Lees & Saddleworth West, Saddleworth North and Saddleworth South wards in this area. It stated that realignment of these ward boundaries 'is a better arrangement than the present status quo in terms of the geography of the district, the communities of interest within it and the communication routes through it.' Its proposed Lees & Saddleworth West ward would comprise the Springhead Lower parish ward of Saddleworth parish (all of the Springhead area except polling districts 75-76) and all of the existing Lees ward except polling districts 63-65 (the Alt, Holts and Pitses areas). The White Rose Society argued that in its proposal 'the historic core of Lees comprising Crossbank, Lees and Nether Lees, remains together in one ward and is now grouped with the demographically, architecturally and historically similar area of Saddleworth West.' Its proposed boundary would run down Lees Brook and Thornleigh Brook, around the village of Grotton, along Wood Brook Lane, westwards along Den Lane and then northwards up Crossbank Avenue, to the south of Dovecoat Lane and up to the west of North Nook. It would then run north of Birks Avenue and New Royd Avenue before rejoining the existing boundary with Waterhead ward.

62 The White Rose Society proposed that its Saddleworth North ward comprise the Delph, Dobcross and Springhead Higher parish wards of Saddleworth parish. Its proposed boundary with Lees & Saddleworth West ward would follow the existing boundary, before branching to the west along Den Lane and Wood Brook Road, and running between Load Hill Farm and Platting Farm. Its proposed boundary with Saddleworth South ward would run to the north of Grasscroft and Uppermill villages and then run westwards to the borough boundary. As the White Rose Society stated, it 'is at a point where the Delph and Diggle valleys join together into the lower valley of the River Tame.' The White Rose Society proposed that its Saddleworth South ward comprise the Greenfield and Uppermill parish wards of Saddleworth parish, the boundaries of which have already been detailed. It stated that 'the changes will not affect representation arrangements on the Saddleworth Parish Council [as] existing Saddleworth Parish Council electoral wards will not cross the proposed metropolitan ward boundaries.'

63 Under the White Rose Society's proposals, Lees & Saddleworth West wards, Saddleworth North and Saddleworth South wards would have councillor:elector ratios 1% above and 4% and 6% below the borough average respectively (2% above the average, equal to the average and 4% below the average by 2006).

64 We received 11 proforma letters from local residents arguing that 'Saddleworth adjoins Oldham ... that is a geographical fact ... however culturally and historically we are a totally different entity to our neighbour.' They stated that 'Saddleworth is the Yorkshire gateway to the Pennines' and that 'the communities within Saddleworth are fiercely loyal to their village

identity'. The residents also pointed out that 'since the 1970's the population within Saddleworth has grown ... [although] the number of Saddleworth representatives on Oldham MBC remains static'. This presents an 'undemocratic' situation as Saddleworth is under-represented on the council. No specific proposals for revised warding arrangements were put forward. A number of these respondents considered that the external boundaries of Oldham borough should be changed to include Saddleworth in Yorkshire for administrative purposes. However, another Saddleworth resident supported the retention of Saddleworth in the borough of Oldham. While we note these comments, we are unable to recommend changes to the external boundaries of the borough of Oldham as part of this review.

65 A further submission from a local resident proposed that the under-representation of Saddleworth could be resolved by the allocation of further borough councillors to the parish. He stated that 'the ward boundaries could be adjusted accordingly, within Saddleworth,' but did not put forward specific proposals as to how this could be achieved. Finally, another resident proposed that 'in order to make three balanced wards, a new ... [ward] should be set up to include the old Springhead Urban District Council area together with Lees, with the relevant adjustment of the Saddleworth West ward boundary.' He provided argumentation to support this: 'this new area ... would also be compatible and similar demographically, historically and architecturally.'

66 We have given careful consideration to the representations received. We are proposing to adopt the White Rose Society's proposed Lees & Saddleworth West, Saddleworth North and Saddleworth South wards, subject to a number of minor amendments. We note that Saddleworth parish is currently represented by two borough wards, each returning three councillors, but it is entitled on a 60-member council to 7.3 councillors (7.5 councillors by 2006). We concur with the view of many respondents that Saddleworth, which is partly rural and historically part of the county of Yorkshire, has to some extent a different character and history from the remainder of the borough, which is predominantly urban and historically part of Lancashire. We would therefore seek to put forward proposals in this area that reflect community identities and interests and provide for effective and convenient local government. However, to provide for good electoral equality in Saddleworth parish, we must also recommend a third borough ward comprising part of Saddleworth and part of another area, since in practice we can only recommend three-member wards in metropolitan authorities.

67 Having visited the area, we consider that this could best be achieved by a ward that links the Lees unparished area and the Springhead area of Saddleworth parish; at no other point does a residential part of Saddleworth parish adjoin another residential area in the borough. We note that the Borough Council (supported by Saddleworth Parish Council), the White Rose Society, Greater Manchester Police and a local resident all put forward variants of this proposal. We note that the Borough Council's proposals for this area would provide for improved electoral equality in this area, albeit at a level slightly higher than that provided by the White Rose Society's scheme. However, we consider that the Borough Council's proposed Lees ward would entail a more arbitrary division of Springhead between borough wards than that of the White Rose Society's proposals.

68 Although in both cases it is necessary to divide Springhead to provide for good electoral equality, under the Borough Council's proposals two separate areas in the north and south of the village (the Grotton and Austerlands areas, based on polling districts 76 and 79) would be retained in Saddleworth West ward. In contrast, only Austerlands would be included in the proposed Saddleworth West ward under the White Rose Society's proposals. We note that Austerlands is linked to the remainder of the proposed Saddleworth North ward (the villages of Delph, Dobcross and Denshaw) via the A62. We further note that it forms part of Springhead Higher parish ward together with a rural area of the parish immediately to the north, also to be contained in the proposed Saddleworth North ward. We therefore consider that there is evidence to suggest that the exclusion of the Austerlands area from the proposed Lees & Saddleworth West ward would not adversely affect the provision of effective and convenient

local government and would provide the best reflection of community identity in the area, given the constraints of a three-member warding pattern.

69 We were not persuaded that the Labour Group's proposal to link the more rural Delph, Denshaw and Dobcross areas of Saddleworth parish with the majority of the existing Waterhead ward in the Oldham urban unparished area would provide the best reflection of community identities and interests due to the poor links between the constituent parts of the proposed ward, despite the resulting improvement in electoral equality. As previously discussed, we are also unable to take into account the issue of regeneration funding entitlements raised by the Labour Group. We further note that Greater Manchester Police's proposals would, by adding Springhead to the whole of the existing Lees ward, result in significant under-representation in this area, and we were therefore unable to give this proposal further consideration.

70 We note that under the White Rose Society's proposals the Alt, Holts and Pitses areas (polling districts 63-65) would be excluded from the proposed Lees and Saddleworth West ward, but were not assigned to another ward. As discussed in the following section, we are proposing that they be included in a revised Alexandra ward. This to some extent reflects the proposal by the Borough Council to transfer Alt and Pitses to Alexandra ward. Having visited this area, we are content that these three areas possess good road links with the remainder of the proposed ward to the west via Lees New Road and the B6194 Abbey Hills Road. In particular, we note that Holts, situated closest to the remainder of Lees ward to the north, forms a distinct, self-contained estate. We therefore consider that it can be transferred to another ward if necessary to provide for good electoral equality across this part of the borough without a detrimental effect on community identities and interests in the affected area.

71 To the east, we consider that the White Rose Society's proposed Saddleworth North and Saddleworth South wards would divide the remainder of Saddleworth parish in a manner which we consider to better reflect community identities and communication routes along the A62, A669 and A672 than either the current arrangements or the other representations received. We were not convinced that the Borough Council's proposed Saddleworth West ward, comprising the village of Grasscroft in the south of the parish and the villages of Delph and Denshaw in the north of the parish would adequately reflect community identities and main road links within Saddleworth parish. In comparison, we note that the White Rose Society's proposed Saddleworth South ward would link Grasscroft with the neighbouring areas of Greenfield and Uppermill to the east.

72 As previously mentioned, we are also putting forward a number of minor modifications to the White Rose Society's proposals for these three wards to better reflect community identities and interests, and to tie ward boundaries to better ground detail. We propose that the new Lees and Saddleworth West ward include all properties in the Lees unparished area to the north and east of Lees Hill Road. This amendment would result in the inclusion of the Rhodes Hill/Knowles Lane area, which having visited this part of the borough, we do not consider to form part of the Holts estate. In Springhead we also propose to include Black Leach Farm on Cooper Street, part of Woodbrook Road and Woodleigh Road in Saddleworth North ward rather than Lees & Saddleworth West ward. These minor amendments would ensure that all properties on Woodbrook Road would be included in a single borough ward and would take the boundary along the centre of Cooper Street. We also propose a minor amendment to include all properties on the High Street, Uppermill in Saddleworth South ward, affecting only Ryefield Lodge, to better reflect the local community.

73 We further note that the Saddleworth parish boundary divides roads between Austerlands (in the proposed Saddleworth North ward) and Lees (in the proposed Lees & Saddleworth West ward). A number of these roads – Belmont Avenue, Crossbank Avenue, Den Lane, Dovecote Lane, Taylor Green Way and Vicarage Close – are situated directly to the north of the revised ward boundary on Den Lane, which also forms the boundary between Springhead Higher and Springhead Lower parish wards of Saddleworth parish. We therefore propose to unite these

roads in a single borough ward by including the parished parts of these roads in Lees & Saddleworth West ward (and thus also in Springhead Lower parish ward), providing in our view for a more effective and clearly identifiable ward boundary. To the north we have identified a number of additional minor parish boundary anomalies on the A62 Huddersfield Road, New Royd Avenue and Temple Close. However, we would not seek to recommend the creation of parish wards containing very few electors, which would be substantially over-represented at parish council level. In our view, these anomalies would best be addressed by a review of external parish boundaries, which lies within the power of the Borough Council to undertake.

74 Under our draft recommendations, Lees & Saddleworth West ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 5% above the borough average (6% above by 2006). Saddleworth North and Saddleworth South wards would both have councillor:elector ratios 6% below the borough average (2% and 4% below by 2006). Our proposed wards are illustrated on Map 2, Map A1 and the large maps.

Alexandra and St Mary's wards

75 Alexandra and St Mary's wards lie in the central and southern areas of the borough. Under the existing electoral arrangements, Alexandra and St Mary's wards have councillor:elector ratios 12% and 7% below the borough average respectively (14% and 8% below by 2006).

76 At Stage One, Oldham Borough Council stated that Alexandra ward is 'currently ... too small'. To address this, it proposed including the Alt area (polling district 65) from the existing Lees ward, the proposed boundary having been detailed in the previous section. It also proposed transferring the area north of Honeywell Lane (part of polling district 1) from the existing Alexandra ward to its proposed St Paul's ward. It proposed retaining the existing St Mary's ward.

77 Under Oldham Borough Council's proposals, Alexandra ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 2% above the borough average (1% by 2006). St Mary's ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 7% below the borough average (8% below by 2006).

78 The Labour Group proposed two new wards in this area. It proposed a new Roundthorn ward to replace the existing Alexandra ward, which would extend 'from Glodwick into Roundthorn and lower Clarksfield into what is becoming a distinct community in areas of terraced streets' and use 'the expanse of Alexandra Park' as a boundary. Its eastern boundary with Lees would follow the existing boundary northwards to Dunham Street. It would then follow this street, run along Sidebottom Street and then Huddersfield Road to Palm Street. Running south down Palm Street, it would run to the east of Spring Street and Esther Street, before running along Clarksfield Road and then westwards to the south of Lees Road and the north of Southlink Road. The Labour Group's proposed boundary would run to the south of Oldham Way and then along Park Road and Abbey Hills Road, where it would rejoin the existing boundary.

79 The Labour Group also proposed a new Central ward, 'based on its close relationship with the town centre and town centre regeneration areas.' Its proposed boundary would run down Huddersfield Road, along Shaw Road and then along the railway, before rejoining Shaw Road to the south of Meek Street. Running southwards, it would run to the west of properties along Higginshaw Road, run to the west of Oldham Edge playing fields, before running along Henshaw Street. Moving westwards, it would run to the south of the Civic Centre, along the A627, along Manchester Street and then southwards along Coppice Street. It would run to the east of Werneth Junior and Infants Schools, before running eastwards along Chamber Road, down Ashton Road, to the south of Scott Street and across to the east side of Belgrave Road, where it would run behind these properties until the boundary joined the boundaries between the proposed Lees and Roundthorn wards already detailed.

80 Under the Labour Group's proposals, Roundthorn ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 1% above the borough average (2% below by 2006). Central ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 6% below the borough average (7% below by 2006).

81 Greater Manchester Police proposed a new St Mary's ward. The changes they recommended were 'in order to bring the community of Glodwick into one ward area and also the generally recognised area of the town centre.' The northern boundary would run along Lees Road from Clarksfield Road to Mumps Roundabout, then run up Brook Street to Shaw Road and to the existing boundary. The eastern boundary would run from the Leesbrook and Breeze Hill areas, through Roundthorn to Manor Road and Abbey Hills Road. The southern boundary would run from Manor Road up Abbey Hills Road to the Fenny Hill area to the existing Alexandra/Lees boundary. Their proposed St Mary's ward would then be extended west to the old railway line, along Deanshut Clough. The boundary would follow Honeywell Lane and run along Kings Road to Park Road. From Park Road, it would run up to the Kings Street Roundabout and along Oldham Way to Middleton Road. It would then run east from Middleton Road to Rochdale Road and then north to St Mary's to rejoin the existing boundary at Lord Street. Greater Manchester Police did not provide any electorate figures for their proposals.

82 Having carefully considered all representations received at Stage One, we propose to broadly adopt the Borough Council's proposed St Mary's ward as we consider it to best meet the statutory criteria, subject to two amendments to improve electoral equality and better reflect community identities and interests in the Glodwick and Moorhey areas. We are also adopting the Borough Council's proposed Alexandra ward but are putting forward a substantial number of modifications, in part as a consequence of our proposals for a new Lees & Saddleworth West ward to the east (where we are adopting the proposals of the White Rose Society) and for a revised warding pattern to the west of Alexandra Park. We consider that our proposals provide a better balance overall in the south of the Oldham unparished area and in Saddleworth between electoral equality, the need to reflect community identities and interests and the provision of effective and convenient local government.

83 Our decision to broadly adopt the Borough Council's proposals in the Oldham unparished area and the White Rose Society's proposals in Saddleworth parish has also limited the extent to which the Labour Group's and the Greater Manchester Police's proposals could be taken into consideration. We note that both the Labour Group and Greater Manchester Police considered that no ward should bridge Alexandra Park. However, in light of our proposals for the Lees and Saddleworth areas, we found it impossible on a 60-member council to achieve electoral equality and not put forward wards that would cross the park (Alexandra) and the town centre (St Mary's). While the Labour Group's proposals provided for good electoral equality, we were not convinced that the proposed Central ward would adequately reflect community identities and interests, as it comprised parts of three separate communities to the north, south and east of Oldham town centre. We note the lack of consensus among respondents as to whether Oldham town centre should be included in a single ward, and would welcome further views and evidence from interested parties at Stage Three.

84 We propose the following amendments to the Borough Council's proposed Alexandra and St Mary's wards. First, we propose that the Holts area be transferred from the existing Lees ward into Alexandra ward, as previously discussed. We consider that this change would help improve electoral equality further to the east without adversely affecting community identities and interests in the affected area.

85 Second, we propose to transfer that part of the existing Alexandra ward to the south of Dowry Street and west of the Snipe Clough ravine (broadly comprising the Fitton Hill and Hathershaw areas) to St Paul's ward. We also propose to transfer that part of the existing St Paul's ward to the east of Ashton Road and to the south of Park Road to Alexandra ward. We consider that these amendments would provide for improved electoral equality in our revised Alexandra and St Paul's wards. Having visited the area, we consider that the Bardsley area in

the existing St Paul's ward, together with properties on the west side of the A627 Ashton Road, is somewhat isolated from the remainder of the ward to the north, yet adjoins the Fitton Hill area in the existing Alexandra ward. We note that the Labour Group proposed to include these areas in the existing St Paul's ward. We further noted that access across the north of Alexandra Park, from west to east of the proposed Alexandra ward, via Park Road and Kings Road is as good, if not better than across the south of the park. We therefore consider that our proposed Alexandra ward would also provide for a better reflection of community identities and interests in this part of the borough.

86 Third, we propose to transfer that part of the existing Alexandra ward to the north of Park Road to the Borough Council's proposed St Mary's ward. We note the view of the Labour Group and the Greater Manchester Police that the Glodwick area is currently divided between district wards and seek to unite the community in a single ward. Having visited the area, we consider that the current boundary between Alexandra and St Mary's wards, which the Borough Council proposed to retain, divides properties on either side of Waterloo Street, which is predominantly residential in character. In our view this amendment would therefore provide a better reflection of community identities and interests in Glodwick. We also note that Queens Road, situated to the south of Park Road adjoining Alexandra Park, is different in character from roads to the north. We consider that it may be retained in Alexandra ward, facilitating the linkage of the western and eastern sections of the ward along Park Road, without detrimental effect on community identities in this area.

87 Finally, to improve electoral equality in the revised St Mary's ward, we also propose that the existing northern ward boundary on Ronald Street be adjusted to run to the rear of properties on the A669 Lees Road, resulting in the transfer of Balfour Street, Eric Street, Kelperlow Street and Ronald Street to Waterhead ward. Having visited the area, we note that the current boundary divides Ronald Street, which is a minor road and residential in character, and consider that this amendment would better reflect community identities and interests by uniting an estate in a single ward.

88 Under our draft recommendations, St Mary's ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 2% above the borough average (equal to the borough average by 2006). Alexandra ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 6% below the borough average (5% below the average by 2006). Our proposed wards are illustrated on Map 2, Map A1 and the large maps.

St James' and Waterhead wards

89 St James' and Waterhead wards lie in the centre of the borough. Under the existing electoral arrangements, Waterhead ward has a councillor:elector ratio 19% above the borough average (17% above by 2006). St James' ward has a councillor:elector ratio 20% below the borough average (18% below by 2006).

90 At Stage One, Oldham Borough Council stated that 'St James' (ward) is currently too small and Waterhead (ward) is too large.' It therefore proposed the transfer of the Moorside and Turf Pit Lane area (polling district 99) from the existing Waterhead ward to its proposed St James' ward. Its proposed boundary would run to the east of Haugh Hill Road and to the north of Higher Count Hill before rejoining the existing boundary. This modification represents the only change proposed to these two wards.

91 Under Oldham Borough Council's proposals, Waterhead ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 1% above the borough average (1% below by 2006). St James' ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 2% below the borough average (equal to the average by 2006).

92 The Labour Group proposed one minor modification to St James' ward, noting that the existing Waterhead ward be largely replaced by Saddleworth North ward as previously

described. It proposed the transfer to its proposed St James' ward of polling district 102 from the existing Waterhead ward, comprising that part of the ward to the south of Herbert Street and Sharples Hall Street. Its proposed boundary between St James' and Saddleworth North ward would thus run to the east of properties along Herbert Street, down Sharples Hall Street and then along Huddersfield Road to rejoin the existing boundary. Under the Labour Group's proposals, St James' ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 7% below the borough average (4% below by 2006).

93 Greater Manchester Police proposed modifications to both of these wards. Their proposed Waterhead ward 'would encompass all of the Clarksfield community north of Lees Road, the Mount Pleasant and Greenacres Moor areas to Mumps.' They proposed that the southern boundary of Waterhead ward be extended to Lees Road, west to Mumps roundabout and then east up Huddersfield Road (A62) to Cross Street. Greater Manchester Police also proposed that the southern boundary of St James' ward be extended from Shaw Road/Cross Street to Mumps and north up Brook Street to Shaw Road. They did not provide any electorate figures for their proposals.

94 After careful consideration of all representations received at Stage One, we have decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposed St James' and Waterhead wards, which we consider would improve electoral equality, continue to employ the strong ward boundary of the A672 Ripponden Road up to the junction with Turf Pit Lane, and unite the Moorside community in St James' ward. However, we propose two modifications to further improve electoral equality in the Oldham unparished area. First, as discussed in the previous section, we propose that the boundary between Waterhead and St Mary's wards be moved southwards from Ronald Street to the rear of properties on the A669 Lees Road. This amendment would improve electoral equality in our revised St Mary's ward while in our view better reflecting community identities in the Ronald Street area.

95 Second, we are proposing a consequential amendment to retain good electoral equality in the proposed Waterhead ward. Under our proposals, an additional part of Waterhead ward to the north of Alexandra Terrace and the Havenside Centre and to the south of Turf Pit Lane would be transferred to St James' ward. We note that we were unable to further consider the Labour Group's proposals for these wards since we do not propose to adopt its Saddleworth North ward. As previously discussed, we are also unable to take into account the issue of regeneration funding raised by the Labour Group. Similarly, as a result of our proposal to adopt the Borough Council's proposed St Mary's and Waterhead wards, we could not give further consideration to Greater Manchester Police's proposed amendments.

96 Under our draft recommendations, St James' and Waterhead wards would have councillor:elector ratios 1% and 5% above the borough average respectively (both 3% above by 2006). Our proposed wards are illustrated on Map 2, Map A1 and the large maps.

Hollinwood and St Paul's wards

97 Hollinwood and St Paul's wards lie to the south of the borough. Under the existing electoral arrangements, Hollinwood and St Paul's wards have councillor:elector ratios 18% and 3% below the borough average respectively (15% and 2% below by 2006).

98 At Stage One, Oldham Borough Council stated that Hollinwood ward is 'currently ... too small.' It addressed this by proposing the transfer of the Garden Suburbs area (polling district 47) from the existing St Paul's ward to its proposed Hollinwood ward. The revised boundary would run to the south of the properties on Green Lane, to the south of the properties at the end of that lane before running up Fieldsway road, along Nadin Street and down Hollins Road, where it would rejoin the existing boundary. The Borough Council also proposed that the Pastures estate centred on Lime Lane in the existing Hollinwood ward be included in a revised Failsworth East ward, adjusting the ward boundary to follow the M60. However, it added that

'the M60 is a relatively new topographical feature', and considered that it did not accurately divide the Failsworth and Hollinwood communities to the north of this point. It considered that Roman Road linked Kaskenmoor School and Hillingdon Close to the rest of Hollinwood ward.

99 The Borough Council further proposed that part of the town centre (part of polling district 41) be transferred out of the existing St Paul's ward to its proposed Coldhurst ward, affecting few electors. Its proposed boundary would run along the A62 Oldham Way. As previously discussed, the Borough Council also proposed that the area to the north of Honeywell Lane (part of polling district one) be transferred from the existing Alexandra ward to its proposed St Paul's ward.

100 Under Oldham Borough Council's proposals, Hollinwood ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 9% below the borough average (7% below by 2006). St Paul's ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 2% below the borough average, both initially and by 2006.

101 The Labour Group proposed the same Hollinwood ward as the Borough Council, but proposed 'significant change' to St Paul's ward. 'The re-defined ward straddles Ashton Road (A627) from the Tameside boundary to the town centre.' Therefore, its proposed boundary of St Paul's ward would run to the east of the Fitton Hill area, south of Scott Street, up Ashton Road, along Chamber Road and to the east of the properties on Burlington Avenue. It would then follow Royley Road and New Road, run to the south of properties on Manley Road and then run down Lorne Street. The proposed boundary would then run along Copster Hill Road and then southwards to the borough boundary, passing to the east of the Hollins Green, Lime Side and Moss Grove areas.

102 Under the Labour Group's proposals, Hollinwood would have the same councillor:elector ratio as under the Borough Council's proposals. St Paul's ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 1% above the borough average (2% above by 2006).

103 David Heyes MP supported the Borough Council and the Labour Group's proposed Hollinwood ward. He stated that 'the council's proposals produce a coherent Hollinwood ward ... the Garden Suburbs area ... has always been regarded locally as an integral part of the Hollins/Hollinwood community along the Hollins road corridor.' David Heyes MP acknowledged that the proposed ward would be below the average number of electors, but argued that it was necessary to transfer the Pastures Estate into Failsworth East ward as it was 'severed from the rest of Hollinwood since the opening of the M60 motorway ... and the residents regard themselves as living in Failsworth'.

104 We received one further representation in relation to this area at Stage One. Greater Manchester Police considered that the northern boundary of St Paul's ward should 'run from King Street Roundabout east along Park Road to Kings Road', with the remainder of the existing St Paul's ward to the north transferred to their proposed St Mary's ward. They did not provide any electorate figures for their proposals.

105 Having carefully considered all representations received at Stage One, we propose to broadly adopt the Borough Council's and Labour Group's proposed Hollinwood ward as we consider it to best reflect community identity, subject to a number of amendments to improve electoral equality and provide for more clearly defined ward boundaries. We note the support of David Heyes MP for this proposal. However, we are also putting forward a substantial number of modifications to the Borough Council's proposed St Paul's ward. These changes derive in part from our proposals for a new Lees & Saddleworth West ward to the east (based on the White Rose Society's scheme) and a revised Alexandra ward, and in part from our proposals to improve electoral equality in the wards of Hollinwood and Werneth to the west of the ward. We consider that our proposals provide a better balance overall in the south of the Oldham unparished area and Saddleworth parish between electoral equality, the need to reflect

community identities and interests and the provision of effective and convenient local government.

106 Our first amendment to the Borough Council's and Labour Group's proposed Hollinwood ward is to improve electoral equality in this ward by transferring that part of St Paul's ward to the west of the B1692 Frederick Street and to the south of Wolverton Avenue and College Avenue to the proposed Hollinwood ward. We note that, as proposed by the Borough Council and the Labour Group, road links between the Garden Suburbs area and the remainder of Hollinwood ward via Hollins Road would lie in St Paul's ward. Our amendment would correct this anomaly.

107 Second, we also propose that the M60 form the boundary between Hollinwood ward and Failsworth East ward from Cutler Hill Road in the south to the Manchester Victoria to Oldham railway line in the north. While we note the view of the Borough Council concerning links across the recently built motorway, having visited the area we consider that it is the most effective and convenient ward boundary available in this area. Further, we note that Hillingdon Drive, where the majority of affected residential properties are located, adjoins other residential properties in Failsworth East ward. However, to the south of Cutler Hill Road, we propose a minor amendment to Hollinwood ward to include all properties in the small village of Woodhouse Green in Failsworth East ward. We concur with the decision of the Borough Council and the Labour Group not to use the M60 as the ward boundary at this point, noting that this would divide Woodhouse Green and the nearby village of Woodhouses between borough wards.

108 As previously discussed, we propose thirdly to transfer to St Paul's ward that part of the existing Alexandra ward to the south of Dowry Street and west of the Snipe Clough ravine (broadly comprising the Fitton Hill and Hathershaw areas) to improve electoral equality. We also propose to transfer to Alexandra ward that part of the existing St Paul's ward to the east of Ashton Road and to the south of Park Road for the same reason and to reflect community identities. Finally, we also propose to transfer that part of St Paul's ward to the west of the B1692 but to the north of (and including) Wolverton Avenue and College Avenue to a revised Werneth ward to improve electoral equality.

109 While we note that the boundaries in the south of our proposed St Paul's ward to some extent reflects those put forward by the Labour Group, in light of our proposals for the Lees and Saddleworth areas, we found it impossible on a 60-member council to achieve electoral equality and not put forward a ward in this area that would either cross Alexandra Park or the town centre. Unlike the Labour Group, we opted to retain the existing link across the park, since as previously discussed we were concerned that its proposed Central ward would not sufficiently reflect community identities and interests by combining parts of different communities on three sides of the town centre.

110 Under our draft recommendations, Hollinwood and St Paul's wards would both have councillor:elector ratios 2% below the borough average (both 1% below by 2006). Our proposed wards are illustrated on Map 2, Map A1 and the large maps.

Coldhurst and Werneth wards

111 Coldhurst and Werneth wards lie in the centre of the borough. Under the existing electoral arrangements, Coldhurst ward has a councillor:elector ratio equal to the borough average, both initially and by 2006. Werneth ward has a councillor:elector ratio 8% below the borough average, both initially and by 2006.

112 At Stage One, Oldham Borough Council proposed minor modifications to these two wards. It proposed that Coldhurst ward include parts of the town centre, 'containing very few electors', from the existing St Paul's and Werneth wards. It stated that 'this will have the advantage of bringing the town centre into two wards, rather than four as it is currently.' Its proposed boundary between these three wards would run along the A62 Oldham Way.

113 Under Oldham Borough Council's proposals, Coldhurst ward would have a councillor:elector ratio equal to the borough average, both initially and by 2006. Werneth ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 8% below the borough average, both initially and by 2006.

114 The Labour Group proposed no change to Coldhurst ward and 'significant change' to Werneth ward. Werneth ward's boundaries with the proposed Central, Coldhurst, Hollinwood and St Paul's wards have already been detailed, and its boundary with Chadderton Central and Chadderton South wards would remain unchanged under these proposals. The Labour Group stated that 'the re-defined ward includes the relatively discrete Freehold community and then extends across the southern face of the Coppice ridge into former St Paul's (ward) marked by three parallel roads, Heron Street, its bottom boundary, Frederick Street running through the middle and Windsor Road lying adjacent to the top boundary.'

115 Under the Labour Group's proposals, Coldhurst ward would have the same councillor:elector ratio as the existing ward. Werneth ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 1% above the borough average, both initially and by 2006.

116 We received two further representations in relation to this area. As previously discussed, Greater Manchester Police proposed to transfer to St Mary's ward that part of the existing Werneth ward to the north of the A62 Oldham Way, and that part of the existing Coldhurst ward to the south of St Mary's Way and the A669 Middleton Road. They considered that the revised St Mary's ward would unite the town centre area, but did not provide any electorate figures for their proposals. Chadderton Historical Society put forward an amendment to the boundary between the wards of Chadderton North and Coldhurst, described in a subsequent section of this report.

117 After careful consideration of all representations received at Stage One, we propose to adopt the Borough Council's Coldhurst and Werneth wards as we consider them to best meet the statutory criteria, subject to several minor amendments. We note that the Labour Group put forward a revised Coldhurst ward identical to that of the Borough Council except in the south of the proposed ward. As previously discussed, we are proposing to improve electoral equality in Werneth ward by including that part of St Paul's ward to the west of the B1692 and to the north of (and including) Wolverton Avenue and College Avenue in an amended Werneth ward. We also propose the transfer of part of Cumberland Drive from the proposed Coldhurst ward to Royton South ward; this amendment would affect only 11 electors and would unite Cumberland Drive in Royton South ward.

118 Based on the available evidence, we are content that these revised wards would provide the best balance between achieving good electoral equality, reflecting community identities and interests and providing effective and convenient local government. We were unable to adopt the Labour Group's wards in this area, as we do not propose to adopt its Central ward, which would span the town centre in a way we did not consider to best reflect community identities and interests. However, noting the lack of consensus among respondents as to whether Oldham town centre should be included in a single ward, we would welcome further views and evidence from interested parties at Stage Three.

119 Under our draft recommendations, Coldhurst ward would have a councillor:elector ratio equal to the borough average, both initially and by 2006. Werneth ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 4% below the borough average (3% below by 2006). Our proposed wards are illustrated on Map 2, Map A1 and the large maps.

Failsworth East and Failsworth West wards

120 Failsworth East and Failsworth West wards lie to the south-west of the borough. Under the existing electoral arrangements, Failsworth East ward has a councillor:elector ratio 3% above the borough average (2% above by 2006). Failsworth West ward has a councillor:elector ratio 7% below the borough average (9% below by 2006).

121 At Stage One, Oldham Borough Council proposed one modification to the existing Failsworth East ward and no change to the existing Failsworth West ward. As described in a preceding section, its proposed Failsworth East ward would include the Pastures estate (part of polling district 124) from the existing Hollinwood ward. The boundary between these two wards would be moved to the M60 as 'the motorway does effectively divide the community'. However, the Borough Council added that 'the M60 is a relatively new topographical feature', and considered that it did not accurately divide the Failsworth and Hollinwood communities to the north of this point. It considered that Roman Road linked Kaskenmoor School and Hillingdon Close to the rest of Hollinwood ward.

122 Under Oldham Borough Council's proposals, Failsworth East ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 5% above the borough average (4% above by 2006). Failsworth West ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 7% below the borough average (9% below by 2006).

123 The Labour Group also proposed the inclusion of the Pastures estate in an amended Failsworth East ward. However, it also proposed the transfer from Failsworth East ward to Failsworth West ward of part of polling district 113, an area of the Lords Lane estate centred on Alder Road. Its proposed boundary would run to the east of Warwick Road and to the north of Durham Crescent, where rejoins the existing boundary.

124 Under the Labour Group's proposals, Failsworth West ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 1% above the borough average (1% below by 2006). Failsworth East ward would have a councillor:elector ratio of 4% below the borough average, both initially and by 2006.

125 David Heyes MP provided argumentation supporting the Labour Group's proposed Failsworth East and Failsworth West wards. He stated that the streets comprising the part of polling district 113 to be transferred 'are all within the Lord Lane Estate' and that the properties in these streets 'are similar in style, character and vintage to the rest of the estate' which already lies within Failsworth West ward. David Heyes MP argued that this would form a 'coherent whole as a local community and is clearly delineated along both sides of Alder Road' something which 'can be clearly seen on the map and on the ground.' He also considered that these proposals provide for better electoral equality than the Borough Council's proposals. As discussed previously, David Heyes MP supported the Borough Council and the Labour group's proposed Hollinwood ward.

126 Having carefully considered all representations received during Stage One, we propose to adopt the Labour Group's proposed Failsworth East and Failsworth West wards, subject to a number of amendments. We note the support and argumentation for the Labour Group's proposals provided by David Heyes MP and, having visited the area, concur that they would best reflect community identities and interests in the area while providing for improved levels of electoral equality in Failsworth West ward. However, we are also proposing to transfer part of Cemetery Road and all of Broome Grove from Failsworth West to Failsworth East ward, in order to unite Cemetery Road in a single ward. As previously discussed, we propose further minor amendments between the wards of Failsworth East and Hollinwood in order to make greater use of the M60 as a clearly identifiable boundary and to include all of Woodhouse Green in Failsworth East ward. These changes would facilitate a slight improvement in electoral equality in Failsworth East ward while in our view providing for more clearly defined and effective ward boundaries in the affected areas.

127 Under our draft recommendations, Failsworth West would have a councillor:elector ratio equal to the borough average (1% below by 2006). Failsworth East would have a councillor:elector ratio 2% below the borough average, both initially and by 2006. Our proposed wards are illustrated on Map 2, Map A1 and the large maps.

Chadderton Central, Chadderton North and Chadderton South wards

128 Chadderton Central, Chadderton North and Chadderton South wards lie to the west of the borough. Under the existing electoral arrangements, Chadderton Central and Chadderton North wards have councillor:elector ratios 6% and 2% above the borough average respectively (9% above and equal to the borough average by 2006). Chadderton South ward has a councillor:elector ratio 6% below the borough average (8% below by 2006).

129 At Stage One, Oldham Borough Council stated that 'Chadderton Central (ward) is currently too large and Chadderton South (ward) too small.' It therefore proposed the transfer of the area south of Eaves Lane and part of Butler Green (part of polling district 10) and the area of Broadway south from Eaves Lane and Whitegate Lane (part of polling district 9) from the existing Chadderton Central ward to its proposed Chadderton South ward. Its proposed boundary would run along the railway line, to the south of the recreation ground, through the mills, to the north of the properties along Ravenside Park, down Raven Avenue and along Eaves Lane, before running to the west of the properties along Broadway road and to the west of the properties on Whitegate Lane. The Labour Group put forward identical proposals to those of the Borough Council, stating that there had been 'consensus' between the main parties in this area.

130 Under Oldham Borough Council's and the Labour Group's proposals, Chadderton North and Chadderton South wards would have councillor:elector ratios 2% above the borough average (equal to and 1% below by 2006). Chadderton Central ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 2% below the borough average (1% above by 2006).

131 Chadderton Historical Society also put forward proposals for this area. It proposed that polling districts 27 and 28, comprising that part of Coldhurst ward to the east of and accessed from Garforth Street, together with properties numbered 336-358 Middleton Road be transferred to Chadderton North ward. It argued that 'historically and geographically' these two areas 'are considered part of the town of Chadderton.' It argued that these two areas should therefore be transferred from the existing Coldhurst ward to its proposed Chadderton North ward. Its proposed boundary between these two wards would therefore run down Busk Road and to the east of properties along Kempton Way, before rejoining the existing boundary at Middleton Road. To achieve better electoral equality, it then proposed the transfer of the area bounded by Middleton Road, Garforth Street, Brook Street and Broadway (polling district 14) from Chadderton North ward to Chadderton Central ward and the transfer of the area adjacent to the B6189 Foxdenton Lane (polling district nine) from Chadderton Central ward to Chadderton South ward. It also proposed the transfer of the Greengate area (part of polling district seven), containing few voters, from Chadderton Central ward to Chadderton South ward 'to achieve a more logical boundary between these two wards.'

132 Under Chadderton Historical Society's proposals, Chadderton Central, Chadderton North and Chadderton South wards would have councillor:elector ratios 7%, 5% and 3% above the borough average respectively (10% and 3% above and equal to the average by 2006).

133 We have given careful consideration to the representations received at Stage One. Noting the consensus between the Borough Council and the Labour Group in this area, we have decided to adopt their revised Chadderton Central and Chadderton South wards and their proposal to retain the existing Chadderton North ward. We are content that these proposals would provide for an improved level of electoral equality, while providing a good reflection of community identities and interests in the Chadderton area.

134 However, we are proposing several amendments which would affect only a minimal number of electors. First, we propose to transfer 242-246 Foxdenton Lane (the B6189) from the proposed Chadderton South ward to Chadderton Central ward to retain all properties on this road in a single ward. Second, we propose to transfer the Boat and Horses public house on the A663 Broadway from Chadderton Central ward to Chadderton South ward to reflect its proximity to residential properties to the south of the Broadway. Finally, we propose to transfer from Chadderton South ward to Chadderton Central ward the Broadway Business Park area between the Rochdale Canal and the Manchester Victoria to Rochdale railway line, containing no electors. We consider that moving the ward boundary south to the M60 will provide for a more clearly identifiable boundary in this part of the borough, without affecting links between residential areas to either side of the motorway in Chadderton South ward.

135 We are not proposing to adopt the amendments put forward by Chadderton Historical Society to the wards of Chadderton Central, Chadderton North, Chadderton South and Coldhurst. Having visited the area to be transferred from Coldhurst to Chadderton North under the Society's proposals, and considered the evidence provided in support of this amendment, we recognise that this proposal had merit. In particular, we note that the current boundary on Garforth Street appears to divide residential roads that are similar in character. Those roads in Coldhurst ward immediately to the east of the ward boundary are only accessible from the west, and are separated from the remainder of the ward by a small industrial area.

136 Nonetheless, we are unable to consider any single area in isolation when putting forward proposals for new warding arrangements. Rather, we seek to put forward proposals that provide the best balance across the borough as a whole between achieving electoral equality, reflecting community identities and interests and providing effective and convenient local government. We note that the Society's proposal would lead to either the substantial over-representation of Coldhurst ward (a councillor:elector ratio 13% below the borough average now and 12% below by 2006) or would entail further consequential changes across the Oldham unparished area to provide for improved electoral equality in Coldhurst ward. We have received no proposals for such changes and note the support of the Borough Council and the Labour Group for the retention of the existing boundary between Chadderton North and Coldhurst wards. We therefore propose that it be retained. However, we would welcome comments from local people and other interested parties during Stage Three.

137 The Society's proposals for the rest of this area assume the inclusion of part of Coldhurst ward in Chadderton North ward and, as we are not proposing this, it is difficult for us to adopt any of their further changes in this area without leading either to a poor level of electoral equality or a poor reflection of community identity. We do not therefore propose that they be adopted as part of our draft recommendations. Further, based on the evidence received, we do not consider that they would sufficiently reflect community identities and interests in the Chadderton area or provide for effective and convenient ward boundaries. In particular, we were concerned that the Society's proposed Chadderton Central ward would breach the easily identifiable existing boundary with Chadderton North ward on the A669 Middleton Road. We also note that under the Society's proposals the B6189 Foxdenton Lane residential area would be transferred from Chadderton Central to Chadderton South ward. This area would not adjoin other residential areas in the proposed Chadderton South ward, although it would be linked to them via the A663 Broadway.

138 Under our draft recommendations, Chadderton North and Chadderton South wards would both have a councillor:elector ratio 2% above the borough average (equal to and 1% below by 2006). Chadderton Central ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 2% below the borough average (1% above by 2006). Our proposed wards are illustrated on Map 2, Map A1 and the large maps.

Crompton and Shaw wards

139 Crompton and Shaw wards lie in the north of the borough and respectively comprise the North and West parish wards and the East and South parish wards of Shaw & Crompton parish. Under the existing electoral arrangements, Crompton and Shaw wards have councillor:elector ratios 8% and 1% above the borough average respectively (6% above and equal to the borough average by 2006).

140 At Stage One, Oldham Borough Council proposed that Crompton and Shaw wards remain unchanged. The Labour Group put forward identical proposals to those of the Borough Council, stating that there had been 'consensus' between the main parties in this area. Under Oldham Borough Council's and the Labour Group's proposals, Crompton and Shaw wards would have the same councillor:elector ratios as under the existing arrangements.

141 We received one further submission in relation to this area. A local resident proposed that Crompton and Shaw wards be renamed Crompton West and Crompton East respectively, in line with the existing ward names for Chadderton, Failsworth, Royton and Saddleworth. He provided examples of the usage of Crompton in preference to Shaw in the local community. The resident also considered that Crompton was the historically correct name of the parish and therefore proposed that the parish be renamed accordingly.

142 Having carefully considered the three representations received at Stage One, we propose to adopt the Borough Council and Labour Group's proposals for Crompton and Shaw wards subject to one amendment. We note that there appears to be a consensus in support of the retention of the existing warding arrangement, and are generally content on the basis of the available evidence that this reflects community identities and interests and provides for effective and convenient local government. Nonetheless, we would ideally seek to further reduce electoral variance in Crompton ward. Having visited the area, we consider that this could potentially be achieved by means of a transfer of electors to Shaw ward in the Fraser Street area. However, we propose instead to both improve electoral equality and better reflect community identities and interests in the affected area by transferring that part of Shaw & Crompton parish to the west of (and including) Fir Lane from Crompton ward to Royton North ward. We consider that this area geographically forms part of the town of Royton, but is separated from the Crompton urban area by open space.

143 Our proposal to further divide Shaw & Crompton parish between district wards would require the creation of a relatively over-represented Fir Lane parish ward. Nonetheless, on the basis of the evidence available to us we consider that this proposal would best meet our statutory criteria, as outlined above. We would therefore suggest that the Borough Council consider a review of external parish boundaries in this area following the completion of the PER. However, we would welcome further comments on this matter from local people and other interested parties during Stage Three.

144 We examined the proposal by a local resident to rename Crompton and Shaw wards and the evidence provided in support of this option. We note that both the Borough Council and the Labour Group supported the retention of the existing ward names, and we would in this instance require evidence of wider support before recommending any change. We would welcome further comments on this matter from local people and other interested parties during Stage Three. However, there is no provision in legislation for us to recommend changes to the names of parishes; such a review lies within the remit of the Borough Council to undertake.

145 Under our draft recommendations, Crompton and Shaw wards would have councillor:elector ratios 3% and 1% above the borough average respectively (1% above and equal to by 2006). Our proposed wards are illustrated on Map 2, Map A1 and the large maps.

Royton North and Royton South wards

146 Royton North and Royton South wards lie in the north-west of the borough. Under the existing electoral arrangements, Royton North and Royton South wards have councillor:elector ratios 3% above and equal to the borough average respectively (1% and 2% above by 2006).

147 At Stage One, Oldham Borough Council proposed that Royton North and Royton South wards remain unchanged. The Labour Group put forward identical proposals to those of the Borough Council, stating that there had been 'consensus' between the main parties in this area. Under Oldham Borough Council's and the Labour Group's proposals, Royton North and Royton South wards would have the same councillor:elector ratios as under the existing arrangements.

148 Having carefully considered the two representations received at Stage One, we propose to adopt the Borough Council and the Labour Group's proposals for the retention of the existing Royton North and Royton South wards as they provide for electoral equality and use good boundaries, subject to four amendments. As described in the previous section, we are proposing to transfer the Fir Lane area of Shaw & Crompton parish from Crompton ward to Royton North ward to better reflect community identities and interests in this part of the borough. We are also proposing a consequential amendment between Royton North and Royton South wards to retain good electoral equality in Royton North ward, entailing the transfer to Royton South ward of a small area to the south of Middleton Road (the B6195), east of Union Street, and west of the A671 Oldham Road. We also propose two further minor changes to provide for effective and convenient ward boundaries: the transfer of part of Cumberland Drive from Coldhurst ward to the proposed Royton South ward, as previously discussed; and the inclusion in Royton South ward of all of Cavendish Way, which is currently divided between the two wards of Royton. We are content on the basis of the available evidence that these modifications would ensure the best available balance between achieving electoral equality, reflecting community identities and interests, and providing effective and convenient local government.

149 Under our draft recommendations, Royton North and Royton South wards would have councillor:elector ratios 5% and 3% above the borough average respectively (3% and 5% above by 2006). Our proposed wards are illustrated on Map 2, Map A1 and the large maps.

Electoral cycle

150 Under section 7(3) of the Local Government Act 1972, all metropolitan boroughs have a system of elections by thirds.

Conclusions

151 Having considered all the evidence and representations received during the initial stage of the review, we propose that:

- a council of 60 members should be retained;
- there should be 20 wards, the same as at present;
- the boundaries of 18 of the existing wards should be modified, and two wards should retain their existing boundaries;

152 Our draft recommendations would involve modifying all but two of the existing wards in Oldham borough, as summarised below:

- We propose adopting the Saddleworth White Rose Society's proposals in the east of the borough (the Lees and Saddleworth areas), with minor amendments.

- We propose broadly adopting the Borough Council's scheme in the Oldham unparished area but subject to our own amendments, especially in Alexandra and St Paul's wards.
- We propose adopting the Labour Group and David Heyes MP's proposals in the Failsworth area, with minor amendments.
- We propose adopting the Borough Council's and Labour Group's proposals for the north and west of the borough (the Chadderton, Royton and Shaw & Crompton areas), with minor amendments.

153 Table 5 shows how our draft recommendations will affect electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements (based on 2001 electorate figures) and with forecast electorates for the year 2006.

Table 5: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	2001 Electorate		2006 Electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	60	60	60	60
Number of wards	20	20	20	20
Average number of electors per councillor	2,661	2,661	2,680	2,680
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	6	0	6	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	1	0	1	0

154 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for Oldham Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from six to none. By 2006, no wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10%.

Draft recommendation

Oldham Borough Council should comprise 60 councillors serving 20 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A and the large maps.

Parish council electoral arrangements

155 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different 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 consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Shaw & Crompton and Saddleworth to reflect the proposed borough wards.

156 The parish of Shaw & Crompton is currently served by 14 councillors representing four wards: East, North, South and West. Each parish ward returns three councillors except North parish ward, which returns five councillors. As a result of our draft recommendations, we propose the creation of a new parish ward, Fir Lane parish ward, to reflect the inclusion of part of the parish in Royton North ward. The boundary between the new parish ward and the revised

South parish ward should reflect the new borough ward boundary. We recommend that this parish ward be represented by one councillor, but that the total number of councillors for the whole parish should remain unchanged. This would entail a consequential reduction of the representation of North parish ward to four councillors, to which it is entitled based upon its share of the parish electorate. We welcome views on our proposals for Shaw & Crompton parish at Stage Three.

Draft recommendation

Shaw & Crompton Parish Council should comprise 14 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: East (returning three councillors), North (returning four councillors), South (returning three councillors), West (returning three councillors) and Fir Lane (returning one councillor). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large maps in Appendix A.

157 The parish of Saddleworth is currently served by 20 councillors representing six wards: Greenfield and Springhead Lower (each returning five parish councillors); Delph and Dobcross (each returning three parish councillors); and Springhead Higher and Uppermill (each returning two parish councillors). In light of our draft recommendations in this area, we are proposing minor modifications to the boundaries between the parish wards to reflect the new borough warding. We also propose further minor amendment to transfer Halls Way from Uppermill parish ward to Greenfield parish ward to reflect road access. We are not proposing to modify the level of representation of any of the wards concerned, and welcome views on our proposals for Saddleworth parish at Stage Three.

Draft recommendation

Saddleworth Parish Council should comprise 20 councillors, as at present, representing six wards: Delph (returning three councillors), Dobcross (returning three councillors), Greenfield (returning five councillors), Springhead Higher (returning two councillors), Springhead Lower (returning five councillors) and Uppermill (returning two councillors). The boundary between these parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large maps in Appendix A.

Map 2: Draft recommendations for Oldham

5 What happens next?

158 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Oldham contained in this report. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 22 April 2003. Any received *after* this date may not be taken into account. All responses may be inspected at our offices and those of the Borough Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

159 Express your views by writing directly to us:

**Team Leader
Oldham Review
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

160 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, ***whether or not*** they agree with our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to The Electoral Commission, which cannot make the Order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after it receives them.

Appendix A

Draft recommendations for Oldham: **Detailed mapping**

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

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

The **large maps** illustrate the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Oldham.

Map A1: Draft recommendations for Oldham: Key map

Appendix B

Code of Practice on Written Consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm, requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Public bodies, such as The Boundary Committee for England, are encouraged to follow the Code.

The Code of Practice applies to consultation documents published after 1 January 2001, which should reproduce the criteria, give explanations of any departures, and confirm that the criteria have otherwise been followed.

Table B1: Boundary Committee for England's compliance with Code criteria

Criteria	Compliance/departure
Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process for a policy (including legislation) or service from the start, so that it has the best prospect of improving the proposals concerned, and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage.	We comply with this requirement.
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose.	We comply with this requirement.
A consultation document should be as simple and concise as possible. It should include a summary, in two pages at most, of the main questions it seeks views on. It should make it as easy as possible for readers to respond, make contact or complain.	We comply with this requirement.
Documents should be made widely available, with the fullest use of electronic means (though not to the exclusion of others), and effectively drawn to the attention of all interested groups and individuals.	We comply with this requirement.
Sufficient time should be allowed for considered responses from all groups with an interest. Twelve weeks should be the standard minimum period for a consultation.	We consult on draft recommendations for a minimum of eight weeks, but may extend the period if consultations take place over holiday periods.
Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed, and reasons for decisions finally taken.	We comply with this requirement.
Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated.	We comply with this requirement.