

Final recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Rochdale

Report to The Electoral Commission

September 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.

This report sets out our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Rochdale in Greater Manchester.

Summary

We began a review of Rochdale's electoral arrangements on 14 May 2002. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 25 February 2003, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation. We now submit final recommendations to The Electoral Commission.

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

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

- **in 12 of the 20 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10% from the borough average and four wards vary by more than 20%;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10% from the average in 13 wards and by more than 20% in five wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 114-115) are that:

- **Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council should have 60 councillors, the same as at present;**
- **there should be 20 wards;**
- **the boundaries of all 20 existing wards should be modified.**

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 10% from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in none of the wards expected to vary by more than 10% from the average for the borough in 2006.**

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to The Electoral Commission, which will not make an Order implementing them before 8 September 2003. The information in the representations will be available for public access once the Order has been made.

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Table 1: Final recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Large map
1	Balderstone & Kirikholt	3	Part Balderstone ward,	1, 3 and 4
2	Bamford	3	Part Brimrod & Deeplish ward, part Norden & Bamford ward, part Spotland ward	1
3	Castleton	3	Part Brimrod & Deeplish ward, part Castleton ward, part Middleton North ward	1 and 3
4	Central Rochdale	3	Part Central & Falinge ward, part Smallbridge & Wardleworth ward	1 and 4
5	East Middleton	3	Part Middleton East ward, part Middleton North ward	3
6	Healey	3	Part Central & Falinge ward, Part Healey ward, part Wardle ward	1, 2 and 4
7	Hopwood Hall	3	Part Heywood South ward, part Middleton Central ward part Middleton North	3
8	Kingsway	3	Part Balderstone, part Newbold ward, part Milnrow, part Smallbridge and Wardleworth ward	4
9	Littleborough Lakeside	3	Part Littleborough ward, part Milnrow & Newhey ward, part Wardle ward	2 and 4
10	Milkstone & Deeplish	3	Part Brimrod & Deeplish ward, Central & Falinge ward, part Newbold ward	1 and 4
11	Milnrow & Newhey	3	Part Littleborough, part Milnrow ward	4
12	Norden	3	Part Heywood North ward, part Healey ward, part Norden & Bamford ward, part Spotland ward	1
13	North Heywood	3	Part Heywood North ward, part Heywood South ward	1 and 3
14	North Middleton	3	Part Middleton Central ward, part Middleton East ward, part Middleton North ward	3
15	Smallbridge & Firgrove	3	Part Milnrow, part Newbold ward, part Smallbridge & Wardleworth ward, part Wardle ward	2 and 4
16	South Middleton	3	Part Middleton South ward	3
17	Spotland & Falinge	3	Part Central & Falinge, part Healey ward, part Spotland ward, part Norden & Bamford ward	1
18	Wardle & West Littleborough	3	Part Littleborough ward, part Wardle ward	1, 2 and 4
19	West Heywood	3	Part Heywood West ward, part Heywood North ward, part Heywood South	1 and 3
20	West Middleton	3	Part Middleton Central ward, part Middleton West ward, part Middleton South	3

Notes:

1. The whole borough is unparished.
2. The wards on the above table are illustrated on Map 2 and the large maps.

Table 2: Final recommendations for Rochdale

	Ward name	No. of councillors	Electorate 2001	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate 2006	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Balderstone & Kirkholt	3	7,234	2,411	-6	7,285	2,428	-7
2	Bamford	3	7,885	2,628	2	7,975	2,658	2
3	Castleton	3	7,878	2,626	2	7,850	2,617	1
4	Central Rochdale	3	7,590	2,530	-1	7,459	2,486	-4
5	East Middleton	3	7,806	2,602	1	7,804	2,601	0
6	Healey	3	7,626	2,542	-1	7,808	2,603	0
7	Hopwood Hall	3	7,872	2,624	2	8,053	2,684	3
8	Kingsway	3	7,823	2,608	2	7,895	2,632	1
9	Littleborough Lakeside	3	7,863	2,621	2	8,061	2,687	3
10	Milkstone & Deeplish	3	7,345	2,448	-5	7,307	2,436	-6
11	Milnrow & Newhey	3	7,779	2,593	1	7,983	2,661	2
12	Norden	3	7,607	2,536	-1	7,740	2,580	-1
13	North Heywood	3	7,859	2,620	2	7,945	2,648	2
14	North Middleton	3	7,872	2,624	2	8,029	2,676	3
15	Smallbridge & Firgrove	3	7,434	2,478	-3	7,461	2,487	-4
16	South Middleton	3	7,919	2,640	3	7,861	2,620	1
17	Spotland & Falinge	3	7,729	2,576	0	7,741	2,580	-1
18	Wardle & West Littleborough	3	6,695	2,232	-13	7,384	2,461	-5
19	West Heywood	3	8,138	2,713	6	7,983	2,661	2
20	West Middleton	3	7,920	2,640	3	8,214	2,738	5
	Totals	60	153,874	–	–	155,838	–	–
	Average	–	–	2,565	–	–	2,597	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Rochdale 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 final recommendations for the electoral arrangements for the metropolitan borough of Rochdale. We are reviewing the ten metropolitan boroughs of 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 Rochdale. Rochdale's last review was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which reported to the Secretary of State in April 1979 (Report no. 322).

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

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

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

5 Our task is to make recommendations on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards.

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

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

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

councillors. Where our recommendation is for multi-member wards, we believe that the number of councillors to be returned from each ward should not exceed three, other than in very exceptional circumstances. Numbers in excess of three could lead to an unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate and we have not, to date, prescribed any wards with more than three councillors.

9 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 14 May 2002, when we wrote to Rochdale Metropolitan Borough inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified the Greater Manchester Police Authority, the Local Government Association, National Association of Local Councils, Members of Parliament with constituencies in the borough, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 16 September 2002. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

10 Stage Three began on 25 February 2003 with the publication of the report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Rochdale in Greater Manchester* and ended on 22 April 2003. During this period comments were sought from the public and any other interested parties on the preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four the draft recommendations were reconsidered in the light of the Stage Three consultation and we now publish the final recommendations.

2 Current electoral arrangements

11 The metropolitan borough of Rochdale lies in the north-west of Greater Manchester and covers an area of 15,976 hectares with a population of 207,400.

12 The electorate of Rochdale Metropolitan Borough is presently 153,874 (December 2001) and is projected to increase to 155,838 by 2006. The Council currently has 60 members who are elected from 20 wards.

13 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,565 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,597 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 12 of the 20 wards varies by more than 10% from the borough average, four wards by more than 20% and one ward by more than 30%. The worst imbalance is in Middleton West ward, where each councillor represents 40% less electors than the borough average.

14 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 that follows, this calculation may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

Map 1: Existing wards in Rochdale

Table 3: Existing electoral arrangements

	Ward name	No. of councillors	Electorate 2001	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate 2006	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Balderstone	3	7,453	2,484	-3	7,492	2,492	-4
2	Brimrod & Deeplish	3	6,305	2,102	-18	6,352	2,117	-18
3	Castleton	3	7,756	2,585	1	7,723	2,574	-1
4	Central & Falinge	3	7,630	2,543	-1	7,618	2,539	-2
5	Healey	3	9,833	3,278	28	10,026	3,342	29
6	Heywood North	3	7,038	2,346	-9	6,983	2,328	-10
7	Heywood South	3	8,464	2,821	10	8,825	2,942	13
8	Heywood West	3	6,303	2,101	-18	6,162	2,054	-21
9	Littleborough	3	9,391	3,130	22	9,873	3,291	27
10	Middleton Central	3	6,624	2,208	-14	6,569	2,190	-16
11	Middleton East	3	6,631	2,210	-14	6,622	2,207	-15
12	Middleton North	3	8,520	2,840	11	8,688	2,896	12
13	Middleton South	3	7,923	2,641	3	7,867	2,622	1
14	Middleton West	3	4,585	1,528	-40	4,824	1,608	-38
15	Milnrow	3	8,849	2,950	15	9,043	3,014	16
16	Newbold	3	7,773	2,591	1	7,859	2,620	1
17	Norden & Bamford	3	9,961	3,320	29	10,077	3,359	29
18	Smallbridge & Wardleworth	3	9,120	3,040	19	9,075	3,025	16
19	Spotland	3	6,676	2,225	-13	6,645	2,215	-15
20	Wardle	3	7,039	2,346	9	7,515	2,505	-4
	Totals	60	153,874	-	-	155,838	-	-
	Average	-	-	2,565	-	-	2,597	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Rochdale Metropolitan 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 Middleton West ward were relatively over-represented by 40%, while electors in Norden & Bamford ward were relatively under-represented by 29%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 Draft recommendations

15 During Stage One nine representations were received, including a borough-wide schemes from Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council and the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council, and representations from Castleton Residents Association, Hopwood Community Association, Heywood Conservative Wards Group and four residents.

16 Our draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council's proposals that achieved some improvement in electoral equality. However, we moved away from the Borough Council's scheme in a number of areas, affecting the proposed Norden & Caldershaw, Spotland & Falinge, Balderstone, Newbold, Middleton North, Castleton, Smallbridge & Firgrove and Milnrow & Newhey wards. We proposed that:

- Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council should be served by 60 councillors, representing 20 wards, as at present;
- the boundaries of all 20 of the existing wards should be modified, with no wards retaining their existing boundaries.

Draft recommendation

Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council should comprise 60 councillors, serving 20 wards.

17 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in all of the 20 wards varying by no more than 10% from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no wards varying by more than 10% from the average in 2006.

4 Responses to consultation

18 During the consultation on the draft recommendations report, 105 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Rochdale Borough Council.

Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council

19 The Borough Council supported the majority of the draft recommendations; however, they proposed amendments to the boundaries of Newbold, Balderstone, Spotland & Falinge, Middleton South, Littleborough and Wardle wards.

The Liberal Democrats Group on the borough council

20 The Liberal Democrats stated that it now accepted the arguments for a 60-member scheme and submitted an alternative 60-member scheme.

Councillors

21 Councillor Duckworth, member for Balderstone ward, opposed the proposals for the new Balderstone ward. Councillor Williams, member for Middleton South, supported one resident's submission opposing the boundary between the proposed Middleton North and Castleton wards.

Other representations

22 Hollins Estate Management Board (HEMB) opposed the draft recommendations for the Hollins area and stated a preference for the Liberal Democrats Stage One proposals for 57 members representing 19 wards. Rochdale Labour Party Local Government Committee, Littleborough Civic Trust and one local resident all proposed amendments to the draft recommendations. A further 96 representations were received in support of Hollins Estate Management Board response to our draft recommendations. As mentioned above one resident objected to the boundary between the proposed Middleton North and Castleton wards.

5 Analysis and final recommendations

23 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Rochdale 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.

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

25 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.

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

Electorate forecasts

27 Since 1975 there has been a 3% increase in the electorate of Rochdale district. At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 1% from 153,874 to 155,838 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. The Borough Council stated that there was a need to address the disparity between the electors to the south and west of the borough that are decreasing and the north and east of the borough that are increasing. 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. Having accepted that this is an inexact science and, having considered the forecast electorates, we stated in our draft recommendations report that we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

28 We received no comments on the Council's electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and we remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates currently available.

Council size

29 Rochdale Borough Council presently has 60 members representing 20 wards. In the draft recommendations report we adopted the Borough Council's proposal for a council of 60 members which were developed by the Labour and Conservative groups on the council. The Liberal Democrats proposed a council size of 57 members representing 19 wards.

30 The Borough Council stated that in October 2001 Rochdale adopted a new political management system based on a Leader and Cabinet structure. The roles for non-executive members have been made more effective through the adoption of comprehensive overview and scrutiny arrangements. It further stated that the individuality and practicality of local decision-making was retained through the four Township Committees that tend to reflect the separate community identities within the borough.

31 The Borough Council retains a 10 member Cabinet that meets monthly to formulate the Borough Council's policy and budget framework and also makes implementation decisions within the framework. The Cabinet consists of the Leader of the Council and nine members who each hold different portfolios relating to a particular area of the Borough Council's work.

32 The Borough Council retained the four Township Committees of Heywood, Rochdale, Middleton and Pennines that were first established in 1992. These committees meet twice per quarter and comprise all the members of the wards that fall within the boundaries of each Township. The Township Committees have extensive delegated powers with at least 95% of all planning applications being dealt with at Township level. The Borough Council further stated that the Township Committees retain their own Township funds that are used for community and environmental projects as well as devolved budgets for use in areas such as highway maintenance.

33 The Borough Council also has six Overview & Scrutiny Committees that enable members not involved in Cabinet decision-making to maintain a check on the delivery of local services. The Borough Council stated that it operates committees that serve the regulatory and quasi-judicial functions. The regulatory committee comprises nine members who consider planning applications not dealt with at Township Committee level. The Personnel Committee considers all staffing issues relating to the Borough Council's 8,000 employees. Appeals Committees comprise at least five members who deal with a wide range of appeals, including for example those relating to staffing. The Borough Council also retains a Standards Committee to deal with issues relating to the conduct of the councillors.

34 It further stated that the borough has over 150 community/residents groups and over 800 voluntary groups and organisations that maintain regular contact and links with councillors. In addition to this some members take on regional local government roles, for example, active involvement in the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities.

35 Based on the current committee sizes the Borough Council stated that the total number of seats on the Committees worked out at four per member. This committee work did not include councillors' commitment to outside bodies and representative functions. The Borough Council argued a reduction in council size would have a detrimental effect on the representational workload of councillors. The Borough Council stated that the average size of the Cabinet, Regulatory and Overview & Scrutiny Committees is 10 members. It argued that, given the wide briefs of these committees, a reduction in the overall number of members would reduce the Borough Council's effectiveness.

36 With regard to councillor workload, the Borough Council stated that these arrangements meant that on average councillors attended 40 scheduled Committee meetings per annum. It argued that there was insufficient evidence to suggest that a reduction in councillors could be achieved without sacrificing local decision-making at Township level or reducing the effectiveness of overview and scrutiny functions.

37 The Borough Council therefore argued that a reduction in councillors would diminish the effectiveness of Cabinet and Township decisions. It also stated that this would lead to the centralisation of the decision-making process and damage the viability of well established Township Committee structures. It further argued that a reduction would lead to unacceptably high ward caseloads for the councillors and jeopardise the councillors' participation in external

events. It also stated that it was not convinced that an increase in council size was appropriate, as it considered the high workload on councillors an argument for increased support. It therefore proposed retaining the present political management system within a council of 60 members.

38 The Liberal Democrats stated that they initially supported the Borough Council's proposal for retention of 60 members within a pattern of 20 wards. However, in considering that the resulting ward patterns would be unpopular, they alternatively proposed reducing the number of wards by one to 19 and the number of councillors by three to 57.

39 The Liberal Democrats stated that a reduction in council size would bring Rochdale into line with the rest of the Greater Manchester area in terms of average electorate per ward. They stated that such a decrease in council size would lead to a small increase in the workload for councillors. However, they also accepted that this increase did not take into account other pressures on councillors' time, such as participation on regional and sub-regional bodies.

40 We gave careful consideration to all the evidence and representations received. In evaluating the appropriate council size on which to base our draft recommendations, we gave more weight to argumentation and evidence that established how the Borough Council would operate effectively on a proposed size, whatever that size may be. We considered that on the balance of argumentation the evidence pointed towards the Borough Council's proposals of retaining 60 members being the best council size for Rochdale. We therefore proposed a council size of 60 members representing 20 wards.

41 At Stage Three, the Borough Council made no comment on the issue of council size. We received one alternative to the proposed council size of 60 members. The HEMB, supported by 96 proforma letters, stated that it used the 57-member Stage One scheme proposed by the Liberal Democrats as the basis of its opposition to the draft recommendations. It argued that owing to the smaller population of the borough in comparison to the surrounding boroughs there should be a reduction to 57 members. It further argued that the Liberal Democrats 19 ward pattern would keep 14 wards below 5%. However at Stage Three the Liberal Democrats stated that it now accepted the argument for 60-members and proposed a pattern of 20 three-member wards for Rochdale.

42 Given the evidence received during the review, we did not consider that there was sufficient evidence given to support a reduction of the proposed council size from the present number of 60 members. We remain of the view that the proposals submitted by the Borough Council provide the best argumentation and evidence in relation to council size. We are therefore content to confirm the draft proposals for 60 members as final.

Electoral arrangements

43 As mentioned above at Stage One the proposals from the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats differed due to the adoption of different council sizes. This made the different ward patterns developed, particularly in the south and centre of the borough, mutually exclusive.

44 Both schemes were the subject of extensive public consultation. One resident objected to the present Norden & Bamford ward being split due to political and geographical considerations. Within the Heywood and Middleton areas we received objections from two local organisations and three local residents objecting to the Borough Council's proposed Hopwood Hall ward. However, we cannot look at ward proposals in isolation, and having carefully considered all the responses received at Stage One, we were convinced that the proposal submitted by the Borough Council in both areas represented the best balance of the statutory criteria. Both borough-wide schemes provided good levels of electoral equality; however, in view of our recommendations on council size, the degree of consensus behind large elements of the Borough Council's proposals and the consultation exercise that it undertook, we decided to base our draft recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme.

45 At Stage Three, the Borough Council expressed support for the majority of the draft recommendations but also proposed amendments to the boundaries of Newbold, Balderstone, Spotland & Falinge, Middleton South, Littleborough and Wardle wards. It stated that the proposed changes provided a better reflection of community identity and maintained good levels of electoral equality. These amendments were supported in the submissions from the Rochdale Labour Party Local Government Committee, Littleborough Civic Trust and one local resident. We noted the Liberal Democrats proposals for 60 members; however, the ward pattern they proposed provided electoral variances above 10% in three wards. We also noted the opposition of the HEMB to the draft proposals and their support of the Liberal Democrats 57 member scheme.

46 However, after careful consideration we remain convinced that the draft ward pattern proposed under a council size of 60 members provides the best basis for a ward scheme for the borough as a whole. However, we propose adopting the Borough Council's amendments to boundaries of Newbold, Balderstone, Spotland & Falinge, Middleton South, Littleborough and Wardle wards to improve the balance between the statutory criteria further.

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

- i. Brimrod & Deeplish, Central & Falinge, Healey, Heywood North, Norden & Bamford and Spotland wards;
- ii. Balderstone, Castleton, Heywood South, Heywood West, Middleton Central, Middleton East, Middleton North, Middleton South and Middleton West wards;
- iii. Littleborough, Milnrow, Newbold, Smallbridge & Wardleworth and Wardle wards.

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

Brimrod & Deeplish, Central & Falinge, Healey, Heywood North, Norden & Bamford and Spotland wards

49 These unparished wards, located in the west of the borough, are each represented by three councillors. The number of electors per councillor is 18% below the borough average in Brimrod & Deeplish ward (18% below by 2006), 1% below the borough average in Central & Falinge ward (2% below by 2006), 28% above the borough average in Healey ward (29% above by 2006), 9% below the borough average in Heywood North ward (10% below by 2006), 29% above the borough average in Norden & Bamford ward (29% above by 2006) and 13% below the borough average in Spotland ward (15% below by 2006).

50 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed the north west of the borough be represented by six wards. It proposed uniting the terraced housing in the Falinge area that focuses around Spotland Community Centre into a proposed Spotland & Falinge ward. It further proposed a new Central & Deeplish ward comprising the Stoneyfield area in the south and the area below the St Mary's Gate/A58 road in the north. It argued that this ward would unite the community situated around the Milkstone Road railway bridge.

51 The Borough Council proposed an Inner Rochdale ward comprising the Mitchell Hey area in the south-east and the Town Head area in the centre of the ward. It proposed that this ward should include the unified area around Whitworth Road that is presently split between three wards, the Wardleworth area and the estates of Lower Falinge and College Bank.

52 The Borough Council stated that its rationale for the north west of the borough was guided by the geographical constraints of Healey ward and the increase in new build in the Healey, Norden and Bamford areas. It therefore proposed that the Norden and Bamford areas be

divided, with the area of Brimrod presently in Marland & Brimrod ward and the area of Oakenrod presently in Spotland ward being combined into a new Bamford & Marland ward linked by Rock Valley Way.

53 It argued that it was not possible within the present Healey ward to cross the Healey Dell without first travelling one and a half miles through two other wards to get to the other side. It therefore proposed that the present Healey ward be split along the Dell with the area to the east of it being placed in the new Healey ward. This ward would also include the area of Central and Falinge to the north of Falinge Park School and Falinge Park. It further proposed that the Bothroyd estate to the west be included in the proposed Spotland & Falinge ward with the areas of Cutgate, Spotland and Greave, to which it is similar in character.

54 The Borough Council proposed that the remaining area west of the Dell would be placed in the proposed Norden & Caldershaw ward that would also include the Norden settlement, new build within the Caldershaw area and the Somerset Grove area from the present Spotland ward.

55 At Stage One we received one objection from a local resident to the Borough Council's proposed Bamford & Marland ward on grounds of the close proximity of the Norden and Bamford areas to each other. This resident also stated she suspected the purposes of the Borough Council proposals were 'purely party political on their behalf to give them more votes'.

56 Having adopted a council size of 60 members we were persuaded that the Borough Council's proposals for this area provided the best basis for the draft recommendations. We noted the objections to the proposed Bamford & Marland ward; however, we could not take into account the potential party political implications of boundary amendments in proposing the draft recommendations. Being at the western edge of the borough and surrounded by a large rural hinterland, a ward pattern for this area would need to divide the remaining urban areas in such a way as to meet the statutory criteria. We are therefore persuaded that the proposed Bamford & Marland ward provided for the most viable ward pattern available for this area of the borough.

57 However, to improve community links around the Redfern Wood area we proposed amending the boundaries between the proposed Norden & Caldershaw and Spotland & Falinge wards, with Redfern Wood area now being transferred to the latter ward. We considered that this amendment would unite a continuous urban area between Redfern Wood and Brotherod Wood within one ward, and would not have an adverse effect on the electoral equality in the surrounding wards.

58 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor would be 2% above the borough average in Bamford & Marland ward (2% above by 2006), 5% below the borough average in Central & Deeplish ward (6% below by 2006), 1% below the borough average in Healey ward (equal to the average by 2006), 1% below the borough average in Inner Rochdale ward (4% below by 2006), 7% below the borough average in Norden & Caldershaw ward (7% below by 2006) and 7% above the borough average in Spotland & Falinge ward (5% above by 2006).

59 The Borough Council stated that at Stage One it had intended the Lanehead area be placed in the proposed Spotland & Falinge ward with access via Ings Lane/Rooley Moor Road. It also proposed the transfer of the Caldershaw streets into the proposed Norden & Caldershaw ward stating that confusion between Redfern Wood (the Caldershaw Street) and Redfern Wood (the clough splitting the Stonehill estate) resulted in a mapping error within the Borough Council's proposals.

60 The Borough Council stated that the Somerset Grove area was also incorrectly placed in the proposed Norden & Caldershaw ward. It further stated that on the grounds of both community identity and achieving electoral equality the best placement of the Somerset Grove area would be within the proposed Spotland & Falinge ward.

61 The Borough Council also stated that the Caldershaw streets was better linked with the recent housing development in the proposed Norden and Caldershaw ward rather than with the old established areas of Spotland and Falinge ward.

62 The Borough Council stated that both the Lanehead and Caldershaw amendments provided a better reflection of community identity and improved electoral equality and had all-party agreement. It further proposed the amendment of ward names in this area; proposing that Bamford & Marland ward change to Bamford ward, the proposed Central & Deeplish ward change to Milkstone & Deeplish ward, the proposed Inner Rochdale ward changed to Central Rochdale and the proposed Norden & Caldershaw change to Norden ward.

63 The Rochdale Labour Party Local Government Committee supported the amendments for both the proposed Spotland & Falinge and Norden & Caldershaw wards.

64 Having accepted the arguments for a pattern of 20 wards the Liberal Democrats stated they were concerned that the proposed Central & Deeplish and Inner Rochdale wards separated areas with a majority Asian community from similar white areas. It also stated that it was concerned about the proposed Bamford & Marland ward that brings together two distinct areas. They further proposed that the Caldershaw area be transferred to a proposed Healy ward with the Whitworth road becoming the boundary for a proposed Syke and Smallbridge ward.

65 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to endorse the amendments proposed by the Borough Council as these would achieve reasonable electoral equality and have received some local support. We also propose adopting the ward name changes as proposed by the Borough Council. We note the concerns of the Liberal Democrats in respect of the proposed Central & Deeplish and Inner Rochdale wards. However, we were not convinced by their argument that the Borough Council's proposals would be detrimental to good race relations in Rochdale. We also consider that within the ward pattern we have adopted for this area the Borough Council's amendments provide the best balance between the statutory criteria available.

66 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor would be 2% above the borough average in Bamford ward (2% above by 2006), 5% below the borough average in Milkstone & Deeplish ward (6% below by 2006), 1% below the borough average in Healey ward (equal to the average by 2006), 1% below the borough average in Central Rochdale ward (4% below by 2006), 1% below the borough average in Norden ward (1% below by 2006) and equal to the borough average in Spotland & Falinge ward (1% below by 2006).

Balderstone, Castleton, Heywood South, Heywood West, Middleton Central, Middleton East, Middleton North, Middleton South and Middleton West wards

67 These unparished wards are located towards the south of the borough and are each represented by three councillors. The number of electors per councillor is 3% below the borough average in Balderstone ward (4% below by 2006), 1% above the borough average in Castleton ward (1% below by 2006), 10% above the borough average in Heywood South ward (13% above by 2006), 18% below the borough average in Heywood West ward (21% below by 2006), 14% below the borough average in Middleton Central ward (16% below by 2006), 14% below the borough average in Middleton East ward (15% below by 2006), 11% above the borough average in Middleton North ward (12% above by 2006), 3% above the borough average in Middleton South ward (1% above by 2006) and 40% below the borough average in Middleton West ward (38% below by 2006).

68 At Stage One the Borough Council stated the population in the south and west of the borough was decreasing, and that between the Townships of Heywood and Middleton there had

to be a reduction of one ward. In terms of allocation it stated that Heywood Township would be too small for three wards and that Middleton Township would be too large for four wards.

69 The Borough Council therefore proposed that part of the present Heywood South ward and that part of the present Middleton Central ward to the north of Hollin Lane be combined in a proposed Hopwood Hall ward. This would link the Lane End area north of the M62 motorway with the Hollins area to the south of the same motorway.

70 It argued that this proposal would enable the townships of Heywood and Middleton to be represented by seven wards and provide the best balance between the statutory criteria. It admitted that this proposal would be contentious locally. However, it stated that the parts of Heywood and Middleton within the proposed ward would still retain distinct representation on both the Heywood and Middleton Townships. It argued that this proposal provided the most viable ward pattern for the south of the borough. It further noted that the Liberal Democrats' alternative proposals for linking the areas of Middleton's Village and the Silver Birch estate within Heywood South did not take into account projected expansion of the Silver Birch area envisaged through the Borough Council's master plan for the Langley area.

71 The Borough Council proposed a new Heywood West ward that would comprise the present Heywood West ward and the Broadfield area to its east. It proposed a Heywood North ward bounded to its north by the Bury & Rochdale Old Road and including the Bottom O 'Th' Brow area in the west. It proposed to include the Captain Fold area in the east and that area above Walton Street to the south in this ward.

72 The Borough Council proposed a new Castleton ward that would comprise the present Castleton ward and the Thornham settlement from the present Middleton North ward. It further proposed that Balderstone ward remain the same as at present.

73 To the south, the Borough Council proposed a new Bowlee Park ward bounded by the M62 motorway to the north and the North Manchester Golf Course to the south of the ward. It proposed that this ward also comprise the Bowlee area in the west and the Langley settlement in the east of the ward

74 The Borough Council proposed a new Middleton South ward comprising the Rhodes settlement in the west, the Lime Fields in the east and the Alkington Garden Village area in the south. It further proposed a Middleton North ward bounded by the Rochdale A664 road to the north of the ward. It proposed this ward should comprise the John Lee Fold area towards the southern boundary, including those groups of properties either side of the Oldham Road. The Borough Council further proposed a new Middleton East ward comprising the Mills Hill area in the north, the Moorclose area in the east and the areas of Jumbo and Brookside Links either side of the Wince Brook.

75 At Stage One the Castleton Residents Association stated that it was content with the present electoral arrangements for the Castleton ward. The Hopwood Community Association stated that it preferred that the area that it covers remain within a Heywood ward. It also stated that it had little community identity with the Middleton area that is separated from it by green belt and the M62 motorway. It further proposed that part of the present Heywood South ward north of Pilsworth Road be placed in a proposed Heywood West ward. Three residents from the Middleton Township also objected to being placed in the proposed Hopwood Hall ward. Heywood Conservative Wards Group proposed that any amendments to the ward boundaries in Heywood Township should be made only between the Heywood wards.

76 We noted the objections to the proposed Hopwood Hall ward. We also noted that the only alternative proposals for the Heywood/Middleton areas from the Liberal Democrats proposed that the northern part of the Langley settlement be divided, leaving it isolated and with poor access to the remainder of their proposed Heywood South & Birch ward.

77 The Borough Council accepted that its proposals for this area would be contentious locally. However, it stated the electorate in these areas would be able to retain their respective Heywood and Middleton identities through the maintenance of effective representation on both the Heywood and Middleton Township Committees. Having visited this area, we noted that between the Lane End and Hollins settlements there was good road access, provided via the Middleton A6046 road.

78 Therefore, having adopted a council size of 60 members, we were persuaded that the Borough Council's proposals to include the Hollins and Lane End settlements in the proposed Hopwood Hall ward provide the best basis for a ward pattern in this area that balances the statutory criteria. We noted the objections received from local residents and interest groups. However, we took the view that the Borough Council's proposals facilitate the most viable ward pattern available.

79 However, to improve community links further within the ward boundaries to the south of the borough we proposed a number of amendments. With regard to Balderstone ward, we proposed transferring that part of the proposed Newbold ward along Queensway Road and south of the disused Rochdale Canal into Balderstone ward. As a consequence of this amendment to the north of the proposed Balderstone ward to ensure a balance of the statutory criteria, we also proposed transferring the Lower Place area from the proposed Balderstone ward to the proposed Newbold ward. We were convinced that these amendments would better reflect community identity in this area and would not have an adverse effect on electoral equality.

80 Between the boundaries of the proposed Bowlee Park and Middleton South ward we proposed transferring the properties around Joseph Street and Higher Wood Street to the former ward to provide boundaries that better reflected community identity. We also proposed transferring that part of the industrial estate to the west of the proposed Middleton North ward, around Touchet Hall Road and Boarshaw Lane, to the proposed Castleton ward considering the Borough Council's proposals offered the best basis for a ward pattern that facilitated a viable scheme for the whole of the borough.

81 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 9% below the borough average in Balderstone ward (10% below by 2006), 2% above the borough average in Castleton ward (1% above by 2006), 3% above the borough average in Bowlee Park ward (5% above by 2006), 2% above the borough average in Heywood North ward (2% above by 2006), 6% above the borough average in Heywood West ward (2% above by 2006), 2% above the borough average in Hopwood Hall ward (3% above by 2006), 1% above the borough average in Middleton East ward (equal to the average by 2006), 2% above the borough average in Middleton North ward (3% above by 2006) and 3% above the borough average in Middleton South ward (1% below by 2006).

82 In response to the draft recommendations the Borough Council proposed a number of amendments to the proposed Newbold and Balderstone wards. It argued that a more consistent approach for the Lower Place area would be to transfer 217 electors from the proposed Newbold ward to the proposed Balderstone ward. It further proposed that these wards be renamed Kingsway and Balderstone & Kirkholt wards respectively. It further proposed that the ward names of Bowlee Park, Heywood North, Heywood South, Heywood West, Middleton East, Middleton North and Middleton South should be changed to Middleton West, North Heywood, South Heywood, West Heywood, East Middleton, North Middleton and South Middleton.

83 The Borough Council also proposed that the housing around the Barleyfield Walk area in the proposed Middleton South ward be placed with similar housing in the Harley Road/Weavers Court in the proposed Middleton South ward, due to these being in the ownership of Rochdale Boroughwide Housing. It further proposed that the small enclave of properties between Fairfield Road and Ambleside Close in the proposed Bowlee Park ward should also be placed within the

proposed Middleton South ward as it is also owned by Rochdale Boroughwide Housing. Rochdale Labour Party Local Government Committee strongly supported this proposal. It further stated in terms of community cohesion it found the logic of the draft recommendations for the proposed Balderstone ward irresistible.

84 Having noted that the proposal for the proposed Newbold and Balderstone wards does improve the balance of the statutory criteria we propose adopting this amendment. However, we do not take the view that the proposed amendment between Middleton South and Bowlee Park wards provides a clearly identified boundary. We therefore are content to confirm the draft recommendations in respect of this area.

85 The Liberal Democrats stated that they accept the arguments for a 60 member scheme based on a pattern of 20 wards, but supported the HEMB in opposing the draft recommendations in this area on grounds of community identity. They therefore provided proposals of a ward pattern for the area that they had drafted but not submitted prior to their Stage One proposals. However, this ward pattern was similar in configuration to the 57 member proposals and created one ward with an 11% electoral variance and two wards with an electoral variance of 13%. We therefore do not intend to adopt these proposals for the final recommendations. However, we do propose to change the ward names as proposed by the Borough Council to better reflect community identity.

86 The HEMB stated that it preferred the 57 member scheme proposed by the Liberal Democrats at Stage One. It argued that this provided for the retention of township boundaries. It further stated that the current boundaries, present since 1972, provided a platform for the Borough Council's decision making, service delivery and consultation processes. It also argued that the proposals developed by the Borough Council would be detrimental to community relations between ethnic minority groups and other heterogeneous communities. The HEMB also argued that in comparison with the surrounding councils Rochdale had a smaller population and that a reduction from 20 to 19 wards would be in line with most of these councils in terms the number of electors per ward.

87 Within the south of the borough the HEMB proposed a new Langley ward similar to the ward of the same name proposed at Stage One by the Liberal Democrats. This new Langley ward would include the area of Langley Lane and Silverbirch Estate with a similar number of electors to be transferred from the lower end to the proposed neighbouring Hollin and Boarshaw ward. It stated this would provide a Langley ward with a 8% electoral variance. The HEMB further expressed concern that the inclusion of Hollin Estate with a ward in a Middleton township would not provide adequate representation on township committees. It further stated that the draft recommendations for this area should be reconsidered on the grounds of community identity and geography of this area. These proposals were supported by 95 proforma letters from local residents.

88 Councillor Duckworth objected to the draft recommendations for the Balderstone ward, arguing that the Lower Place area was the historic heart of Balderstone and that the proposed boundary could have political implications on representation for the proposed wards.

89 Councillor Williams stated that he supported one local resident's submission that opposed the proposals for the new Middleton North and Castleton wards. He stated that at present the Stakehill Industrial Estate was the only sizeable industrial estate in the Middleton area. He objected to the placement of Bentley Avenue and the Stakehill industrial estate in the proposed Castleton ward, stating that such a move would alter the administrative boundaries for planning purposes.

90 One resident objected to the transfer of the Thornham Fold area and the Stakehill Industrial Estate and adjacent streets into the proposed Castleton ward. He stated that the area north of the industrial estate known as Slattocks looked towards Middleton for its services. He further

stated that the community interest in planning decisions affecting this industrial area would be altered as they would be taken within Rochdale township as opposed to Middleton township.

91 He further stated that he preferred the whole of the Slattocks area to be retained within the Middleton community. However, he stated that if any amendment had to be made he proposed that the motorway slip road be used as the ward boundary so as to allow Bentley Avenue and Stakehill Industrial Estate to remain in Middleton North ward.

92 Having considered this proposal we have not been convinced that it represents a better reflection of community identity as the Slattocks and Thornham Fold areas retain good access to the main Castleton settlement and are separated from the Middleton area by a railway track. We therefore propose confirming our draft recommendations in this area as final.

93 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received at Stage One. In respect of the HEMB's objections and proposals for the south of the borough, as stated above, we seek to achieve the best possible balance between the statutory criteria after considering what is the most appropriate council size. We remain convinced that the most appropriate size for Rochdale is 60 members in a pattern of 20 wards. Using this as the basis of our draft scheme we were unable to accommodate the proposals of the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrat's as they were mutually exclusive.

94 The HEMB expressed support for the council size of 57 members without providing sufficient evidence or argumentation with regard to why there should be an amendment to the current size. The HEMB's concerns centred on the placement of the Hollins estate; however, we cannot look at any area in isolation and must look to securing the best possible arrangements for the borough as a whole. As stated above, the alternative 60-member scheme did not provide a better balance of the statutory criteria in the south of the borough. We therefore do not propose moving away from our draft recommendations in this respect.

95 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 6% below the borough average in Balderstone & Kirkholt ward (7% below by 2006), 2% above the borough average in Castleton ward (1% above by 2006), 3% above the borough average in West Middleton ward (5% above by 2006), 2% above the borough average in North Heywood ward (2% above by 2006), 6% above the borough average in West Heywood ward (2% above by 2006), 2% above the borough average in Hopwood Hall ward (3% above by 2006), 1% above the borough average in East Middleton ward (equal to the average by 2006), 2% above the borough average in North Middleton ward (3% above by 2006) and 3% above the borough average in South Middleton ward (1% above by 2006).

Littleborough, Milnrow, Newbold, Smallbridge & Wardleworth and Wardle wards

96 These unparished wards are in the east of the borough and are each represented by three councillors. The number of electors per councillor is 22% above the borough average in Littleborough ward (27% above by 2006), 15% above the borough average in Milnrow ward (16% above by 2006), 1% above the borough average in Newbold ward (1% above by 2006), 19% above the borough average in Smallbridge & Wardleworth ward (16% above by 2006) and 9% above the borough average in Wardle ward (4% below by 2006).

97 At Stage One the Borough Council stated that the large electorate in the Pennines wards left little option for manoeuvre in the east of the borough. It therefore proposed five new three-member wards for this area that are quite similar to the present configuration of wards.

98 The Borough Council proposed a new Littleborough ward comprising the Summit settlement in the north and the Smithy Bridge settlement in the south of the ward. The Borough Council stated that the Smithy Bridge settlement would retain access to the Littleborough settlement in

the centre of this ward via the Hollingworth Road and Canal Street. It further proposed that the southern edge of this ward be bounded by the M62 motorway.

99 The Borough Council also proposed that the new Wardle ward comprise the Wardle settlement in the centre, and those parts of the Shore and Caldermoor settlements west of Shore Road.

100 The Borough Council further proposed that the new Milnrow & Newhey ward would exclude the Cray estate and comprise the Lady House and Butterworth Hall areas in the west of the ward. To the south the Borough Council proposed a ward to include the Newhey and Haugh settlements.

101 The Borough Council also proposed a new Smallbridge & Firgrove ward. This ward would comprise the areas from Wardle Ashbrook Hey and Hurstead generally north of the Halifax Road, the east of Wardle Road and Ash Brook and the west side of Birch Road and roads up to Wardle High School. This would be linked via the Pennine View area along Alberts Royds Street and include the properties of the Bishops Street, Clover Hall, Belshill and St Anne's areas. Towards the south, the ward would continue with the inclusion of the Cray and Firgrove areas.

102 It further proposed that the new Newbold ward comprise the Newbold Brow area, with the Belfield area to the north and the Queensway area to the west being linked by the retained part of Deeplish south of the canal.

103 Having adopted a council size of 60 members we were persuaded that the Borough Council's proposals for this area provided the best basis for the draft recommendations. However, to improve community links and ensure better access within these wards we proposed two amendments.

104 As stated perviously we propose transferring that area of Lower Place, in the Borough Council's proposed Balderstone ward into the proposed Newbold ward. As a consequence of this amendment, we further propose transferring that area along Queensway Road and south of the disused Rochdale Canal into the proposed Balderstone ward. We believed this amendment would provide a better reflection of community identity.

105 We further proposed amending the boundary between Smallbridge & Firgrove and Milnrow & Newhey wards. We proposed transferring that area south of the disused railway line and around Buckley Hill Lane into the latter ward. These changes would not have an adverse effect on the electoral equality for these wards, and unite the Buckley Hill Lane area in a ward that would provide a better reflection of community identity.

106 Under the draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 5% below the borough average in Littleborough ward (4% below by 2006), 4% above the borough average in Newbold ward (5% above by 2006), 1% above the borough average in Milnrow & Newhey ward (3% above by 2006), 3% below the borough average in Smallbridge & Firgrove ward (4% below by 2006) and 6% below the borough average in Wardle ward (2% above by 2006).

107 At Stage Three the Borough Council stated that draft recommendations had split the long established closely mixed residential and commercial heart of the Littleborough area between the proposed Littleborough and Wardle wards. It therefore proposed amending the boundary that under the draft recommendations followed along the Shore Road and Hare Hill Road. It proposed that to improve community identity 522 electors should be transferred from the proposed Wardle ward to the proposed Littleborough ward with the boundary now following Shore Road, Whiteless Road, Stockton Street, along the River Roch, at the rear of houses on Railway Street until the railway line.

108 The Borough Council also proposed transferring the 34 electors from the small development in Yea Fold off Eafield Road from the proposed Wardle ward to the proposed Littleborough ward. It considered these properties to be an integral part of the Smithy Bridge Community. It proposed that the two wards would now be separated by the River Roch. The Littleborough Civic Trust stated that it supported the Borough Council proposals for the first amendment in this area. It further stated that it was concerned that as a ward Littleborough was only entitled to three councillors. However, this is something we cannot consider as part of this review. One local resident also expressed support for both proposed amendments to the boundaries between the new Littleborough and Wardle wards.

109 The Borough Council further recommended that the proposed ward names of Littleborough and Wardle be changed to Littleborough Lakeside and Wardle & West Littleborough respectively.

110 We note that these proposals would lead to an initial variance of 13% in the proposed Wardle & West Littleborough; however, by 2006 this variance would be 5%. In terms of community identity this proposal provides the best option available at the northern edge of the borough. Having noted the support for these proposals and that they retain a good balance between the statutory criteria by 2006, we are content to adopt these recommendations as final.

111 The Rochdale Labour Party Local Government Committee proposed that the boundary between the proposed Smallbridge & Firgrove and Milnrow & Newhey wards be the railway line rather than Stanney Brook and the back of the Buckley Hill Lane properties. Having considered this amendment we note that it would not affect any electors and provides a more defined boundary. We are therefore content to adopt it as final. As stated above, we were content to adopt the Borough Council proposed amendments to the proposed Newbold ward along with renaming it to Kingsway ward.

112 Under the final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 2% above the borough average in Littleborough Lakeside ward (3% above by 2006), 2% above the borough average in Kingsway ward (1% above by 2006), 1% above the borough average in Milnrow & Newhey ward (2% above by 2006), 3% below the borough average in Smallbridge & Firgrove ward (4% below by 2006) and 13% below the borough average in Wardle & West Littleborough ward (5% below by 2006).

Electoral cycle

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

Conclusions

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

- we propose boundary amendments between the wards of Newbold and Balderstone and also between Littleborough and Wardle wards;
- we propose boundary amendments between the wards of Spotland & Falinge and Norden & Caldershaw;
- we propose boundary amendments between the wards of Smallbridge & Firgrove and Milnrow & Nehey; and

- we propose that Bowlee Park ward be renamed South Middleton ward, Middleton South ward be renamed South Middleton ward, Middleton North ward be renamed North Middleton ward, Littleborough ward be renamed Littleborough Lakeside ward, Wardle ward be renamed Wardle and West Littleborough ward, Newbold ward be renamed Kingsway ward, Central & Deeplish ward be renamed Milkstone & Deeplish ward, Balderstone ward be renamed Balderstone & Kirkholt, Inner Rochdale ward be renamed Central Rochdale ward and Bamford & Marland ward be renamed Bamford ward.

115 We conclude that, in Rochdale:

- the council size should remain at 60;
- there should be 20 wards, the same as at present;
- the boundaries of all 20 existing wards should be modified.

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

Table 4: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	60	60	60	60
Number of wards	20	20	20	20
Average number of electors per councillor	2,565	2,565	2,597	2,597
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	12	1	13	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	4	0	5	0

117 As Table 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from 12 to one, with no wards varying by more than 20% from the borough average. This level of electoral equality would improve further by 2006, with no ward varying by more than 10% from the average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the statutory criteria.

Final recommendation

Rochdale 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.

Map 2: Final recommendations for Rochdale

6 What happens next?

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

119 It is now up to The Electoral Commission to decide whether to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 1 October 2003, and The Electoral Commission will normally consider all written representations made to them by that date. They particularly welcome any comments on the first draft of the Order, which will implement the new arrangements.

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

**The Secretary
The Electoral Commission
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

Fax: 020 7271 0667

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

Appendix A

Final recommendations for Rochdale: detailed mapping

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

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

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

Map A1: Final recommendations for Rochdale: Key map

Appendix B

Guide to interpreting the first draft of the electoral change Order

Preamble

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

Citation and commencement

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

Interpretation

This defines terms that are used in the Order.

Wards of the borough of Rochdale

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

Elections of the council of the borough of Rochdale

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

Maps

This requires Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council to make a print of the map available for public inspection.

Electoral registers

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

Revocation

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

Explanatory note

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

Appendix C

First draft of electoral change Order for Rochdale

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

2003 No.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT, ENGLAND

The Borough of Rochdale (Electoral Changes) Order 2003

Made - - - - *2003*

Coming into force in accordance with article 1(2)

Whereas the Boundary Committee for England(**a**), acting pursuant to section 15(4) of the Local Government Act 1992(**b**), has submitted to the Electoral Commission(**c**) recommendations dated August 2003 on its review of the borough(**d**) of Rochdale:

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

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

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

Citation and commencement

- 1.—(1) This Order may be cited as the Borough of Rochdale (Electoral Changes) Order 2003.
- (2) This Order shall come into force –
 - (a) for the purpose of proceedings preliminary or relating to any election to be held on the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2004, on the day after that on which it is made;

(a) The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, established by the Electoral Commission in accordance with section 14 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (c.41). The Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001 (S.I. 2001/3962) transferred to the Electoral Commission the functions of the Local Government Commission for England.

(b) 1992 c.19. This section has been amended by S.I. 2001/3962.

(c) The Electoral Commission was established by the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (c.41). The functions of the Secretary of State, under sections 13 to 15 and 17 of the Local Government Act 1992 (c.19), to the extent that they relate to electoral changes within the meaning of that Act, were transferred with modifications to the Electoral Commission on 1st April 2002 (S.I. 2001/3962).

(d) The metropolitan district of Rochdale has the status of a borough.

(e) This section has been amended by S.I. 2001/3962 and also otherwise in ways not relevant to this Order.

(f) This section has been amended by S.I. 2001/3962.

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

Interpretation

2. In this Order –

“borough” means the borough of Rochdale;

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

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

- (a) the principal office of the Electoral Commission; and
(b) the offices of Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council.

Wards of the borough of Rochdale

3.—(1) The existing wards of the borough(a) shall be abolished.

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

Elections of the council of the borough of Rochdale

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

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

(a) See the Borough of Rochdale (Electoral Arrangements) Order 1979 (S.I. 1979/1341).

(b) Article 4 provides for a single election of all the councillors and for reversion to the system of election by thirds, as established by section 7 of the Local Government Act 1972 (c.70).

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

Maps

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

Electoral registers

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

Revocation

7. The Borough of Rochdale (Electoral Arrangements) Order 1979(b) is revoked, save for article 8.

Sealed with the seal of the Electoral Commission on the day of 2003

Chairman of the Commission

Secretary to the Commission

SCHEDULE

article 3

NAMES OF WARDS

Balderstone and Kirikholt	Kingsway	Smallbridge and Firgrove
Bamford	Littleborough Lakeside	South Middleton
Castleton	Milkstone and Deeplish	Spotland and Falinge
Central Rochdale	Milnrow and Newhey	Wardle and West Littleborough
East Middleton	Norden	West Heywood
Healey	North Heywood	West Middleton
Hopwood Hall	North Middleton	

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

(b) S.I. 1979/1341.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Order)

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

The modifications are *indicate the modifications*.

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

Article 3 abolishes the existing wards of the borough and provides for the creation of 20 new wards. That article and the Schedule also make provision for the names and areas of, and numbers of councillors for, the new wards.

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

Article 6 obliges the Electoral Registration Officer to make any necessary amendments to the electoral register to reflect the new electoral arrangements.

Article 7 revokes the Borough of Rochdale (Electoral Arrangements) Order 1979, with the exception of article 8.

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