

# Final recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Wigan

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. We can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish councils.

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



# Summary

We began our review of the electoral arrangements for Wigan 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 Wigan:

- **In 16 of the 24 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10% from the average for the borough and four wards vary by more than 20%.**
- **By 2006 this situation is expected to improve marginally, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10% from the average in 14 wards and by more than 20% in four wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 153 – 154) are that:

- **Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council should have 75 councillors, three more than at present;**
- **there should be 25 wards, instead of 24 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one ward.**

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

- **In all of the proposed 25 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 expected to continue with no ward varying more than 7% 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 11 November 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

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Large Map Reference</b>
1	Abram	3	Abram ward; part of Leigh Central ward	2, 3 and 4
2	Ashton	3	Part of Ashton-Golborne ward; part of Bryn ward	2 and 4
3	Aspull	3	The parishes of Haigh and Worthington; part of Aspull-Standish ward; part of Whelley ward	1, 2 and 3
4	Astley Mosley Common	3	Part of Bedford-Astley ward; part of Tyldesley East ward	3 and 5
5	Atherleigh	3	Part of Atherton ward; part of Hindley Green ward; part of Leigh East ward	3
6	Atherton	3	Part of Atherton ward; part of Hindsford ward	3
7	Bryn	3	Part of Bryn ward; part of Orrell ward	2 and 4
8	Douglas	3	Newtown ward; part of Norley ward; part of Worsley Mesnes ward	2
9	Golborne and Lowton West	3	Part of Ashton-Golborne ward; part of Lightshaw ward	4 and 5
10	Hindley	3	Part of Hindley ward;	2 and 3
11	Hindley Green	3	Part of Hindley ward; part of Hindley Green ward; part of Leigh Central ward	3
12	Ince Whelley	3	Part of Abram ward; part of Ince ward; part of Hindley ward; part of Whelley ward	2
13	Leigh East	3	Part of Atherton ward; part of Bedford-Astley ward; part of Leigh East ward	3 and 5
14	Leigh South	3	Part of Bedford-Astley ward; part of Hope Carr ward; part of Leigh East ward	5
15	Leigh West	3	Part of Hindley Green ward; part of Leigh Central ward	2, 3, 4 and 5
16	Lowton East	3	Part of Hope Carr ward; part of Lightshaw ward	4 and 5
17	Orrell	3	Part of Orrell ward	2
18	Pemberton	3	Part of Norley ward; part of Winstanley ward	2
19	Shevington Lower Ground	3	The parish of Shevington; part of Aspull-Standish ward; part of Beech Hill ward; part of Langtree ward	1 and 2
20	Standish Langtree	3	Part of Aspull-Standish ward; part of Langtree ward	1
21	Tyldesley	3	Part of Hindsford ward; part of Tyldesley East ward	3
22	Wigan Central	3	Part of Swinley ward; part of Whelley ward	1 and 2
23	Wigan West	3	Part of Beech Hill ward; part of Norley ward; part of Swinley ward	1 and 2
24	Winstanley	3	Part of Winstanley ward	2
25	Worsley Mesnes	3	Part of Ince ward; part of Winstanley ward; part of Worsley Mesnes ward	2

## Notes:

- 1) There are three parishes in the borough and they comprise parts of two wards as indicated above.
- 2) The wards in 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: Final recommendations for Wigan

	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	Abram	3	9,374	3,125	-1	10,121	3,374	7
2	Ashton	3	9,266	3,089	-2	9,015	3,005	-5
3	Aspull	3	9,858	3,286	4	9,717	3,239	2
4	Astley Mosley Common	3	9,547	3,182	1	9,540	3,180	1
5	Atherleigh	3	8,826	2,942	-7%	9,424	3,141	-1%
6	Atherton	3	10,139	3,380	7%	9,881	3,294	4%
7	Bryn	3	9,391	3,130	-1	9,141	3,047	-4
8	Douglas	3	9,386	3,129	-1	9,159	3,053	-3
9	Golborne and Lowton West	3	8,836	2,945	-6	8,955	2,985	-6
10	Hindley	3	9,431	3,144	0	10,056	3,352	6
11	Hindley Green	3	8,507	2,836	-10	9,411	3,137	-1
12	Ince Whelley	3	9,197	3,066	-3	9,190	3,063	-3
13	Leigh East	3	10,136	3,379	7	9,909	3,303	4
14	Leigh South	3	10,229	3,410	8	10,005	3,335	5
15	Leigh West	3	10,303	3,434	9	9,978	3,326	5
16	Lowton East	3	8,552	2,851	-9	8,888	2,963	-6
17	Orrell	3	9,175	3,058	-3	9,179	3,060	-3
18	Pemberton	3	9,679	3,226	2	9,343	3,114	-2
19	Shevington Lower Ground	3	9,642	3,214	2	9,434	3,145	-1
20	Standish Langtree	3	9,192	3,064	-3	9,029	3,010	-5
21	Tyldesley	3	9,904	3,301	5	9,991	3,330	5
22	Wigan Central	3	9,295	3,098	-2	9,098	3,033	-4
23	Wigan West	3	9,997	3,332	6	9,873	3,291	4
24	Winstanley	3	8,816	2,939	-7	9,827	3,276	4
25	Worsley Mesnes	3	9,399	3,133	0	9,024	3,008	-5
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>236,077</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>237,188</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
	<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,148</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,162</b>	<b>-</b>

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 borough of Wigan in Greater Manchester. We are reviewing the ten metropolitan authorities 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 Wigan. Wigan's last review was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which reported to the Secretary of State in March 1979 (Report no. 324).

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 Wigan 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. We can also propose changes to the electoral arrangements for parish councils in the borough.

6 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so 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, or 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 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 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 Wigan Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Greater Manchester Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Lancashire Local Councils Association, parish councils in the borough, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, the 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 Wigan 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 Wigan 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 Wigan borough is situated in the extreme west of Greater Manchester and lies to the west of Bolton and Salford, to the north of Warrington, to the east of St Helens and to the south of West Lancashire and Chorley. The borough consists of a number of former mining and textile towns and new residential suburbs grouped around the two larger towns of Wigan and Leigh. Wigan's historic industries of coal and cotton have all but disappeared but there has been an influx of new firms of many kinds.

12 Wigan borough has three parishes, Haigh, Shevington and Worthington, and these are all situated in the northwest of the borough.

13 The electorate of the borough is 236,077 (December 2001). The Council presently has 72 members who are elected from 24 wards, the majority of which are relatively urban. All wards are three-member wards.

14 At present, each councillor represents an average of 3,279 electors, which the Council forecasts will increase to 3,294 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 16 of the 24 wards varies by more than 10% from the borough average, with four wards varying by more than 20%. The worst imbalance is in Norley ward where each councillor represents 31% fewer electors than the borough average.

15 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 Wigan

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	Abram	3	8,886	2,962	-10	9,633	3,211	-3
2	Ashton-Golborne	3	11,046	3,682	12	10,773	3,591	9
3	Aspull-Standish	3	11,737	3,912	19	11,564	3,855	17
4	Atherton	3	8,622	2,874	-12	9,273	3,091	-6
5	Bedford-Astley	3	8,216	2,739	-16	7,955	2,652	-20
6	Beech Hill	3	9,032	3,011	-8	8,978	2,993	-9
7	Bryn	3	9,885	3,295	0	9,596	3,199	-3
8	Hindley Green	3	10,933	3,644	11	11,087	3,696	12
9	Hindley	3	10,552	3,517	7	11,744	3,915	19
10	Hindsford	3	10,910	3,637	11	10,905	3,635	10
11	Hope Carr	3	10,248	3,416	4	10,048	3,349	2
12	Ince	3	7,618	2,539	-23	7,660	2,553	-22
13	Langtree	3	11,654	3,885	18	11,332	3,777	15
14	Leigh Central	3	8,445	2,815	-14	8,267	2,756	-16
15	Leigh East	3	10,735	3,578	9	10,466	3,489	6
16	Lightshaw	3	12,203	4,068	24	12,773	4,258	29
17	Newtown	3	8,333	2,778	-15	8,133	2,711	-18
18	Norley	3	6,813	2,271	-31	6,575	2,192	-33
19	Orrell	3	9,315	3,105	-5	9,361	3,120	-5
20	Swinley	3	8,573	2,858	-13	8,251	2,750	-17
21	Tyldesley East	3	11,790	3,930	20	11,830	3,943	20
22	Whelley	3	8,137	2,712	-17	8,096	2,699	-18
23	Winstanley	3	12,928	4,309	31	13,797	4,599	40
24	Worsley Mesnes	3	9,466	3,155	-4	9,091	3,030	-8
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>236,077</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>237,188</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
	<b>Average</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,279</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,294</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Wigan 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 Norley ward were relatively over-represented by 31%, while electors in Winstanley ward were relatively under-represented by 31%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.



### 3 Draft recommendations

16 During Stage One, nine representations were received, including borough-wide schemes from Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council, the Greater Manchester Conservatives and the Wigan and Leigh Liberal Democrats. We also received representations from a local Labour Party and five local residents' associations. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Wigan.

17 Our draft recommendations were based on Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council's proposals as we considered that they provided a generally good balance between electoral equality, the recognition of community identities and the provision of strong, easily identifiable boundaries. However, we moved away from the Borough Council's scheme in a number of areas, most notably in Ince and Shevington wards, to take account of local views including those of the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats. We proposed that:

- Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council should be served by 75 councillors, compared with the current 72, representing 25 wards, three more than at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one ward.

Draft recommendation

Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council should comprise 75 councillors, serving 25 wards.

18 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in all of the wards varying by no more than 9% from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no wards varying by more than 6% from the average in 2006.



## 4 Responses to consultation

19 During the consultation on the draft recommendations report, seven 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 Wigan Borough Council.

### Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council

20 The Council objected to elements of the proposed Abram, Atherleigh, Atherton, Douglas and Worsley Mesnes wards and proposed alternative ward names for two other wards.

### Political Groups

21 The Wigan Conservative Association and the Greater Manchester West Conservatives objected to the proposed Wigan Central Ward. The Greater Manchester West Conservatives also proposed a number of amendments throughout the borough to improve electoral equality.

### Members of Parliament

22 We received a submission from the Rt Hon Ian McCartney MP and Councillor J B Baldwin (member for Worsley Mesnes ward) who supported the majority of the draft recommendations but opposed part of the proposed Worsley Mesnes ward.

### Other representations

23 A further three representations were received in response to our draft recommendations. Councillor Davies (member for Swinley ward) opposed the proposed Wigan Central ward, One Voice Residents Association forwarded 58 pro forma letters supporting the draft recommendations for the Ince Whelley ward and a local resident proposed alternative arrangements in the Standish area based on community identities.



## 5 Analysis and final recommendations

24 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Wigan 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”.

25 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.

26 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.

27 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

28 Since 1975 there has been a 6% increase in the electorate of Wigan borough from 222,709 to 236,077 in 2001. The Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 0.5% from 236,077 to 237,188 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. 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 Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

29 At Stage One, the Conservatives queried the projected electorate figures produced by the Council but acknowledged that they were unable to provide alternative projections. We asked the Council to respond to the questions raised by the Conservatives concerning new developments and occupancy rates and officers from the Council confirmed that, in their professional opinion, the projections were the best estimates available.

30 During Stage Two, we queried the Council's figures as there appeared to be significant fluctuations in individual wards between 2001 and 2006 without a significant increase or decrease in the overall electorate. The Council responded that the disparity was due ‘to the fact that the Register used to compile the scheme was the July 2002 version and this incorporates claims for inclusion in the Register received since December 2001’. However, we do not take into account rolling registration and therefore requested figures for the existing wards based on the December 2001 electorate which the Council duly provided. We know that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having considered the Council's figures for 2006, accepted that they are the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

31 During Stage Three, The Greater Manchester West Conservatives 'repeat[ed] that some updated reconciliation should be available, as we are well into the period under consideration'. They stated that this was particularly relevant where the largest population growth is expected.

32 We note the comments raised by the Conservatives and recognise the concerns regarding the accuracy of the current and forecasted electorate. As part of the process of periodic electoral reviews we ask the relevant Council to provide figures from the electoral register which is in place at the start of a review. For the review of Wigan, this information was provided from the December 2001 electoral register. In order to identify likely changes in electorate, we also asked Wigan Council to provide an estimate of the electorate in December 2006 based on firm evidence and realistic expectations. By using both of these sets of figures, we are ensuring that our recommendations do not relate to a single point in time. We do not consider that updating this information throughout the review is practical due to the confusion that this would cause. We acknowledge that forecasting electorates is difficult and accept that the figures provided by the Council are the best ones that could be made at the time.

## Council Size

33 Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council currently has 72 members. At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed a council of 75 members, an increase of three. The Council adopted a Leader and Cabinet style of political management in May 2002 and the Council argued that as a result of this new style of decision-making the Council required an increase in size to enable it to fulfil its functions. Under the new arrangements, a Cabinet of ten members (the Executive Leader and nine Portfolio Holders) takes all executive decisions apart from those delegated to Chief Officers. The Cabinet is supported by seven Policy Advisory Panels each dealing with a particular area such as Environment or Regeneration. The Council also has a number of Committees dealing with issues such as Development Control, Overview & Scrutiny and Regulation. The Council stated that it was 'aware of the Government's expectation that, where a Council adopts a Leader and Cabinet style, backbench Members will be freed up from taking Executive decisions so that they can assume the role of Ward Champion'. It went on to say that 'the number of meeting places expected of each member has been reduced [from three] to two to achieve this' and stated that there were a total of 149 places to be filled on the various committees and panels and that this fact pointed towards a council of 75 members. While we noted this argument, we did not consider that sufficient evidence was provided in the Council's original submission to fully justify this increase and we therefore asked the Council to provide further evidence in support of its proposal.

34 The Council provided further information, mainly concerning the representational role of councillors and included details of the many external bodies on which councillors represent the Council, from bodies such as the Greater Manchester Fire and Civil Defence Authority to bodies like the North West Regional Assembly and the North West Museums and Art Gallery Service. The Council also pointed to the establishment of a series of Township Fora across the borough and stated that 'All members will serve on their appropriate Township Forum to agree with stakeholders local plans and priorities'. The Fora are expected to start their work in the summer of 2003 and 'members will be expected to provide time and commitment to ensure their success'. The Council stressed the importance of the representational role of councillors both at a ward level and on external bodies and argued that a council size of 75 was necessary to enable the council to provide effective and convenient local government without having an adverse effect on the ability of councillors to fulfil their representational roles.

35 The Conservatives stated that ‘we do not question the proposals for a twenty-five ward and thus a seventy-five member Council, as this is the view of the current members’. The Liberal Democrats did not refer to council size in their submission.

36 We looked for evidence of how the proposed council size would enable councillors to fulfil the three traditional functions of councillors: to represent the interests of residents, to formulate and monitor the local authority’s policies and priorities, and to represent the interests of both residents and the authority on and to a wide range of external bodies. We considered that the Council had demonstrated its revised structure under the new political management arrangements and recognise the drive to free up backbench members from taking executive decisions by streamlining the decision-making process. However, the Council also stressed the importance of the representational roles of councillors and considered that the increase was necessary to enable councillors to adequately fulfil these representational roles as well as enabling them to formulate and monitor the local authority’s policies and priorities. Evidence such as the establishment of Township Fora and the range of external bodies on which councillors represent the council persuaded us that members are spending more time on their representational roles. We therefore considered that the Council’s proposal for an increase of three members had been based on a well thought through examination of what council size would best enable councillors to fulfil their three roles. We also noted that the proposal for a council size of 75 members had the support of the Conservatives and that we received no opposition, during Stage One, to this proposed council size.

37 Therefore, having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area and the support for the proposed council size, together with the responses received, we concluded that the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 75 members.

38 During Stage Three, Greater Manchester West Conservatives supported the proposed council size. We received no other comments regarding council size and are therefore confirming our draft recommendation for a council of 75 members.

## Electoral arrangements

39 We carefully considered all representations received at Stage One. We received three borough-wide schemes from the Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, and all three proposed schemes consisted of 25 three-member wards based on a council size of 75 members.

40 At Stage One, the Council stated that its proposals represented ‘the best fit that can be achieved to meet the Boundary Committee’s criteria for electoral equality whilst recognising the disparate communities across the Borough’. The Council’s scheme would have provided a generally good level of electoral equality, with just one ward having a variance of 10% by 2006.

41 Both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats took the Council’s scheme as their starting point and put forward amendments in many areas to provide what they considered to be a better balance between electoral equality and the recognition of community identity. The Conservatives stated that they made ‘suggestions that will make for greater equality and at the same time do little to harm “community” representation’ and ‘commended these proposals as a constructive contribution to the debate’. The Liberal Democrats considered that the Council’s proposals provided ‘a serious imbalance of numbers’ and stated that ‘although a disparity of up to 10% is allowed, this should be the exception rather than the rule and the majority of the wards should fall within the 5% bounds’. They also considered that many wards to the north of Wigan were under-subscribed while many wards to the south were over-subscribed and stated that ‘we therefore started our proposed changes by attempting to move sensible areas to wards in the north and west in order to leave enough capacity to ensure that wards in the Leigh and Worsley area could be kept as near to the 5% bands as possible’.

42 One Voice Residents Association considered that the Council had undertaken 'no public consultation or open public meetings to discuss the impact of what the boundary changes will be or indeed whether local people agree or disagree with the council's proposals'. However, we were satisfied that the Council consulted locally during Stage One, including the publishing of public notices in the Wigan and Leigh Reporters and the issuing of press releases to local papers.

43 Having carefully considered all the submissions at Stage One, we based our scheme on the Council's proposals as we considered that they provided a generally good balance between electoral equality, the recognition of community identities and the provision of strong, easily identifiable boundaries. However, in a number of areas, most notably in Ince and Shevington, we moved away from the Council's proposals to take account of local views including those of the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, and to provide a better reflection of community identities. The majority of our amendments were in the western part of the borough.

44 In Shevington and Aspull we moved away from local proposals as endorsing them would have led to the creation of parish wards containing few, if any, electors and we do not consider that this provides for effective and convenient local government. These issues, where proposals were generally to tie boundaries to ground detail, could be addressed by a parish review following this review which would have the power to change the external boundaries of parish councils. Consequential changes to the new borough ward boundaries to tie them to the new parish boundaries could then be requested of The Electoral Commission. Any parish review may also wish to look at the existence of Worthington parish, which has very few electors.

45 In our draft recommendations, we made a number of minor amendments in unparished areas to tie boundaries to ground detail, none of which would affect any electors.

46 In response to our draft recommendations, the Council objected to elements of the proposed Abram, Atherleigh, Atherton, Douglas and Worsley Mesnes wards on the grounds of community identity and interests. They also proposed two ward name changes. We received submissions from the Wigan Conservative Association, Greater Manchester West Conservatives and Councillor Davies that opposed including part of the existing Swinley ward with the Bottling Wood Estate and the Scholes Flats areas in the proposed Wigan Central ward as they do not share a community of interest. Ian McCartney, MP and Councillor Baldwin supported the draft recommendations except in the Worsley Mesnes ward where they proposed an alternative boundary to reflect the identity and interests of the local community. The One Voice Residents Association forwarded 58 pro forma letters supporting the proposed Ince Whelley ward. A local resident supported some of our proposals and also submitted an alternative boundary in the Standish area to reflect community identities.

47 After careful consideration of the representations received, we are endorsing the majority of the draft recommendations as we consider that they provide the best available balance between electoral equality, community identities and interests and the provision of effective and convenient local government. However, we are moving away from our draft recommendations in three areas in response to the representations received from Wigan Borough Council and the Greater Manchester West Conservatives. We have been persuaded to amend the boundary between the proposed Abram and Hindley Green wards so that all of Bickershaw village is united in the proposed Abram ward. We have also made a minor amendment to the boundary between Atherton and Atherleigh wards and Lowton East and Leigh South wards to provide stronger and more clearly identifiable boundaries. Finally, we are adopting the two ward name changes proposed by Wigan Borough Council.

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

- a) Abram, Hindley, Ince and Whelley wards (pages 25 – 28)
- b) Aspull-Standish, Beech Hill, Langtree and Swinley wards (pages 28 – 32)
- c) Newtown, Norley, Orrell, Winstanley and Worsley Mesnes wards (pages 32 – 34)
- d) Ashton-Golborne, Bryn, Hope Carr and Lightshaw wards (pages 34 – 36)
- e) Hindley Green, Leigh Central and Leigh East wards (pages 37 – 38)
- f) Atherton, Bedford-Astley, Hindsford and Tyldesley East wards (pages 39 – 41).

49 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.

## Abram, Hindley, Ince and Whelley wards

50 These four wards are situated in the centre and north of the borough and are unparished. The number of electors per councillor in Abram, Ince and Whelley wards is 10%, 23% and 17% below the borough average respectively (3%, 22% and 18% by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in Hindley ward is 7% above the borough average (19% by 2006).

51 At Stage One, the Council proposed a revised warding arrangement in this area consisting of three wards, each to be represented by three members. It proposed a new Ince Whelley ward to comprise parts of the existing Ince and Whelley wards. It also proposed retaining the existing Abram ward with one minor amendment in the southeast of the proposed ward. This amendment would not affect any electors and would tie the boundary to ground detail. Finally, the Council proposed a revised Hindley ward comprising the majority of the existing Hindley ward and a western area of the existing Hindley Green ward.

52 The Conservatives proposed a revised Ince ward comprising part of the existing Ince ward and the southern part of the existing Whelley ward. They also proposed a revised Abram ward with an area in the west of the existing Abram ward transferring to a revised Golborne & Lowton West ward. Finally, the Conservatives proposed an amended Hindley ward with an area in the north of the existing ward transferring to a revised Aspull ward and an area in the east transferring to an amended Hindley Green ward.

53 The Liberal Democrats stated that ‘we do not think that there is any major discrepancy between our proposals and those of the cabinet for Abram ward’. They proposed an amended Hindley ward comprising the majority of the existing Hindley ward with the exception of an area in the north, which would form part of a new Aspull-Hindley North ward, and two areas in the east, which would form part of an amended Hindley Green ward. Finally, the Liberal Democrats also proposed a revised Whelley-Ince ward consisting of the majority of the existing Ince ward and the southern part of the existing Whelley ward.

54 The Ince Branch of the Makerfield Constituency Labour Party stated that ‘the people of the Ince ward are strongly opposed to the changes suggested by the Council and can see no affinity between the existing Ince ward and the proposed Douglas ward (presently Newtown)’. It proposed an alternative that ‘part of Whelley goes into “Central Ward” and the High Rise Flats (6 in total) would be better served in the proposed “Douglas Ward”’. It proposed an amendment to the Council’s proposal that would retain the Scholes area in a revised Ince Whelley ward and suggested transferring electors on and to the north of Platt Lane into an amended Wigan Central ward to improve electoral equality.

55 The One Voice Residents Association based in Scholes stated that ‘the residents of Ince ward are strongly objecting to the proposed boundary changes Wigan Council are wishing to

adopt and we are asking you to reject the proposals Wigan are planning to submit which puts Darlington Street East, streets off Darlington Street East and the High Rise flats in Scholes into Newtown, known as Douglas ward'. It considered that there had been no public consultation over the proposed changes and submitted 500 letters of objection to Wigan Council. It stated that 'we have no ties to Newtown especially historically and cannot develop any historic ties for the future' and that 'we are not connected directly to the new boundary by road or rail and the Leeds/Liverpool Canal stops short of Newtown itself'. It also stated that 'to travel on public transport from Ince to Newtown takes two bus journeys and is approximately a half-hour journey'. The Residents Association stated that its 'community links are with areas which we are directly attached to, for example Higher Ince, Lower Ince, Spring View, Manchester Road Ince, Darlington Street East and streets off, Warrington Lane taking in three sets of high rise flats, onto Scholes taking in Schofield Lane and rejoining at Manchester Road'. The Residents Association also enclosed a petition signed by 265 people opposing the Council's proposals for this area.

56 We carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One regarding this area. We did not consider that the proposal put forward by the Council and the Conservatives to transfer the electors to the north of Highfield Road, Hindley Station and Railway Street from Hindley ward into an amended Aspull ward provided a good reflection of community identity, especially given the distance of this area from the majority of the properties of the proposed Aspull ward. The Liberal Democrats proposed transferring a slightly larger area of the existing Hindley ward into a new Aspull-Hindley North ward, and again we did not consider that this proposal would provide a good reflection of community identity. We therefore proposed retaining the existing boundary in this area as we considered that it provided a better reflection of community identity than any of the other proposals that we received at Stage One.

57 In the Ince area we were not persuaded that electors in the area of Scholes, which the Council proposed transferring to the new Douglas ward, share a community identity with electors in the proposed Douglas ward. We were persuaded by the evidence of the One Voice Residents Association and the Ince Branch of the Makerfield Constituency Labour Party that electors in this area share more of a community identity with the rest of Scholes and Ince and, given the relative lack of links between this area and the rest of the existing Newtown ward, we proposed retaining this area in the proposed Ince Whelley ward, reflecting in part the proposals of the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats.

58 To improve electoral equality, we proposed transferring electors on and to the north of Platt Lane out of the proposed Ince Whelley ward, as proposed by the Ince Branch of the Makerfield Constituency Labour Party. However, to improve electoral equality following our decision regarding the Aspull/Hindley boundary, we proposed to transfer electors in this area into an amended Aspull ward rather than into an amended Wigan Central ward as proposed by the Ince Branch of the Makerfield Constituency Labour Party. Again to improve electoral equality, we proposed an amendment to the southern boundary of the proposed Ince Whelley ward to include a development in the Spring View area in the amended Ince Whelley ward. The development is on the northern edge of Spring View and, as it is a new development, we did not consider that it will have any strong community ties with the existing Spring View area. The One Voice Residents Association also stated that its 'community links are with areas which we are directly attached to, for example Higher Ince, Lower Ince, Spring View' and we therefore considered that this proposal had some local support. We did not consider that the Conservatives' proposal to transfer the northeastern part of the existing Ince ward into an amended Aspull ward would provide a good reflection of community identities due to the geographical distance between the communities in the proposed ward. Our proposed Ince Whelley ward was broadly similar to that proposed by the Liberal Democrats.

59 The western boundary of our proposed Ince Whelley ward would follow the existing boundary along the Wigan to Crewe railway line apart from a small amendment to run to the west of properties on Mount View. It would then run along River Way, Douglas Street, to the east

of Douglas House before running along Scholes and Platt Lane. The boundary would then run to the south of properties on Leyburn Close, Trecastell Close, Baclaw Close and Swinside to join the boundary between the existing Ince and Whelley wards. The eastern boundary of our proposed ward would follow the boundary between the existing Ince and Aspull-Standish wards with some minor amendments to tie it to ground detail which would not affect any electors. The southern boundary would run along the Wigan to Manchester railway line, Seaman Way and Ince Brook before running to the south of the proposed development in Spring View.

60 In light of our proposals for an amended Ince Whelley ward, we proposed an amended Abram ward to improve electoral equality. Adopting part of the proposal put forward by the Liberal Democrats, we proposed a revised eastern boundary of the Council's proposed Abram ward to move all electors to the west of the Ince to Bickershaw railway line from the existing Leigh Central ward into the proposed Abram ward. We also proposed minor amendments to the northern boundary of the proposed Abram ward to tie the boundary to ground detail, none of which would affect any electors.

61 Finally, we adopted the Council's proposed Hindley ward as we considered that it provided a good balance between electoral equality and the recognition of community identities, retaining as it does the western part of Hindley in a single ward. However, we proposed the amendments outlined above and an amendment to the boundary with the proposed Hindley Green ward to further improve the balance between electoral equality and the recognition of community identities. The amendment to the boundary with the proposed Hindley Green ward was to improve electoral equality and would result in the retention of the existing boundary, to run along Morningson Road and Borsdane Avenue as proposed by the Liberal Democrats, rather than running the boundary to the west of properties on Kenilworth Drive, Hamilton Road and Silverdale Road, as proposed by the Council. The southern boundary of our proposed Hindley ward would follow the existing boundary while the eastern boundary would follow the existing boundary with two amendments. The first of these would be to run the boundary along Atherton Road, Park Road and Close Lane to rejoin the existing boundary. The second amendment would not affect any electors and would tie the boundary to ground detail in the north of the ward.

62 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Abram and Ince Whelley wards would be 7% and 3% below the borough average respectively (1% above and 3% below by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Hindley ward would be equal to the borough average (6% above by 2006).

63 During Stage Three, the Council opposed part of the proposed Abram ward. It stated that the use of the Ince to Bickershaw railway line as the boundary between the proposed Abram and Hindley Green wards outlined in the draft recommendations 'has the effect of dissecting Bickershaw village' and would 'cause difficulty for Ward Members to represent the village effectively'. It also stated that it would 'cause problems for those services attempting to align their management and service delivery configurations in this area'. The Greater Manchester West Conservatives supported 'the movement of the Abram boundary to the Ince/Bickershaw railway line in the interest of electoral equality'. They also supported the 'retaining of the current Hindley/Aspull boundary to the north of Hindley Station and south of the Golf Club'. One Voice Residents Association forwarded 58 pro forma letters supporting the draft recommendations in relation to the proposed Ince Whelley ward which stated that the draft recommendations 'reflect our heritage and community commitment'.

64 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three, we propose to unite Bickershaw Village in the proposed Abram ward. We note the Conservatives' support for the draft recommendations and acknowledge that this amendment provides a worse level of electoral equality in the Abram ward. However, we have been persuaded by the Council's argument that uniting the village in a single ward would allow for more effective service delivery and therefore more effective and convenient local government. We are therefore proposing that

the eastern boundary of the proposed Abram ward runs to the east of the properties of Bickershaw Village. The northern boundary runs directly to the north of that part of the village east of the Ince to Bickershaw railway line. We note the support for the proposed Ince Whelley ward from One Voice Residents Association and are adopting it as part of our final recommendations. In this area we are endorsing our draft recommendations as final with one amendment as detailed above to better reflect community identities.

65 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Abram and Ince Whelley wards would be 1% and 3% below the borough average respectively (7% above and 3% below by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Hindley ward would be equal to the borough average (6% above by 2006).

## Aspull-Standish, Beech Hill, Langtree and Swinley wards

66 These four wards are situated in the northwest of the borough. Langtree ward consists of Shevington parish and an unparished area, and Aspull-Standish ward consists of Haigh and Worthington parishes and an unparished area. The remainder of these wards are unparished. The number of electors per councillor in Aspull-Standish and Langtree wards is 19% and 18% above the borough average respectively (17% and 15% by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in Beech Hill and Swinley wards is 8% and 13% below the borough average respectively (9% and 17% below by 2006).

67 In this area at Stage One, the Council proposed a revised warding arrangement consisting of five wards, each to be represented by three members. A new Aspull ward would contain the majority of the existing Aspull-Standish ward along with a northern part of the existing Hindley ward and an area in the northeast of the existing Whelley ward. The Council proposed a new Standish ward comprising the majority of the part of the existing Aspull-Standish ward to the west of the Wigan to Preston railway line, the Standish Lower Ground area of the existing Beech Hill ward and an area in the northeast of the existing Langtree ward. The Council's proposed Shevington with Langtree ward would contain the majority of the existing Langtree ward, including Shevington parish. It would also include small unparished areas of the existing Aspull-Standish, Beech Hill and Winstanley wards.

68 The Council proposed a revised Wigan West ward comprising the majority of the existing Beech Hill ward, an area in the west of the existing Swinley ward and small areas of the existing Norley and Winstanley wards. Finally, the Council proposed a new Wigan Central ward largely based on the existing Swinley ward but also including the western part of the existing Whelley ward.

69 At Stage One, the Conservatives proposed a revised Aspull ward containing Haigh parish, the majority of the existing Swinley ward and an unparished area of the existing Aspull-Standish ward to the west of Haigh parish. They stated that 'the Aspull proposal is a more widespread ward with several different communities each with their own identities even if there is not a common unity for the whole ward'.

70 The Conservatives also proposed a revised Shevington with Langtree ward comprising Shevington parish and the Standish Lower Ground unparished area. A revised Standish ward would comprise Worthington parish, the western unparished area of the existing Aspull-Standish ward and the unparished area in the northeast of the existing Langtree ward. A revised Beech Hill ward would comprise the majority of the existing Beech Hill ward with the exception of the Standish Lower Ground area, an area in the north of the existing Norley ward and a small area in the southwest of the existing Swinley ward.

71 The Liberal Democrats proposed a new Aspull-Hindley North ward to comprise the eastern part of the existing Aspull-Standish ward, an area in the northeast of the existing Whelley ward and the northern part of the existing Hindley ward. They stated that 'the more recently built

estates near Hindley station form a small community of their own which can just as acceptably be serviced by councillors from Aspull ward as from Hindley ward'. They proposed a new Standish ward to contain the western part of the existing Aspull-Standish ward and the northern part of the existing Langtree ward.

72 The Liberal Democrats proposed a revised Langtree ward comprising Shevington parish, an unparished area in the north of the existing Langtree ward and an unparished area in the west of the existing Beech Hill ward. They also proposed an amended Beech Hill ward comprising the majority of the existing Beech Hill ward and a small area in the southwest of the existing Swinley ward. They stated that 'we believe that Beech Hill should lose the area at the western end of Wigan Lower Road to Shevington ward and we wish to make changes to its [Beech Hill] eastern boundary, following the railway line to include Park Road and all the area south of Park Road bounded by the two railway lines'. Finally, the Liberal Democrats proposed a new Wigan Central ward comprising the majority of the existing Swinley ward and the western part of the existing Whelley ward.

73 We carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One and based our proposals in this area on the Council's scheme as we considered that it provided a generally good balance between electoral equality and the provision of strong, easily identifiable boundaries. However, we proposed a number of amendments to the Council's proposed wards to provide a better balance between electoral equality and the recognition of community identities, particularly in the Aspull and Shevington areas.

74 In the Shevington and Standish area we moved away from the Council's proposals to adopt a slightly amended version of the Conservatives' proposed Shevington with Langtree ward. We considered that the Conservatives' proposal to include the Standish Lower Ground area in Shevington ward provided a better reflection of community identity in this area than the Council's proposed Shevington ward. The Council proposed including the Standish Lower Ground community in a ward with Standish village, and we considered that the Standish Lower Ground community has stronger geographical links with the communities of Beech Hill and Shevington. For reasons of electoral equality we were not persuaded to retain Standish Lower Ground in a revised Beech Hill ward but we considered that the Conservatives' proposal to include Standish Lower Ground in a ward with Shevington provided a better reflection of community identity than the Council's proposal. We also considered that this proposal provided a better reflection of community identity than the Liberal Democrats' proposal which would divide the Standish Lower Ground community between two wards, and we therefore placed the Standish Lower Ground community in a ward with Shevington village.

75 However, we proposed two amendments to the Conservatives' proposed ward to provide stronger and more easily identifiable boundaries. Firstly, we moved away from the Shevington parish boundary in the Shevington Moor area to include an unparished area to the west of the B5206 in our proposed Shevington with Langtree ward. The existing parish boundary runs through the village, and we considered that all the properties in this area should be contained in a single ward. As discussed earlier, this parish boundary is one of the issues that could be addressed in a parish review following this review. Secondly, we proposed to include an unparished area to the south of Shevington parish, to the north of the Manchester to Southport railway line and to the west of Akenhurst Brook in the proposed Shevington with Langtree ward. This amendment would affect no electors.

76 The eastern boundary of our proposed Shevington with Langtree ward would follow Shevington parish's boundary to where it meets the existing boundary between Aspull-Standish and Beech Hill wards, apart from in the Shevington Moor area where we proposed including an unparished area to the west of the B5206 as described above. The proposed boundary would then follow the existing boundary between Aspull-Standish and Beech Hill wards before running southwest between the Beech Hill and Standish Lower Ground estates to the River Douglas. It would follow the River Douglas before running down Akenhurst Brook, west along the

Manchester to Southport railway line and then east along Shevington parish's boundary to the borough boundary.

77 In light of our amended Shevington with Langtree ward, we proposed our own Standish ward, which we considered would provide a good balance between electoral equality, the recognition of community identities and the provision of strong boundaries. Our proposed ward would contain the area to the west of the Liverpool to Preston railway line of the existing Aspull-Standish ward and the unparished area of the existing Shevington ward with the exception of the small unparished area west of the B5206 described above. Our proposed Standish ward would follow the Liverpool to Preston railway line for the majority of its eastern boundary before leaving the railway line to follow the western boundary of Worthington parish.

78 We adopted the Council's proposed Wigan West ward with one small amendment, described above, to include a small unparished area in our proposed Shevington with Langtree ward to provide a stronger boundary. This proposed ward was very similar to the one put forward by the Liberal Democrats, but we considered that the Council's proposal to use the Liverpool to Preston railway line for the entire eastern boundary of the ward provided a stronger boundary than both the Liberal Democrats' and the Conservatives' proposals to retain electors to the west of the Liverpool to Preston railway line in a ward with electors to the east of it. This proposed Wigan West ward would use the Manchester to Southport railway line and the Liverpool to Preston railway line as the southern and eastern boundaries. The northern boundary of the proposed ward would follow the southern boundary of the existing Aspull-Standish ward before running southwest between the Beech Hill and Standish Lower Ground estates to the River Douglas. It would follow the River Douglas in a westerly direction before running south at Ackenhurst Brook to join the Manchester to Southport railway line.

79 We adopted the Council's proposed Wigan Central ward in its entirety as we considered that it provided the best balance between electoral equality, the recognition of community identities and the provision of strong, easily identifiable boundaries. This new Wigan Central ward would be largely based on the existing Swinley ward, and the western and southern boundaries of the proposed ward would be the Liverpool to Preston railway line while the northern boundary would follow the southern boundary of the existing Aspull-Standish ward before turning south to run along Whelley Road and Scholes Road. The proposed boundary would then pass to the east of Douglas House, west along Douglas Street and then south along River Way to the Liverpool to Preston railway line.

80 In light of our proposals in the Ince area described above, we proposed an amended version of the Council's Aspull ward. To improve electoral equality we transferred electors in and to the north of Platt Lane from the existing Whelley ward into an amended Aspull ward. The Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats all proposed transferring electors to the north of Highfield Road, Hindley Station and Railway Street from Hindley ward into an amended Aspull ward, which we did not consider would provide a good reflection of community identity. Electors in this area are currently in Hindley ward and we considered that their community links are stronger with Hindley than with Aspull. We therefore proposed retaining the boundary between the existing Aspull-Standish and Hindley wards. The southern boundary of our revised ward would then run north along the existing boundary between Hindley and Ince wards before following the existing boundary of the Aspull-Standish ward. It would then run southwest along the Leeds and Liverpool Canal and to the south of properties on Swinside, Baclaw Close, Trecastell Close and Leyburn Close before running along Platt Lane. The proposed boundary would then follow Scholes Road before following the existing Aspull-Standish boundary to the Wigan to Preston railway line. It would follow this railway line north before running along the western boundary of Worthington parish to the borough boundary. The northern and eastern boundary of our proposed Aspull ward would be formed by the borough boundary.

81 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Aspull (including the parishes of Haigh and Worthington) and Wigan West wards would be 4%

and 6% above the borough average respectively (2% and 4% by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Standish and Wigan Central wards would be 3% and 2% below the borough average respectively (5% and 4% by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Shevington with Langtree ward (including the parish of Shevington) would be 2% above the borough average (1% below by 2006).

82 During Stage Three, the Greater Manchester West Conservatives, the Wigan Conservative Association and Councillor J F Davies (member for Swinley ward) opposed the proposed Wigan Central ward. The Greater Manchester West Conservatives stated that 'the linking of the residential northern part of the current Swinley ward across a valley with parts of the current Whelley ward produces a ward with no community identity'. The Wigan Conservative Association considered that the transport links between the Bottling Wood estate/Scholes Flats area in the existing Whelley ward and the existing Swinley ward are poor and stated that 'the road link is...a main road out of Wigan, is usually very congested and is more of an obstacle than a link'. It stated that 'there is just no physical or social coalescence of the two areas'. The Wigan Conservative Association also commented on the political implications of the proposals, stating that 'Swinley has historically returned Conservative councillors until recent years and the signs are that it is starting to do so again'. Councillor Davies stated that 'Swinley has no geographic connection nor community with Whelley and Scholes' and also opposed the name Wigan Central. However he did not put forward any alternative name.

83 The Greater Manchester West Conservatives reasserted that their Stage One proposals reflect the best grouping of community interests in the Aspull area. They also supported the proposed Shevington with Langtree ward. The Council proposed to rename the proposed Standish ward and stated that 'in view of the transfer in this area "Standish Langtree" would appear to be more appropriate'. They also proposed to rename the proposed Shevington with Langtree ward and stated that 'in view of the transfer of Standish Lower Ground, the name of "Shevington Lower Ground" would be more appropriate'. A local resident made a number of comments regarding community identities that supported the proposed Standish ward. He also proposed to extend the eastern boundary of the proposed Standish ward to the east of the main west coast railway line. He acknowledged that his proposal 'may not take account of the proposed ward in terms of the electoral quotas, but [thinks] it is far more important to recognise townships and communities'.

84 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three, especially regarding the proposed Wigan Central ward. We have, however, not been persuaded to move away from our draft recommendations in this area. We acknowledge that the transport links between the Bottling Woods/Scholes area and the existing Swinley ward are not ideal. However, there are road links within the proposed ward and we are constrained by the need to provide a uniform pattern of three member wards. We note the comments regarding lack of community identity within the proposed ward. However, we did not receive any specific alternatives for this area, and any amendment to the proposed Wigan Central ward in this area would impact on the proposed Ince Whelley ward which received local support from One Voice Residents Association. In addition, we note the good levels of electoral equality in this area under the draft recommendations and consider that any amendment to the proposed Wigan Central ward could lead to deterioration in electoral equality. We do not consider that the evidence received justifies such deterioration in electoral equality especially in light of the fact that no specific proposals were received. We are therefore content to endorse our proposed Wigan Central and Ince Whelley wards as final. As we have not been persuaded to change the boundaries of the proposed Wigan Central ward, we have also not been persuaded to change the name of the ward as proposed by Councillor Davies. We recognise the points raised concerning the political impact of our recommendations and acknowledge that our reports have political implications. However, we have no brief to consider political implications and have therefore not been persuaded to move away from our draft recommendations.

85 We considered the Council's proposal to rename the proposed Standish ward Standish Langtree and the proposed Shevington with Langtree ward Shevington Lower Ground. We consider that these proposed ward names provide a better reflection of the constituent parts of the proposed wards than the draft recommendations and are therefore adopting these proposed names as part of our final recommendations.

86 In this area we have not been persuaded to substantially move away from our draft recommendations and are therefore confirming them as final but are adopting the two ward name changes as detailed above to better reflect the constituent parts of the respective wards.

87 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Aspull (including the parishes of Haigh and Worthington) and Wigan West wards would be 4% and 6% above the borough average respectively (2% and 4% by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Standish Langtree and Wigan Central wards would be 3% and 2% below the borough average respectively (5% and 4% by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Shevington Lower Ground ward (including the parish of Shevington) would be 2% above the borough average (1% below by 2006), the same as our draft recommendations.

### Newtown, Norley, Orrell, Winstanley and Worsley Mesnes wards

88 These five wards are situated in the west of the borough and are unparished. The number of electors per councillor in Newtown, Norley, Orrell, and Worsley Mesnes wards is 15%, 31%, 5% and 4% below the borough average respectively (18%, 33%, 5% and 8% by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in Winstanley ward is 31% above the borough average (40% by 2006).

89 During Stage One, the Council proposed a revised warding arrangement in this area consisting of five wards, each to be represented by three members. The Council proposed retaining the existing Worsley Mesnes ward in its entirety and retaining the majority of the existing Winstanley ward. A revised Orrell ward would contain the majority of the existing Orrell ward and part of the existing Winstanley ward, while an amended Pemberton ward would comprise the existing Norley ward and the northern part of the existing Winstanley ward. Finally, the Council proposed a new Douglas ward comprising Newtown ward and parts of the existing Ince ward.

90 The Conservatives proposed a revised Orrell ward comprising the majority of the existing ward with the exception of an area in the southeast of the existing ward which would be transferred to a revised Bryn ward. The revised Orrell ward would also contain a small area to the north which is currently in the existing Langtree ward. A new Pemberton ward would comprise the majority of the existing Norley ward with the exception of an area to the north which would be transferred to a revised Beech Hill ward as described above. This new Pemberton ward would also contain the northern part of the existing Winstanley ward.

91 The Conservatives proposed a revised Winstanley ward comprising the majority of the existing ward with the exception of an area in the north and a small area in the east which it proposed transferring to a revised Worsley Mesnes ward. This amended Worsley Mesnes ward would comprise the entirety of the existing Worsley Mesnes ward together with a small area in the east of the existing Winstanley ward. Finally, the Conservatives proposed a new Douglas ward which would comprise the existing Newtown ward and an area in the southwest of the existing Ince ward.

92 The Liberal Democrats proposed a revised Newtown ward consisting of the majority of the existing Newtown ward, an area in the southwest of the existing Ince ward and a small area in the northeast of the existing Worsley Mesnes ward. They also proposed a new Pemberton ward comprising the majority of the existing Norley ward, an area in the southwest of the existing Newtown ward and the northern part of the existing Winstanley ward.

93 The Liberal Democrats stated that they were 'happy with the cabinet proposals for Orrell and Winstanley wards' and that their 'suggestions for Pemberton, Newtown and Worsley Mesnes are very similar to those of the cabinet except that we have included the whole of Ince with Whelley instead of putting part of Lower Ince with Newtown and calling it Douglas ward'.

94 We carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One regarding this area and noted that the Council and the Liberal Democrats put forward very similar proposals in this area. We based our proposals on the Council's scheme as we considered that it generally provided a good balance between electoral equality and the recognition of community identities while providing for strong and easily identifiable boundaries. However, we proposed amendments to the Council's proposed Douglas and Pemberton wards in light of our proposals in the Ince area and we also amended the proposed Orrell and Worsley Mesnes wards to improve electoral equality and provide a better reflection of community identities.

95 We adopted the Council's proposed Winstanley ward without amendment as we considered that it provided a good balance between electoral equality, the recognition of community identity and the provision of strong, easily identifiable boundaries. The only change to the existing Winstanley ward would be to run the northern boundary from Brook Lane west along Smithy Brook to the M6. With two amendments we also adopted the Council's proposed Worsley Mesnes ward. The first of these amendments was to transfer the area bounded by the Leeds and Liverpool Canal and Wigan to Liverpool railway line from the proposed Douglas ward into an amended Worsley Mesnes ward as we considered that the railway line would provide a stronger eastern boundary for the proposed Worsley Mesnes ward. This amendment would not affect any electors. We also proposed one small amendment to provide a better reflection of community identity. This minor amendment included all of the electors on Tipping Street and Beverley Close in the new Douglas ward. To retain the existing boundary in this area would mean that residents would have no vehicular access to the rest of Worsley Mesnes ward without leaving the ward and we did not consider that this would provide for effective and convenient local government. Our proposed Worsley Mesnes ward would follow the boundaries of the existing Worsley Mesnes ward for the remainder of the ward except in the south where we have tied the boundary to ground detail in a number of places. None of these minor amendments would affect any electors.

96 In light of our proposals in the Ince Whelley area detailed earlier, we proposed an amended Douglas ward. For reasons of electoral equality we proposed to transfer part of the existing Norley ward into a revised Douglas ward. All properties on and to the south of Thorburn Road, on and to the east of School Way and Norley Hall Avenue, and all properties in the Chiswell Street, Fairfield Street and Leopold Street area in the existing Norley ward, would be transferred into the revised Douglas ward. The southern boundary of our proposed Douglas ward would follow the Wigan to Pemberton railway line, Poolstock Brook and the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, as discussed above, while the northern boundary would follow the Wigan to Liverpool and Manchester to Southport railway lines.

97 As a result of our amendment to the boundary between the proposed Douglas and Pemberton wards and also as we considered that it would provide a better reflection of community identities, we adopted the suggestion put forward by the Conservatives to retain the M6 as the boundary between Orrell and Pemberton wards. We thus proposed an amended Pemberton ward with the northern boundary of the Manchester to Southport railway line, the western boundary of the M6 and the southern boundary of Smithy Brook and the Wigan to Orrell railway line. As a result of this amendment to the boundary between the proposed Pemberton and Orrell wards our proposed Orrell ward was very similar to that proposed by the Conservatives, with two minor amendments. The first of these is that in the north we proposed to retain the existing boundary with Langtree ward since to utilise the railway line as suggested by the Conservatives would involve the creation of a parish ward containing no electors. We also proposed a minor amendment to the boundary with the proposed Bryn ward to tie the boundary to ground detail, and this change would affect no electors.

98 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Douglas, Orrell and Winstanley wards would be 1%, 3% and 7% below the borough average respectively (3% below, 3% below and 4% above by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Pemberton and Worsley Mesnes wards would be 2% above and equal to the borough average respectively (2% and 5% below by 2006).

99 During Stage Three, the Council and Ian McCartney MP opposed part of the proposed Douglas and Worsley Mesnes wards. Mr McCartney stated that the proposals 'do not reflect the identity and interests of the local community'. They both proposed to include Tipping Street, Beverley Close and Roecliffe Close in the proposed Worsley Mesnes ward instead of in the proposed Douglas ward by extending the 'Worsley Mesnes boundary to align with Pool Street'. They stated that the draft recommendations 'would mean the parents escorting their children to either St James' or St. Jude's Primary Schools would have to cross over from the proposed Douglas ward into the Worsley Mesnes ward'.

100 The Council stated that the proposed 'transfer of the residential area around Larch Avenue has no significant impact on the overall makeup of the Township Programme for Wigan. However this new boundary does not reflect the long-standing neighbourhood identity for this area'. The Greater Manchester West Conservatives proposed to improve electoral equality by transferring electors from the proposed Winstanley ward to the proposed Worsley Mesnes ward. They also supported the proposal to retain the M6 as the eastern boundary of the proposed Orrell ward.

101 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three. We have not been persuaded by the evidence from the Council and Ian McCartney MP to amend the boundary between the proposed Worsley Mesnes and Douglas wards. We did not receive a detailed alternative proposal from them and consider that the draft recommendations provide a strong and clearly identifiable boundary. We consider that moving only a small number of electors into the Worsley Mesnes ward would not facilitate effective and convenient local government as residents in this area would have no vehicular access to the rest of Worsley Mesnes ward without leaving the ward.

102 We note that their proposals referred to the school catchment area as part of their argumentation. However, we do not consider that this evidence is a strong enough indication of community identity to transfer this area into a ward to which it has no vehicular access. We have consequently not been persuaded to move away from our draft recommendations. We have also not been persuaded by the Council's evidence that the area surrounding Larch Avenue should not be included in the Douglas ward as we received no argumentation or evidence in support of its proposal. We also note that the proposed Douglas ward provides a good level of electoral equality and that we received no other representations regarding this area.

103 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Douglas, Orrell and Winstanley wards would be 1%, 3% and 7% below the borough average respectively (3% below, 3% below and 4% above by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Pemberton and Worsley Mesnes wards would be 2% above and equal to the borough average respectively (2% and 5% below by 2006), the same as our draft recommendations.

## Ashton-Golborne, Bryn, Hope Carr and Lightshaw wards

104 These four wards are situated in the south of the borough and are unparished. The number of electors per councillor in Ashton-Golborne, Bryn, Hope Carr and Lightshaw wards is 12%, equal to, 4% and 24% above the borough average respectively (9% above, 3% below, 2% above and 29% above by 2006).

105 At Stage One the Council proposed a revised warding arrangement in this area consisting of five wards each to be represented by three members. It proposed a revised Bryn ward consisting of the majority of the existing Bryn ward and the southeastern part of the existing Orrell ward. It also proposed a new Ashton ward comprising the majority of the existing Ashton-Golborne ward and part of the existing Bryn ward. A new Golborne & Lowton West ward would comprise the western part of the existing Lightshaw ward and an area in the southeast of the existing Ashton-Golborne ward. A new Lowton East ward would comprise the remainder of the existing Lightshaw ward and the western part of the existing Hope Carr ward. Finally in this area, the Council proposed a new Leigh South ward which would comprise the remainder of the existing Hope Carr ward, the western part of the existing Bedford-Astley ward and a small part of the existing Leigh East ward.

106 The Conservatives proposed a new Ashton ward comprising the majority of the existing Ashton-Golborne ward with the exception of two areas in the west and southeast of the existing ward. It would also include an area in the south of the existing Abram ward and an area in the south of the existing Bryn ward.

107 They proposed an amended Bryn ward comprising the majority of the existing Bryn ward with the exception of an area in the south of the existing ward which they proposed transferring to a revised Ashton ward. This amended Bryn ward would also include an area in the southeast of the existing Orrell ward and an area in the west of the existing Ashton-Golborne ward.

108 The Conservatives also proposed a new Golborne & Lowton West ward comprising the southeastern part of the existing Ashton-Golborne ward and the western part of the existing Lightshaw ward. They proposed a new Lowton East ward which would comprise the remainder of the existing Lightshaw ward and the western part of the existing Hope Carr ward.

109 Finally in this area, the Conservatives proposed a new Leigh South ward which would comprise the remainder of the existing Hope Carr ward, the western part of the existing Bedford-Astley ward and southern parts of the existing Leigh Central and Leigh East wards.

110 The Liberal Democrats stated that 'there is no disagreement between ourselves and the cabinet in this area and we believe that our proposals are substantially the same as the cabinet recommendations'. They proposed a new Golborne ward consisting of the western part of the existing Lightshaw ward and an area in the southeast of the existing Ashton-Golborne ward. The Liberal Democrats also proposed a new Lowton ward comprising the eastern part of the existing Lightshaw ward and the western part of the existing Hope Carr ward. Finally the Liberal Democrats proposed a new Leigh South ward comprising the majority of the existing Hope Carr ward and an area in the west of the existing Bedford-Astley ward.

111 Having carefully considered all representations received at Stage One regarding this area, we based our proposals on those of the Borough Council as we considered that, in general, they provided a good balance between electoral equality, the recognition of community identities and the provision of strong, easily identifiable boundaries. The proposals of the Liberal Democrats in this area were very similar to those of the Council and we considered that these proposals provided a better reflection of community identities than those of the Conservatives' whose proposals would involve dividing the community in the Landside and Pennington areas.

112 However, we proposed two amendments to the Council's proposals to provide an improved level of electoral equality. We proposed an amendment to transfer the Alderton Drive and Woodedge estate from the existing Bryn ward to an amended Ashton ward. Our proposed boundary would follow Wigan Road south before running to the west of properties on Bryn Street and would then follow a boundary proposed by the Conservatives to run west along Millingford Brook to the borough boundary. Our proposed Bryn ward would comprise the existing Bryn ward with the addition of all electors to the east of Winstanley Road and the south of the M6, currently in Orrell ward, and an amendment to the southern boundary discussed above.

113 Again to improve electoral equality, we proposed an amendment to the boundary between the Council's proposed Golborne & Lowton West and Lowton East wards. The eastern boundary of the proposed Golborne & Lowton West ward would follow Plank Lane before running to the east of the properties on Slag Lane and Stone Cross Lane North and then west along the East Lancashire Road and south down the Wigan to Crewe railway line to the borough boundary. The borough boundary would form the southern boundary of the proposed ward, and the western boundary would run to the west of the properties on Helen Street before following Golborne Road and Edge Green Road. It would then run eastwards along a path before following Edge Green Road and Nan Holes Brook. The northern boundary of the proposed Golborne & Lowton West ward would consist of the boundary between the existing Abram and Lightshaw wards.

114 We adopted the Council's proposals without amendment in the remainder of the area as we considered that they provided the best balance between electoral equality, the recognition of community identities and the provision of strong, easily identifiable boundaries. The proposed Lowton East ward would comprise the remainder of the existing Lightshaw ward and the western part of the existing Hope Carr ward. The eastern boundary of this proposed ward would be formed by Atherleigh Way before running generally northwest through Pennington Flash Country Park to Plank Lane.

115 The northern boundary of the proposed Leigh South ward would follow the boundary between the existing Hope Carr and Leigh Central wards before leaving the Bridgewater Canal and running north to Spinning Jenny Way. The proposed boundary would then run east along Spinning Jenny Way and Chapel Street, north along Mill Lane and east along Bedford Brook and Manchester Road. The eastern boundary would run south from Manchester Road to the East Lancashire Road which would form the southern boundary of the proposed ward.

116 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Ashton, Bryn, Golborne & Lowton West and Lowton East wards would be 2%, 1%, 6% and 9% below the borough average respectively (5%, 4%, 6% and 6% by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Leigh South ward would be 8% above the borough average (5% by 2006).

117 During Stage Three, the Greater Manchester West Conservatives proposed to include Pennington Flash Country Park in an amended Lowton East ward, using Atherleigh Way as the boundary between Lowton East and Leigh South wards. This would not affect any electors. They also stated that in this area 'electoral equality should take precedence and that community links in the area are tenuous to say the least'. We consider that using Atherleigh Way as a boundary between the two wards would provide a stronger and more clearly identifiable boundary and are proposing to adopt this amendment as part of our final recommendations. We were not persuaded, however, to amend our proposals to improve electoral equality as we consider that our draft recommendations provide the best balance between electoral equality and the reflection of community identities and interests. We also received no detailed alternative proposals or comments for this area and are consequently endorsing our draft recommendations as final with the one minor modification detailed above.

118 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Ashton, Bryn, Golborne & Lowton West and Lowton East wards would be 2%, 1%, 6% and 9% below the borough average respectively (5%, 4%, 6% and 6% by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Leigh South ward would be 8% above the borough average (5% by 2006), the same as our draft recommendations.

## Hindley Green, Leigh Central and Leigh East wards

119 These three wards are situated in the centre and east of the borough and are unparished. The number of electors per councillor in Hindley Green and Leigh East wards is 11% and 9% above the borough average respectively (12% and 6% by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in Leigh Central ward is 14% below the borough average (16% below by 2006).

120 At Stage One, the Council proposed a revised warding arrangement consisting of three wards, each to be represented by three members. A revised Hindley Green ward would comprise parts of the existing Hindley, Hindley Green and Leigh Central wards while a new Leigh West ward would comprise parts of the existing Hindley Green, Leigh Central and Leigh East wards. Finally, the Council proposed an amended Leigh East ward comprising parts of the existing Atherton, Bedford-Astley and Leigh East wards.

121 The Conservatives proposed a revised Hindley Green ward comprising the northern part of the existing ward and an area in the east of the existing Hindley ward. They also proposed a new Leigh Bedford ward comprising part of the existing Atherton ward, part of the existing Bedford-Astley ward and part of the existing Leigh East ward. Finally, they proposed a revised Leigh West ward comprising the majority of the existing Leigh Central ward, an area in the south of the existing Hindley Green ward and a small area in the west of the existing Leigh East ward.

122 The Liberal Democrats proposed an amended Hindley Green ward comprising part of the existing Hindley Green ward, two areas in the eastern part of the existing Hindley ward and an area in the north of the existing Leigh Central ward. They proposed a new Leigh West ward to comprise the eastern part of the existing Leigh Central ward, the southern part of the existing Hindley Green ward and a small area in the west of the existing Leigh East ward.

123 The Liberal Democrats also proposed a new Leigh Bedford ward comprising the eastern part of the existing Leigh East ward, the western part of the existing Bedford-Astley ward and an area in the east of the existing Leigh Central ward.

124 Having carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, we based our proposals in this area on those of the Borough Council as we considered that their proposals provided a good balance between electoral equality, the recognition of community identities and the provision of strong, easily identifiable boundaries. However, we proposed some amendments to improve electoral equality and provide a better reflection of community identities.

125 In light of our proposals in the Ince Whelley area and the fact that we are unable to consider any area in isolation, we proposed amendments to the Council's Hindley Green ward to improve electoral equality and provide a better reflection of community identity. In the west of the proposed ward, we proposed retaining the existing boundary so it runs along Mornington Road and Borsdane Avenue, while in the south we moved away from the Council's proposals to run the boundary south along the old Ince to Bickershaw railway line. Our proposed boundary would then run northeast to the east of the properties in the Bolton House Road and Bickershaw Lane area before rejoining the Council's proposed boundary at Smith's Lane. In the east of the proposed ward we also proposed an amendment to provide a better reflection of community identity. Our proposed boundary would run to the west of properties on Minehead, Taunton and Tiverton Avenue's before running east to the south of properties on Corner Lane and then north along Westleigh Lane and a path to the borough boundary. This would include all electors in the Bexhill Drive estate in an amended Hindley Green ward, and we considered that this would provide a better reflection of community identity than the Council's proposals.

126 With the exception of an amendment to tie a boundary to ground detail which would not affect any electors, we adopted the Council's proposed Leigh East and Leigh West wards without modification as we considered that these wards provided a good balance between

electoral equality, the recognition of community identities and the provision of strong, easily identifiable boundaries. We considered the proposals of both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats but we considered that neither of these proposals provided strong, easily identifiable boundaries or a good reflection of community identities in the town of Leigh. We are unable to consider any area in isolation and, in light of the warding pattern we adopted elsewhere, we remained persuaded that the Council's proposals provided the best balance between the statutory criteria in this area.

127 The southern boundary of our proposed Leigh West ward would follow the boundary between the existing Leigh Central and Hope Carr wards while the western boundary of the proposed ward with the proposed Hindley Green ward is described above. The northern boundary would run east along a path to the south of properties on Minehead Avenue and Honiton Close. The eastern boundary of the proposed ward would run south along Westleigh Brook before running along Westleigh Lane and Nel Pan Lane and then south along Westleigh Brook again. It would then follow the boundary between the existing wards of Hindley Green and Leigh East before running east along Victoria Street and Kirkhall Lane. The proposed boundary would then run south along Leigh Road, Market Place, Market Street and King Street.

128 Finally, we proposed an amended Leigh East ward, the western boundary of which would follow Leigh Road, Market Place, Market Street and King Street. The southern boundary of the proposed ward would share a boundary with the proposed Leigh South ward, as described earlier. The eastern boundary of the proposed ward would run to the west of properties on Debdale Lane and Rufford Place before running generally north along a track to the boundary between the existing wards of Bedford-Astley and Tyldesley East. It would then run along South Lane, Maden Street, Lord Street, Meanley Road and Cooling Lane. The northern boundary of the proposed ward would follow the boundary between the existing Bedford-Astley and Hindsford wards before running west along Atherton Lake Brook, north along The Avenue and east along Orchard Lane.

129 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Leigh East and Leigh West wards would be 7% and 9% above the borough average respectively (4% and 5% by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Hindley Green ward would be 4% below the borough average (5% above by 2006).

130 During Stage Three, the Greater Manchester West Conservatives proposed to improve the electoral equality in the borough as a whole by transferring part of the electorate out of the proposed Leigh East and Leigh West wards in to the neighbouring wards to the west but did not specify any particular proposals. The Council proposed uniting Bickershaw Village in the same ward, as detailed above.

131 We have carefully considered the proposals received at Stage Three and, as detailed above, have been persuaded to unite Bickershaw Village in the same ward. We transferred the eastern half of Bickershaw Village from the proposed Hindley Green ward to the proposed Abram ward to reflect community identities and interests, as detailed above. We were not persuaded to improve electoral equality as proposed by the Greater Manchester West Conservatives, as no specific proposals were made and we consider that our draft recommendations provide good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests in the area.

132 We received no other comments regarding this area and are endorsing our draft recommendations as final with the one amendment detailed above.

133 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Leigh East and Leigh West wards would be 7% and 9% above the borough average respectively (4% and 5% by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Hindley Green ward would be 10% below the borough average (1% below by 2006).

## Atherton, Bedford-Astley, Hindsford and Tyldesley East wards

134 These four wards are situated in the east of the borough and are entirely unparished. The number of electors per councillor in Atherton and Bedford-Astley wards is 12% and 16% below the borough average respectively (6% and 20% by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in Hindsford and Tyldesley East wards is 11% and 20% above the borough average respectively (10% and 20% by 2006).

135 At Stage One, the Council proposed a revised warding pattern of four wards, each to be represented by three councillors. It proposed a new Atherleigh ward comprising parts of the existing Atherton, Hindley Green and Leigh East wards. A revised Atherton ward would comprise parts of the existing Atherton and Hindsford wards while a new Tyldesley ward would comprise parts of the existing Tyldesley and Hindsford wards. Finally, a new Astley Mosley Common ward would comprise the majority of the existing Bedford-Astley ward and part of the existing Tyldesley East ward.

136 The Conservatives proposed a revised Atherton ward comprising a western area of the existing Atherton ward, a southern area of the existing Hindley Green ward and a northern area of the existing Leigh East ward. They proposed a new Atherleigh ward comprising the northern part of the existing Atherton ward and the northern part of the existing Hindsford ward.

137 They also proposed a new Tyldesley ward comprising the northern part of the existing Tyldesley East ward and the eastern part of the existing Hindsford ward and finally a new Astley & Mosley Common ward comprising the southern and eastern part of the existing Tyldesley East ward and the majority of the existing Bedford-Astley ward.

138 The Liberal Democrats proposed a new Atherleigh ward comprising the western part of the existing Atherton ward, an area in the north of the existing Leigh East ward and a small area in the east of the existing Hindley Green ward. They also proposed an amended Atherton ward comprising the eastern part of the existing Atherton ward and the western part of the existing Hindsford ward. The Liberal Democrats stated that 'the cabinet proposals for dividing up this township into two wards are totally unacceptable' and considered that 'where an arbitrary boundary is required to even up numbers, it is best to place it across a more recently built estate where loyalties tend to be to the local area rather than to the town itself and it can be a big advantage to the local residents to have six councillors concerned with their estate rather than three'. Therefore the Liberal Democrats 'have accordingly placed the boundary between Atherton ward and Atherleigh ward in the centre of the Hag Fold estate'.

139 The Liberal Democrats proposed a new Tyldesley ward comprising the eastern part of the existing Hindsford ward and the northwestern part of the existing Tyldesley East ward. Finally, they proposed a new Astley-Mosley Common ward comprising the majority of the existing Bedford-Astley ward and the southeastern part of the existing Tyldesley East ward. The Liberal Democrats stated that they were 'happy with the cabinet proposals for Tyldesley ward and Astley/Mosley Common ward'.

140 At Stage One, we also received four pro forma letters from the Hag Fold Residents Association stating that 'it is very important to local people that the Hag Fold estate is not seen as separate from the town of Atherton itself'. The Residents Association considered that 'local people feel very strongly that with any boundary change they want to be included with Atherton centre and not detached from prosperity and opportunity'. It also considered that 'there is a real concern that unless Hag Fold is attached to Atherton town centre that the improvements seen over the past few years will be reversed and Hag Fold will once again be seen as a "sink" estate with few facilities and poor opportunities for its residents'.

141 Having carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, we based our proposals for this area on those of the Council, which were similar to those of the Conservatives, as we considered that their proposals provided a good balance between electoral equality and the recognition of community identities. The Liberal Democrats supported the Council's proposed Astley Mosley Common and Tyldesley wards but put forward substantially different Atherleigh and Atherton wards. We did not consider that the Liberal Democrats' proposal to divide the Hag Fold estate between these two wards would provide a good reflection of community identity, especially in light of the representations from the Hag Fold Residents Association, and considered that the Council's proposals provided the best balance between the statutory criteria in this area.

142 We did, however, propose three amendments to the Council's proposals to provide an improved level of electoral equality in light of our proposals in the rest of the borough. The first of these amendments was a revised boundary between the proposed Atherleigh and Hindley Green wards, and this amendment is described in the previous section. To provide an improved level of electoral equality we also proposed an amendment to the boundary between the proposed Atherleigh and Atherton wards. Our proposed boundary would run along Leigh Road before running to the south of numbers 34–62 Leigh Road and then turning north along Liscard Street and then to the west of properties on Gadbury Avenue and Worthing Grove. It would then run west along Wigan Road before rejoining the Council's proposed boundary to run north to the borough boundary.

143 In light of our proposals for Atherleigh ward, we also proposed an amendment to the boundary between the proposed Atherton and Tyldesley wards to improve electoral equality. Our proposal involved transferring all the electors in the Lodge Lane, Lodge Road and Lord Street area of Hindsford from Atherton ward into Tyldesley ward. We noted that the Council's proposed Atherton ward took into account the representations received from the Hag Fold Residents Association and were content to endorse the majority of this ward with the two amendments described above. In the rest of this area we were content to endorse the Council's proposals as we considered that they provided a good balance between the statutory criteria.

144 A revised Atherton ward would have a southern boundary with the proposed Atherleigh ward as described above. It would then follow Market Street, Tyldesley Road and Miller's Lane before running to the north of all properties in the Lodge Lane, Lodge Road and Lord Street area of Hindsford. The proposed boundary would then run north along Hindsford Brook to the Wigan to Manchester railway line which it would follow east to the borough boundary. The northern boundary would follow the borough boundary.

145 The western boundary of our proposed Atherleigh ward would be the boundary with the proposed Hindley Green and Leigh West wards as described earlier. The southern boundary of the proposed ward would follow Victoria Street, Kirkhall Lane, Orchard Lane, The Avenue and Atherton Lake Brook while the eastern boundary of the proposed ward would follow Miller's Lane and Tyldesley Road. The northern boundary of the proposed Atherleigh ward would follow the boundary with the proposed Atherton ward as described above.

146 With the exception of the above amendment we adopted the Council's proposed Tyldesley ward. The eastern boundary of the proposed ward would follow Mort Lane before running to the north and east of properties on Dewberry Close and Bank House Close. It would then run to the east of properties on Makant's Close and Sale Lane before running west along a dismantled railway. The southern boundary of the proposed ward would follow Honksford Brook, Bodmin Road, Helston Way, Stour Road and Ennerdale Road before running to the west of properties on Coniston Road. It would then run west along Ley Road, Meanley Road and Cooling Lane. The western boundary of the proposed ward would follow Atherton Lake Brook and Miller's Lane while the northern boundary would follow the Wigan to Manchester railway line and Hindsford Brook before running to the north of all the properties in the Lodge Lane, Lodge Road and Lord Street area of Hindsford as described above.

147 Finally, we adopted the Council's proposed Astley Mosley Common ward. The southern and eastern boundaries of the proposed Astley Mosley Common ward would be the borough boundary, while the western boundary would run south along and then to the east of properties on Mort Lane before running to the east of properties on Dewberry Close, Bank House Close, Makant's Close and Sale Lane. The boundary would then run west along a dismantled railway line and west along Honkford Brook, Bodmin Road, Helston Way, Stour Road and Ennerdale Road. It would then run to the west of properties on Coniston Road and west along Ley Road before following the boundary between the existing Bedford-Astley and Tyldesley East wards. The proposed boundary would leave the existing boundary and run along paths generally southwest before running to the west of properties on Rufford Place and Debdale Lane. It would then follow Manchester Road before running south to the East Lancashire Road which it would follow west to the borough boundary.

148 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors in the proposed Astley Mosley Common, Atherton and Tyldesley wards would be 1%, 8% and 5% above the borough average respectively (1%, 4% and 5% by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Atherleigh ward would be 7% below the borough average (1% by 2006).

149 During Stage Three, the Council proposed to amend the boundary between the proposed Atherton and Atherleigh wards so that the boundary is consistent and runs along the middle of Leigh Road until it joins Liscard Street where it then turns north. The Greater Manchester West Conservatives stated that 'in general terms we find the Committee proposals acceptable'. They supported 'the Committee's rejection of the idea to divide the Hag Fold estate between two wards'. They also stated that they felt that 'further amendments could be made to achieve greater electoral equality by 2006'.

150 Having considered the representations received at Stage Three we have been persuaded to adopt the Council's proposal to transfer 34 – 62 Leigh Road into the proposed Atherleigh ward to provide a stronger and more clearly identifiable boundary. The Greater Manchester West Conservatives did not propose any specific amendments to the draft recommendations to improve electoral equality and we have not been persuaded to amend our proposals in this area as we consider the draft recommendations provide a good balance between the statutory criteria. We received no other representations regarding this area at Stage Three and are consequently confirming our draft recommendations as final with one minor amendment between the proposed Atherton and Atherleigh wards to provide a stronger boundary.

151 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors in the proposed Astley Mosley Common, Atherton and Tyldesley wards would be 1%, 7% and 5% above the borough average respectively (1%, 4% and 5% by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Atherleigh ward would be 7% below the borough average (1% by 2006).

## Electoral cycle

152 Under section 7(3) of the Local Government Act 1972, all Metropolitan authorities have a system of elections by thirds.

## Conclusions

153 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 to unite Bickershaw Village in the proposed Abram ward;
- we propose to strengthen the boundaries between the proposed Atherton and Atherleigh wards and between the proposed Lowton East and Leigh South wards;
- we propose that the Shevington with Langtree ward and Standish wards proposed at Stage One be renamed Shevington Lower Ground and Standish Langtree respectively.

154 We conclude that, in Wigan:

- there should be a increase in council size from 72 to 75;
- there should be 25 wards, one more than at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified;

155 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	72	75	72	75
Number of wards	24	25	24	25
Average number of electors per councillor	3,279	3,148	3,294	3,163
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from The average	16	0	14	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from The average	4	0	4	0

156 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 16 to none. By 2006 no wards are forecast to have an electoral variance over 7%. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the statutory criteria.

### Final recommendation

Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council should comprise 75 councillors serving 25 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 Wigan



## 6 What happens next?

157 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Wigan 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).

158 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 11 November 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.

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



# Appendix A

## Final recommendations for Wigan: **Detailed mapping**

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for the Wigan 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 proposed warding arrangements for Wigan.

Map A1: Final recommendations for Wigan: Key map

# Appendix B

## Guide to interpreting the first draft of the Electoral Change Order

### **Preamble**

This describes the process by which the Statutory Instrument will be made, and under which powers. Text in square brackets will be removed if The Electoral Commission decides not to modify the Final Recommendations.

### **Citation and Commencement**

This defines the name of the Statutory Instrument and sets the dates on which it will come into force.

### **Interpretation**

This defines terms that are used in the Statutory Instrument.

### **Wards of the Borough of Wigan**

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 Wigan**

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 Wigan Borough Council to make a print of the map available for public inspection.

### **Electoral Registers**

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

### **Revocation**

This revokes the Statutory Instrument that defines the existing wards, with the exception of any 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 decides not to modify the Final Recommendations.



# Appendix C

## First Draft of the Electoral Change Order for Wigan

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### STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

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**2003 No.**

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT, ENGLAND**

### **The Borough of Wigan (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 September 2003 on its review of the borough(**d**) of Wigan:

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 Wigan (Electoral Changes) Order 2003.

(2) This Order shall come into force –

- 
- (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 Wigan 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.

- (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;
- (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 Wigan;

“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 Wigan (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 Wigan Borough Council.

## **Wards of the borough of Wigan**

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

(2) The borough shall be divided into 25 wards which shall bear the names set out in column 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 Wigan**

**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.

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(a) See the Borough of Wigan (Electoral Arrangements) Order 1979 (S.I. 1979/1524).

(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).

(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.

### **Maps**

5. Wigan Borough Council shall make a print of the map marked “Map referred to in the Borough of Wigan (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 Wigan (Electoral Arrangements) Order (b) is revoked, save for articles 8 and 9 (7).

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

Chairman of the Commission

Secretary to the Commission

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(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. 1979/1524.

## SCHEDULE

article 3

### NAMES OF WARDS

Abram	Leigh South
Ashton	Leigh West
Aspull	Lowton East
Astley Mosley Common	Orrell
Atherleigh	Pemberton
Atherton	Shevington Lower Ground
Bryn	Standish Langtree
Douglas	Tyldesley
Golborne and Lowton West	Wigan Central
Hindley	Wigan West
Hindley Green	Winstanley
Ince Whelley	Worsley Mesnes
Leigh East	

#### 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 Wigan.

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 twenty-five 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 Wigan (Electoral Changes) Order 1979 with the exception of articles 8 and 9 (7).

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 Wigan Borough Council and at the principal office of the Electoral Commission at Trevelyan House, Great Peter Street, London SW1P 2HW.