

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
South Ribble in Lancashire

April 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

The Local Government Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament. Our task is to review and make recommendations to the Government on whether there should be changes to the structure of local government, the boundaries of individual local authority areas, and their electoral arrangements.

Members of the Commission are:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)
Professor Michael Clarke CBE (Deputy Chairman)
Kru Desai
Peter Brokenshire
Pamela Gordon
Robin Gray
Robert Hughes CBE

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

We are statutorily required to review periodically the electoral arrangements – such as the number of councillors representing electors in each area and the number and boundaries of wards and electoral divisions – of every principal local authority in England. In broad terms our objective 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, and the number of councillors and ward names. We can also make recommendations for change to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils in the borough.

This report sets out the Commission's draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of South Ribble in Lancashire.

© Crown Copyright 2000

Applications for reproduction should be made to: Her Majesty's Stationery Office Copyright Unit

The mapping in this report is reproduced from OS mapping by the Local Government Commission for England with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, ©Crown Copyright.

Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.
Licence Number: GD 03114G.

This report is printed on recycled paper.

CONTENTS

	page
SUMMARY	v
1 INTRODUCTION	<i>1</i>
2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS	5
3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED	9
4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>11</i>
5 NEXT STEPS	29
APPENDICES	
A Draft Recommendations for South Ribble: Detailed Mapping	<i>31</i>
B The Statutory Provisions	35

A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for the Central Area of the borough is inserted inside the back cover of the report.

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for South Ribble on 7 September 1999.

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

We found that the existing electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in South Ribble:

- **in five of the 22 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and one ward varies by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2004 electoral equality is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 13 wards and by more than 20 per cent in three wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 86-87) are that:

- **South Ribble Borough Council should have 55 councillors, one more than at present;**
- **there should be 27 wards, instead of 22 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 21 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of five, and one ward should retain its existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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

- **In 21 of the proposed 27 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **An improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue with the number of electors per councillor in no ward expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2004.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the re-distribution of councillors for the parishes of Farington, Hutton, Longton and Penwortham;**
- **an increase in the number of councillors serving Penwortham Town Council.**

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

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for eight weeks from 4 April 2000. Because we take this consultation very seriously, we may move away from our draft recommendations in the light of Stage Three responses. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations and then make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.**
- **It will then be for the Secretary of State to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. He will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 5 June 2000:

**Review Manager
South Ribble Review
Local Government Commission for England
Dolphyn Court
10/11 Great Turnstile
London WC1V 7JU**

Fax: 020 7404 6142

E-mail: reviews@lgce.gov.uk

Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Bamber Bridge East	2	Bamber Bridge Central ward (part); Bamber Bridge South ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
2	Bamber Bridge North	2	Bamber Bridge Central ward (part); Bamber Bridge South (part); Walton-le-Dale ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
3	Bamber Bridge West	2	Bamber Bridge Central ward (part); Bamber Bridge South ward (part); Lostock Hall ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
4	Broad Oak	2	Howick ward (part -part Howick parish ward of Penwortham parish); Manor ward (part -part Manor parish ward of Penwortham parish); Middleforth Green ward (part - part Middleforth Green parish ward of Penwortham parish); Kingsfold ward (part - part Kingsfold parish ward of Penwortham parish).	Map 2 and large map
5	Carrwood	2	Lostock Hall ward (part); Walton-le-Dale ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
6	Castle	2	Howick ward (part - part Howick parish ward of Penwortham parish); Priory ward (part - part Priory parish ward of Penwortham parish)	Map 2 and large map
7	Charnock	2	Charnock ward (part - part Charnock parish ward of Charnock parish); Kingsfold ward (part - part Kingsfold parish ward of Penwortham parish)	Map 2 and large map
8	Earnshaw Bridge	2	Leyland St John's ward (part); Moss Side ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
9	Farington East	2	Farington ward (part - part Farington parish); Leyland St Ambrose ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
10	Farington West	2	Farington ward (part - part Farington parish)	Map 2 and large map
11	Golden Hill	2	Leyland Central ward (part); Leyland St John's ward (part); Leyland St Mary's ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
12	Gregson Lane	2	All Saints ward (part)	Maps 2 and A3
13	Hutton & Longton	3	Hutton & New Longton ward (part - part Hutton parish); Longton Central & West ward (part - part Longton parish)	Maps 2 and A2
14	Kingsfold	2	Charnock ward (part - part Charnock parish ward of Penwortham parish); Kingsfold ward (part - part Kingsfold parish ward of Penwortham parish); Middleforth Green ward (part - part Middleforth Green parish ward of Penwortham parish)	Map 2 and large map

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
15	Leyland Central	2	Leyland Central ward (part); Leyland St Mary's (part)	Map 2 and large map
16	Leyland St Ambrose	2	Leyland St Ambrose ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
17	Leyland St Mary's	2	Leyland St Mary's ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
18	Little Hoole & Much Hoole	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Little Hoole and Much Hoole)	Map 2
19	Lostock Hall	2	Lostock Hall ward (part); Bamber Bridge Central ward (part); Bamber Bridge South ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
20	Lowerhouse	2	Leyland St Mary's ward (part); Seven Stars ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
21	Middleforth	2	Middleforth Green ward (part - part Middleforth Green parish ward of Penwortham parish); Kingsfold ward (part - part Kingsfold ward of Penwortham parish)	Map 2 and large map
22	Moss Side	2	Moss Side ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
23	New Longton	2	Hutton & New Longton ward (part - part Hutton parish); Longton Central & West ward (part - part Longton parish)	Map 2 and Map A2
24	Samlesbury	2	Samlesbury & Cuerdale ward; All Saints ward (part); Walton-le-Dale ward (part)	Maps 2 and A3
25	Seven Stars	2	Seven Stars ward (part); Moss Side ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
26	Walton-le-Dale	2	Walton-le-Dale ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
27	Whitefield	2	Howick ward (part -part Howick parish ward of Penwortham parish); Priory ward (part - part Priory parish of Penwortham parish); Manor ward (part - part Manor parish ward of Penwortham parish)	Map 2 and large map

Notes: *The Bamber Bridge and Leyland areas are the only unparished parts of the borough.*

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for South Ribble

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
1	Bamber Bridge East	2	3,262	1,631	11	3,258	1,629	9
2	Bamber Bridge North	2	2,729	1,365	-7	3,213	1,607	7
3	Bamber Bridge West	2	3,013	1,507	3	2,926	1,463	-2
4	Broad Oak	2	3,105	1,553	6	3,093	1,547	3
5	Carrwood	2	2,326	1,163	-21	2,892	1,446	-3
6	Castle	2	3,235	1,618	10	3,088	1,544	3
7	Charnock	2	2,668	1,334	-9	2,775	1,388	-7
8	Earnshaw Bridge	2	3,029	1,515	3	2,896	1,448	-3
9	Farington East	2	2,394	1,197	-18	2,978	1,489	0
10	Farington West	2	2,967	1,484	1	2,892	1,446	-3
11	Golden Hill	2	3,058	1,529	4	2,912	1,456	-3
12	Gregson Lane	2	3,028	1,514	3	2,925	1,463	-2
13	Hutton & Longton	3	4,538	1,513	3	4,555	1,518	1
14	Kingsfold	2	2,954	1,477	1	3,070	1,535	3
15	Leyland Central	2	2,709	1,355	-8	2,827	1,414	-6
16	Leyland St Ambrose	2	2,603	1,302	-11	3,293	1,647	10
17	Leyland St Mary's	2	3,052	1,526	4	2,919	1,460	-2
18	Little Hoole & Much Hoole	2	2,913	1,457	-1	2,958	1,479	-1
19	Lostock Hall	2	3,186	1,593	9	3,216	1,608	7
20	Lowerhouse	2	3,034	1,517	3	2,922	1,461	-2
21	Middleforth	2	2,943	1,472	0	2,916	1,458	-3
22	Moss Side	2	2,326	1,163	-21	2,827	1,414	-6
23	New Longton	2	3,438	1,719	17	3,263	1,632	9

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
24	Samlesbury	2	3,165	1,583	8	3,041	1,521	2
25	Seven Stars	2	2,931	1,466	0	2,788	1,394	-7
26	Walton-le-Dale	2	3,098	1,549	6	2,948	1,474	-1
27	Whitefield	2	3,037	1,519	3	2,912	1,456	-3
	Totals	55	80,741	-	-	82,303	-	-
	Average	-	-	1,468	-	-	1,496	-

Source: *Electorate figures are based on South Ribble Borough Council's submission.*

Notes: *1 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.*

2 The total electorate for 1999 and 2004 shown in Figure 2 above differs from those shown in Figure 4 by one and seven electors respectively, which has a negligible impact upon variances.

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of South Ribble in Lancashire on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the 12 districts in Lancashire as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of South Ribble. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in July 1975 (Report No. 28). The electoral arrangements of Lancashire County Council were last reviewed in November 1980 (Report No. 399). We expect to review the County Council's electoral arrangements shortly after completion of the district reviews in order to enable orders to be made by the Secretary of State in time for the 2001 county elections.

3 In undertaking these reviews, we must have regard to:

- the statutory criteria in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992, ie the need to:
 - (a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
 - (b) secure effective and convenient local government;
- the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements* in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (see Appendix B).

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the Borough Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also make recommendations on the electoral arrangements for parish and town councils in the borough.

5 We also have regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (third edition published in October 1999). This sets out our approach to the reviews.

6 In our *Guidance*, we state that we wish wherever possible to build on schemes which have been prepared locally on the basis of careful and effective consultation. Local interests are normally in a better position to judge what council size and ward configuration are most likely to secure effective and convenient local government in their areas, while allowing proper reflection of the identities and interests of local communities.

7 The broad objective of PERs is then to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the district as a whole. For example, we will require particular justification for schemes

which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

8 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the general assumption that the existing council size already secures effective and convenient local government in that district but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. 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 a district’s electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a district council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other districts.

9 The review is in four stages (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Stages of the Review

Stage	Description
One	Submission of proposals to the Commission
Two	The Commission’s analysis and deliberation
Three	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	Final deliberation and report to the Secretary of State

10 In July 1998 the Government published a White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, i.e. in year one half of the district council would be elected, in year two half the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities.

11 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/2000 PER programme, including the Lancashire districts, that until any direction is received from the Secretary of State, the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the October 1999 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State’s intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas. The proposals are now being taken forward in a Local Government Bill published in December 1999 and are currently being considered by Parliament.

12 Stage One began on 7 September 1999, when we wrote to South Ribble Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Lancashire County Council, Lancashire Police Authority, the local authority associations, the Member of Parliament, 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 the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 29 November 1999.

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

14 Stage Three began on 4 April 2000 and will end on 5 June 2000. This stage involves publishing the draft recommendations in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations.**

15 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to move away from them in any areas, and submit final recommendations to the Secretary of State. Interested parties will have a further six weeks to make representations to the Secretary of State. It will then be for him to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If the Secretary of State accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, he will make an order. The Secretary of State will determine when any changes come into effect.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

16 The borough of South Ribble lies to the south of the River Ribble, with the districts of Fylde and Preston to its north and Chorley, West Lancashire and Blackburn with Darwin to its south. The central area of the borough contains three main urban settlements: Bamber Bridge, Leyland and Penwortham. The western and eastern ends of South Ribble are predominantly rural in nature. The borough is served by three motorways, the M61, M6 and M65 and the main London to Glasgow and Preston to Liverpool railway lines run through the borough.

17 The borough contains eight parishes, but the two settlements of Leyland and Bamber Bridge are themselves unparished. Leyland town comprises approximately 29 per cent of the borough's total electorate.

18 To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward (the councillor:elector ratio) varies from the borough average in percentage terms. In the text which follows this calculation may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

19 The electorate of the borough is 80,742 (February 1999). The Council presently has 54 members who are elected from 22 wards, 15 of which are relatively urban and the remainder being predominantly rural. Twelve of the wards are each represented by three councillors, eight are each represented by two councillors and two are single-member wards. The Council is elected together every four years.

20 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in South Ribble borough, with around 20 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,495 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,524 by the year 2004 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 five of the 22 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, and one ward by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Samlesbury & Cuerdale ward, where the councillor represents 36 per cent fewer electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in South Ribble

Figure 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
1	All Saints	3	4,140	1,380	-8	4,000	1,333	-13
2	Bamber Bridge Central	3	4,581	1,527	2	4,630	1,543	1
3	Bamber Bridge South	3	4,080	1,360	-9	4,080	1,360	-11
4	Charnock	1	1,399	1,399	-6	1,670	1,670	10
5	Farington	3	4,944	1,648	10	5,470	1,823	20
6	Howick	2	2,760	1,380	-8	2,660	1,330	-13
7	Hutton & New Longton	3	3,970	1,323	-11	3,800	1,267	-17
8	Kingsfold	3	4,592	1,531	2	4,520	1,507	-1
9	Leyland Central	2	3,224	1,612	8	3,270	1,635	7
10	Leyland St Ambrose	2	3,021	1,511	1	3,690	1,845	21
11	Leyland St John's	3	4,285	1,428	-4	4,140	1,380	-9
12	Leyland St Mary's	3	4,815	1,605	7	4,620	1,540	1
13	Little Hoole & Much Hoole	2	2,913	1,457	-3	2,960	1,480	-3
14	Longton Central & West	3	4,006	1,335	-11	4,010	1,337	-12
15	Lostock Hall	3	5,109	1,703	14	5,140	1,713	12
16	Manor	2	2,958	1,479	-1	2,910	1,455	-5
17	Middleforth Green	2	3,499	1,750	17	3,490	1,745	14
18	Moss Side	3	4,673	1,558	4	5,060	1,687	11
19	Priory	2	2,734	1,367	-9	2,600	1,300	-15

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
20	Samlesbury & Cuerdale	1	964	964	-36	930	930	-39
21	Seven Stars	2	3,142	1,571	5	3,000	1,500	-2
22	Walton-le-Dale	3	4,933	1,644	10	5,660	1,887	24
	Totals	54	80,742	-	-	82,310	-	-
	Averages	-	-	1,495	-	-	1,524	-

Source: *Electorate figures are based on information provided by South Ribble 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 1999, electors in Samlesbury & Cuerdale ward were relatively over-represented by 36 per cent, while electors in Middleforth Green ward were relatively under-represented by 17 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.*

3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

21 At the start of the review we invited members of the public and other interested parties to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for South Ribble Borough Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

22 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met with officers and members from the Borough Council. We are most grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received five representations during Stage One, including borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council and the North West Conservatives, all of which may be inspected by appointment the offices of the Borough Council and the Commission.

South Ribble Borough Council

23 The Borough Council proposed a council of 55 members, one more than at present, serving 27 wards, compared to the existing 22 wards. All but one of its proposed wards would return two councillors, with one ward returning three councillors. Under the Council's proposals, seven wards would have electoral variances greater than 10 per cent initially, although no ward is anticipated to vary by more than 10 per cent by 2004.

24 The Council noted that its proposals had received "a majority decision" from members on the Council. The Council noted that while its scheme proposed a ward boundary in Hutton parish along a line to the west of the A59 road, "the [Borough] Council would prefer [this] boundary to be located along the centre line of the A59 ... as this would reflect the affiliation of local communities more realistically".

North West Conservatives

25 The North West Conservatives stated, "The Conservative Party submits proposals for a 54 member Council", although its appended scheme made proposals for a 53-member council. The Conservatives noted that in preparing its proposals, "an over-riding consideration was the strong local wish to retain existing links with minimum disruption to electoral arrangements and parishes". Its proposals were based on estimated 2004 electorate data only, with eight wards varying by more than 10 per cent.

Ribble Valley Conservative Association

26 Ribble Valley Conservative Association recommended a revised warding pattern for two wards in the far west of the borough. It stated its proposed warding pattern would "provide a better balanced pair of wards".

Parish and Town Councils

27 We received representations from one parish council and one town council. Hutton Parish Council was concerned that should the parish be divided between two borough wards, the identities and interests of the parish would not be adequately reflected.

28 Penwortham Town Council proposed to “increase the number of town councillors representing Penwortham from seventeen to eighteen”. In particular, it proposed that the existing Charnock town ward should return an additional councillor, thereby increasing its representation from two to three.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

29 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for South Ribble is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to the statutory criteria set out in the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the interests and identities of local communities – and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

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

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

32 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable, but we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, the objective 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 start from the standpoint of electoral equality, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates. We will require particular justification for schemes which result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent and over should arise only in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

Electorate Forecasts

33 The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 2 per cent from 80,742 to 82,310 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expects most of the growth to be in Charnock, Farington, Leyland St Ambrose and Moss Side wards, although a significant amount is also expected in Walton-le-Dale ward. The Council has estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

34 We accept that forecasting electorates is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the Borough Council’s figures, are content that they represent the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council Size

35 As already explained, the Commission's starting point is to assume that the current council size facilitates convenient and effective local government, although we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case.

36 South Ribble Borough Council currently has 54 members. The Borough Council proposed a council of 55 members, an increase of one. The North West Conservatives stated "the Conservative Party submits proposals for a 54 member council", although we noted that its borough-wide scheme contained recommendations for only 53 members.

37 Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we have concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 55 members.

Electoral Arrangements

38 We have considered both the borough-wide proposals we received together with the other representations. We were concerned that under the North West Conservatives' proposals, significant electoral imbalances were likely to persist in 2004, with eight wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average. While we acknowledge that in a number of areas the North West Conservatives' proposals would improve electoral equality, it is not usually possible to adopt discrete areas from one set of proposals due to the consequential impact on adjacent wards. Furthermore, we are proposing to adopt a council of 55 members, as noted above, which further impinges upon the compatibility between the Borough Council's and Conservatives' proposals.

39 We noted that under the Borough Council's proposals, a significant improvement in electoral equality would be achieved, with no ward varying by more than 10 per cent in 2004. Officers at the Council also indicated that all but one parish council had expressed its support for the scheme.

40 In view of the degree of consensus behind large elements of the Council's proposals, and the significant improvements in electoral equality they would secure across the borough, we have concluded that we should base our recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme. We consider that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or other proposals submitted at Stage One. However, in order to improve electoral equality further and having regard to local community identities and interests, we have decided to substantially move away from the Borough Council's proposals in one area and we propose modifications to the ward boundaries in a number of areas in order to utilise more easily recognisable ground features. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

The Unparished Areas

- (a) Leyland Central, Leyland St Ambrose and Leyland St Mary's wards;
- (b) Leyland St John's, Seven Stars and Moss Side wards;
- (c) All Saints, Bamber Bridge South and Lostock Hall wards;
- (d) Bamber Bridge Central and Walton-le-Dale wards.

The Parished Areas

- (e) Charnock, Kingsfold and Middleforth Green wards;
- (f) Howick, Manor and Priory wards;
- (g) Farington ward;
- (h) Little Hoole & Much Hoole ward;
- (i) Hutton & New Longton and Longton Central & West wards;
- (j) Samlesbury & Cuerdale ward.

41 The Borough Council did not supply ward names with its proposals, instead using an indicative lettering system. We have considered the Council's proposed wards and, together with the advice of officers at the Council, we have composed our own ward names to clarify its indicative system. We have incorporated our ward names within the body of the text and have included them as part of our draft recommendations, but the first time the ward is named we have also indicated its letter under the Council's submitted proposals.

42 Details of our draft recommendations are set out in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

The Unparished Area

Leyland Central, Leyland St Ambrose and Leyland St Mary's wards

43 The three wards of Leyland Central, Leyland St Ambrose and Leyland St Mary's lie in the far south of the borough and are each currently under-represented by 8 per cent, 1 per cent and 7 per cent respectively (7 per cent, 21 per cent and 1 per cent in 2004). Leyland St Mary's ward returns three councillors, while the other two wards each return two councillors.

44 The Borough Council proposed retaining the railway line as the western ward boundary for Leyland St Ambrose (V) ward with the borough boundary forming the ward's southern and eastern boundaries. The Council proposed modifying the ward's northern boundary, transferring an area broadly west of St David's Road into a modified Farington ward. To the west of Leyland St Ambrose ward, the Council proposed a modified Leyland St Mary's (P) ward which would retain the ward's existing eastern and southern boundaries and the majority of its northern boundary (with an area broadly north of Regent Road forming part of an adjacent Golden Hill (N) ward). The proposed western ward boundary of St Mary's ward would be modified to follow Broadfield Drive and Woodlea Road and the rear of properties in Fox Lane, Parkgate Drive and Cumberland Avenue until the borough boundary. The Council's proposed Leyland Central (Q) ward would broadly reflect the existing Leyland Central ward, although an area north of Hough

Lane and west of Churchill Way would form part of a modified Leyland St John's ward, detailed later. Under the Council's proposals, the two-member wards of Leyland St Ambrose, Leyland St Mary's and Leyland Central would have electoral variances of 11 per cent, 4 per cent and 8 per cent (10 per cent, 2 per cent and 6 per cent in 2004).

45 The North West Conservative Party stated that its proposals in the Leyland area would "help to create a strong local identity... [which] ... has resulted in some variations in Leyland which could be eliminated but which would only result in less robust boundaries". Its proposals reflected the Council's proposals in a number of areas, such as the use of the railway line as a boundary, although elsewhere its proposals differed significantly. Of the seven wards the Conservatives proposed in the Leyland area, five would vary by 10 per cent or more from the average, based upon their estimated 2004 electorate and a council size of 53-members. We are not proposing to adopt the Conservatives' proposals in Leyland due to its alternative council size and significant electoral imbalances. We received no further representations for the area.

46 Having examined options to improve electoral equality further in the Council's proposed Leyland St Ambrose ward, we concluded that given the location of the ward on the edge of the borough and the use of the railway line as a strong boundary, alternative options to modify the ward structure were limited and could lead to a reduction in effective and convenient local government in the area. We concluded that the Council's proposals would achieve a satisfactory balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We are therefore adopting the Borough Council's proposals for Leyland St Ambrose, Leyland St Mary's and Leyland Central wards, subject to a number of minor boundary modifications which would not impact upon electorates within the area as part of our draft recommendations. The proposals are shown on the large map at the back of the report.

Leyland St John's, Seven Stars and Moss Side wards

47 Seven Stars ward returns two councillors and is under-represented by 5 per cent under the present arrangements (2 per cent over-represented by 2004). Leyland St John's and Moss Side wards currently return three councillors each and are over- and under-represented by 4 per cent each respectively (9 per cent and 11 per cent respectively in 2004).

48 These three wards on the western side of Leyland would form five two-member wards under the Borough Council's proposals. Its proposed Lowerhouse (O) ward would comprise that part of the existing Leyland St Mary's ward not within its proposed Leyland St Mary's ward, together with that part of the existing Seven Stars ward east of Leyland Lane. The area of Seven Stars ward broadly west of Leyland Lane, together with an area of housing around Moss Side Way currently in Moss Side ward, would form the Council's proposed Seven Stars (M) ward. To the north, the Council proposed a Golden Hill ward, comprising that part of Leyland Central ward west of Churchill Way and north of Hough Lane, that part of Leyland St Mary's ward broadly north of Regent Road, and a large part of Leyland St John's ward east of Broadfield Drive, Bannister Drive and Leyland Lane. The remaining part of Leyland St John's ward and part of Moss Side East ward (north of Dunkirk Lane and east of Paradise Lane, Titan Way and Reiver Road) would form the Council's proposed Earnshaw Bridge (L) ward with Moss Side (E) ward comprising the remaining, western area of Moss Side ward.

49 Under the Council's proposals, Lowerhouse, Seven Stars, Golden Hill, Earnshaw Bridge and Moss Side wards would have electoral variances of 3 per cent, equal to the average, 4 per cent, 3 per cent and 21 per cent respectively (2 per cent, 7 per cent, 3 per cent, 3 per cent and 6 per cent respectively in 2004). The Borough Council's electorate forecasts include an additional 501 electors in its proposed Moss Side ward due to new housing developments in the area (the electorate in the remaining part of Moss Side ward is anticipated to reduce marginally over the same period).

50 We noted that the North West Conservatives' proposals, although based on an alternative council size, utilised a number of similar ward boundaries to the Borough Council in this area, and that in particular there was a degree of consensus over the use of the Leyland Lane. Having carefully considered the representations for this part of Leyland, we note the Borough Council's proposals achieve a high degree of electoral equality, seek to reflect the existing settlement pattern, and anticipate development in the formulation of its ward boundaries. We are therefore incorporating the Council's proposals into our draft recommendations, with a number of minor amendments to utilise more recognisable ground features (affecting no electors). Our draft recommendations are shown on the large map at the back of the report.

All Saints, Bamber Bridge South and Lostock Hall wards

51 Each of the three wards of All Saints, Bamber Bridge South and Lostock Hall return three councillors and are located in the Bamber Bridge area. All Saints and Bamber Bridge South wards are both currently over-represented by 8 per cent and 9 per cent respectively (13 and 11 per cent by 2004). Lostock Hall ward is under represented by 14 per cent (12 per cent in 2004).

52 The Borough Council proposed retaining the existing southern, western and eastern (borough) boundaries of All Saints ward for its proposed Higher Walton (Y) ward. However, an area of the ward, Coupe Green (Polling District WBA), would be transferred into a new Samlesbury ward. To the south, the existing Bamber Bridge South ward would be modified, with an area west of Station Road forming part of a modified Bamber Bridge West (X) ward. An area of the existing Bamber Bridge Central ward broadly south of Skipton Close, west of Brindle Way and east of Station Road, would form part of the Council's proposed Bamber Bridge East (Z) ward. The Council's proposed Lostock Hall (T) ward would comprise the southern part of the existing Lostock Hall ward (south of Browndge Road), together with the Irongate area (currently part of Bamber Bridge Central ward). Under the Council's proposals, Higher Walton, Bamber Bridge West, Bamber Bridge East and Lostock Hall wards would have electoral variances equal to the average, 3 per cent, 11 per cent and 9 per cent (5 per cent, 2 per cent, 9 per cent and 7 per cent in 2004).

53 The North West Conservatives proposed an alternative warding pattern in the area, but did not provide detailed mapping in its submission. Using the North West Conservatives' estimated 2004 electorate, its proposed Bamber Bridge North, Bamber Bridge South, Lostock Hall and All Saints wards would be 6 per cent, 7 per cent, 3 per cent and 8 per cent respectively, based on a council size of 53 members.

54 Ribble Valley Conservative Association noted the lack of direct road connections between the Coupe Green area of the existing All Saints ward and the remainder of the modified Samlesbury & Cuerdale ward. The Association proposed an alternative configuration for All Saints ward, comprising the Coupe Green and Gregson Lane areas (polling districts WBA and WBB respectively), with the Higher Walton area (WA polling district) forming part of a modified Samlesbury ward. The Association stated that its proposals “provide a better balanced pair of wards in terms of topography...”. Its proposed All Saints ward would have an electoral variance of 3 per cent (2 per cent in 2004), based on a council size of 53 members.

55 We have carefully considered the representations commenting on this area. We do not consider that the North West Conservatives’ proposals would be compatible with our proposals elsewhere in the borough nor would they achieve an acceptable balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We were concerned that the Borough Council’s proposed All Saints ward might not accurately reflect the road pattern in the area and that this may impact upon the effectiveness and convenience of local government in the area. We therefore propose adopting Ribble Valley Conservative Association’s proposals for All Saints ward, comprising the Coupe Green and Gregson Lane areas, which we judge would facilitate a reasonable level of electoral equality in this and surrounding wards, and better reflect the existing road network, while having regard to the statutory criteria. However, we do not propose retaining the name All Saints, noting that All Saints Church would fall outside the ward and we are therefore recommending renaming All Saints as Gregson Lane ward. Elsewhere, we are satisfied that the Council’s proposed Lostock Hall, Bamber Bridge West and Bamber Bridge East wards would achieve a high degree of electoral equality and reflect the statutory criteria and we are therefore adopting them unaltered. Under our proposals Gregson Lane ward would have an electoral variance of 3 per cent (2 per cent in 2004). Our draft recommendations are shown on Map A3 at the back of the report.

Bamber Bridge Central and Walton-le-Dale wards

56 The two wards of Bamber Bridge Central and Walton-le-Dale in the north of the borough are both under-represented by 2 per cent and 10 per cent respectively (1 per cent and 24 per cent in 2004). Each ward presently returns three councillors.

57 The Council proposed three two-member wards to cover the existing Bamber Bridge Central and Walton-le-Dale wards. Its proposed Carrwood (R) ward would follow the western ward boundary of the existing Walton-le-Dale ward, thereafter following the eastern parish boundary of Penwortham parish before turning east along the centre of Brownedge Road, north along London Way, then west to the disused tram line and finally following a line north across field edges and across Carr Wood Road to the borough boundary. The Council’s proposed Walton-le-Dale (S) ward would abut the western boundary of its proposed Carrwood ward. Its southern boundary would follow the existing boundary to the north of Selkirk Drive, then follow the centre of Chorley Road north, before turning west to the rear of Walton Green and the borough boundary. The Council’s proposed Bamber Bridge North (W) ward would lie north of its proposed Bamber Bridge West and Bamber Bridge East wards, and would utilise the M6 motorway as its eastern boundary. Under the Council’s proposals, Carrwood, Walton-le-Dale and Bamber Bridge North wards would have electoral variances of 21 per cent, 6 per cent and 7 per cent respectively (3 per cent, 1 per cent and 7 per cent in 2004).

58 The North West Conservatives proposed an alternative warding pattern in the area, although did not provide detailed mapping in its submission. Using the North West Conservative's estimated 2004 electorate, its proposed Farington North & Charnock, Walton-le-Dale and Bamber Bridge North wards would be 6 per cent, 1 per cent and 6 per cent, based on a council-size of 53-members.

59 We have carefully considered the proposals we received for this area. We do not consider that the North West Conservatives' proposals in this area would be compatible with our proposals elsewhere in the borough. We consider that the Borough Council's proposals would facilitate electoral equality in the area and utilise the clearest available ward boundaries, reflecting the existing settlement pattern in the area. We are therefore adopting the Council's proposed wards of Carrwood, Walton-le-Dale and Bamber Bridge North unaltered. Our proposed ward boundaries are illustrated on the large map at the rear of the report.

The Parished Area

Charnock, Kingsfold and Middleforth Green wards

60 The three wards of Charnock, Kingsfold and Middleforth Green are located within Penwortham parish in the north of the borough and return one, three and two councillors respectively. The number of electors per councillor is 6 per cent below the average in Charnock ward, 2 per cent above in Kingsfold ward and 17 per cent above in Middleforth Green ward (10 per cent above, 1 per cent below and 14 per cent above in 2004 respectively).

61 The Council proposed three new, two-member wards for the area currently covered by the three wards of Charnock, Kingsfold and Middleforth Green. The Council's proposed Charnock (J) ward would comprise the majority of the existing Charnock ward, along with an area of Kingsfold ward broadly west of Leyland Road and south of Studholme Avenue and Kingsfold Drive, with only an area of the existing ward west of Bee Lane forming part of a modified Kingsfold ward. West of this ward, the Council proposed a new Kingsfold ward broadly comprising the central part of the existing Kingsfold ward. The eastern part of the ward would form part of a modified Charnock ward and an area broadly west of Hill Road South would form part of a new Broad Oak (G) ward. The Council's modified Middleforth (I) ward would retain the existing eastern ward boundary (following the parish boundary), the southern boundary would remain broadly unchanged, while the northern boundary would be the borough boundary. Under the Council's proposals, Charnock, Kingsfold and Middleforth wards would have electoral variances of 9 per cent, 1 per cent and equal to the average respectively (7 per cent, 3 per cent and 3 per cent in 2004).

62 The North West Conservatives proposed an alternative warding pattern in the area, retaining the majority of the existing Kingsfold and Middleforth Green wards unchanged. The existing Charnock ward would form a ward along with part of Farington parish as noted below. Under the Conservatives' 2004 electorate, its proposed Kingsfold and Middleforth Green wards would have electoral variances of 3 per cent and 12 per cent, based on a council-size of 53-members.

63 We have carefully considered the Council's proposals in this area. We note that the ward boundaries proposed by the Council achieve improvements in electoral equality and broadly reflect the settlement pattern in the area. We do not judge that the North West Conservatives proposals achieve an acceptable level of electoral equality in the area. We therefore propose adopting the Council's proposals for Charnock, Middleforth and Kingsfold wards in our draft recommendations, with a number of minor boundary modifications to utilise more recognisable ground features in the area, which would affect no electors. Our proposals are illustrated in detail on the large map at the rear of the report.

Howick, Manor and Priory wards

64 The three wards of Howick, Manor and Priory each return two members and are presently over-represented by 8 per cent, 1 per cent and 9 per cent respectively (13 per cent, 5 per cent and 15 per cent in 2004). Each ward falls within Penwortham parish in the north of the borough.

65 The Council proposed three two-member wards in the west of Penwortham parish. Its Broad Oak ward would utilise the borough boundary and parish boundary as its northern and southern boundaries respectively. Its eastern boundary would run east of the existing boundary along Penwortham Way and would be coterminous with its proposed western boundaries for Middleforth and Kingsfold wards. The western ward boundary of Broad Oak ward would follow Liverpool Road, Cop Lane, Manor Lane, Manor Avenue and Birch Avenue before turning south to the parish boundary. The Council's proposed Whitefield (F) ward would utilise the western boundary of Broad Oak ward as its eastern and northern boundaries with Liverpool Road and the parish boundary forming its western and southern boundaries respectively. Castle (C) ward would comprise the remainder of Penwortham parish west of Liverpool Road. Under the Council's proposals, Broad Oak, Whitefield and Castle wards would have electoral variances of 6 per cent, 3 per cent and 10 per cent (all wards 3 per cent in 2004).

66 The North West Conservatives proposed broadly to retain the existing three wards unchanged, noting that "Priory would lose the unique local identity it currently enjoys if it were subject to change". Under the Conservatives' proposed council size of 53 members, Priory, Manor and Howick wards would have electoral variances in 2004 of 16 per cent, 6 per cent and 14 per cent.

67 We have carefully considered the proposals for these three wards in Penwortham. We are satisfied that the Borough Council's proposals achieve a high degree of electoral equality while reflecting the settlement pattern in the area and, where compatible with electoral equality and the statutory criteria, utilise clearly identifiable ward boundaries. We do not consider that the North West Conservatives' proposals in this area would achieve an acceptable level of electoral equality or be compatible with our proposed warding pattern elsewhere in the borough. We are therefore adopting the Borough Council's proposals unaltered in our draft recommendations, which are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Farington ward

68 The three-member Farington ward currently comprises the whole of Farington parish and has an electoral variance of 10 per cent (20 per cent in 2004).

69 The Council's proposals would create two, two-member wards with Farington East (U) ward broadly east of the railway line together with an area of the existing Leyland St Ambrose ward around Lever House Lane. Farington West (K) ward would comprise the western part of Farington ward. Under the Council's proposals, Farington East and Farington West wards would have electoral variances of 18 per cent and 1 per cent (equal to the average and 3 per cent in 2004 respectively).

70 The North West Conservatives proposed an alternative, "north - south" division of the existing ward with part of Farington parish forming a new ward along with an area of the existing Charnock ward; and the southern part of the parish would form a two-member Farington South ward. Under the Conservatives' proposals Farington South and Farington North & Charnock wards would have electoral variances of 10 per cent and 6 per cent respectively in 2004, based on a council size of 53-members.

71 We carefully examined the proposals for Farington. We consider that the Borough Council's use of the railway line forms a natural boundary within the parish, and facilitates a warding pattern which achieves a high degree of electoral equality. We are therefore including its proposals for Farington in our draft recommendations, subject to a minor boundary modification to continue to follow the centre of the railway line at the northern end of the parish. We do not judge that the North West Conservatives' proposals achieve an acceptable degree of electoral equality. The large map at the rear of the report illustrates our proposals.

Little Hoole & Much Hoole ward

72 The two-member ward of Little Hoole & Much Hoole currently comprises the two parishes of the same names and has an electoral variance of 3 per cent (unchanged in 2004).

73 The Borough Council proposed no change to Little Hoole & Much Hoole ward which would have an electoral variance of 1 per cent, both initially and in 2004 under our proposed 55-member council. The North West Conservatives also proposed retaining the existing Little Hoole & Much Hoole ward in its 53-member council proposals, although it proposed renaming the ward as Hoole.

74 We have considered the proposals for Little Hoole & Much Hoole ward. Under a council size of 55 members, we noted that the Council's proposal for no change would retain good levels of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. We are therefore proposing no change to the ward as part of our draft recommendations. We also propose retaining the existing ward name, Little Hoole & Much Hoole, as we consider this accurately reflects the composition of the ward.

Hutton & New Longton and Longton Central & West wards

75 The two western wards of Hutton & New Longton and Longton Central & West each currently return three councillors, and have electoral variances of 11 per cent (17 and 12 per cent in 2004 respectively). Hutton & New Longton ward currently comprises the whole of Hutton parish, together with East parish ward of Longton parish. The remaining West and Central parish wards of Longton parish form Longton Central & West ward. Both wards are located in the west of the borough.

76 The Borough Council proposed a reconfiguration of wards in this area, to provide a three-member Hutton & Longton (A) ward and a two-member New Longton (D) ward. The Council proposed that the boundary between the two wards should follow the Liverpool Road south before turning west to the south of properties on Ratten Lane, following a line broadly west of Fensway and field edges, then turning south to the parish boundary, west of Moor Lane. The proposed boundary would then follow the existing parish boundary along Longton Beck before turning south to follow the Longton by-pass to the southern parish ward boundary of Longton parish. Under the Borough Council's proposals, Hutton & Longton ward and New Longton ward would have electoral variances of 3 and 17 per cent respectively (1 per cent and 9 per cent respectively in 2004).

77 The Borough Council stated in its submission, however, that it would "prefer the boundary to be located along the centre line of the A59 [Longton By-Pass] ... as this would reflect the affiliation of the local communities more realistically". Under this alternative proposal, the electoral variances in Hutton & Longton and New Longton wards would be 15 per cent and 11 per cent in 2004.

78 The North West Conservatives' proposed a single-member Hutton ward which would be coterminous with Hutton parish and would, based on a council size of 53 members, have an electoral variance of 7 per cent in 2004 and two, two-member wards in Longton, Longton East and Longton West, with electoral variances of 22 per cent each in 2004. Hutton Parish Council did not support the Borough Council's proposed warding of Hutton parish which it considered would adversely impact upon community identities in the parish. Additionally, while it noted the possibility of a single-member Hutton ward, Hutton Parish Council noted the "advantages of multi-seat wards".

79 We have carefully examined all the submissions for the Hutton and Longton areas. We noted that the Borough Council's proposals would require the warding of Hutton parish, which is currently unwarded, and the re-warding of Longton parish. We do not ward a parish if a more suitable alternative can be found which achieves reasonable electoral equality and reflects the statutory criteria. We considered a range of alternatives in the Hutton and Longton areas, including the option that Hutton parish form a single-member ward and the parish of Longton form two, two-member wards. However, we judge that such a combination would only achieve acceptable levels of electoral equality at the expense of a worse reflection of the statutory criteria in Longton ward. We judge such a solution could not be justified in this instance. Equally, we do not consider that the North West Conservatives' proposals achieve an acceptable level of electoral equality. While we note the concerns of Hutton Parish Council, our proposals must attempt to

improve the electoral arrangements across the whole borough and we cannot, therefore, look at one area in isolation.

80 We have concluded, therefore, that the Borough Council's proposals in the Hutton and Longton areas achieve good levels of electoral equality, have reasonable regard to the settlement pattern in the area and satisfactorily reflect the statutory criteria overall. Additionally, the alternative proposals for the area would not, we judge, achieve a comparable balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Accordingly, we are adopting the Council's proposed Hutton & Longton and New Longton wards as part of our draft recommendations. However, we do not consider that the Council's alternative proposal to utilise the entire length of the A59 would achieve an acceptable level of electoral equality. Our proposals for Hutton & Longton and New Longton wards are shown in detail on Map A2 at the back of the report.

Samlesbury & Cuerdale ward

81 The single-member Samlesbury & Cuerdale ward lies in the far north-east of the borough. The ward comprises the two parishes of Cuerdale and Samlesbury and has the worst electoral variance in the borough, at 36 per cent fewer electors than the borough average (39 per cent fewer in 2004).

82 The Borough Council proposed extending the existing Samlesbury & Cuerdale ward south, creating a two-member ward, additionally including an area of the existing Walton-le-Dale ward broadly north of the River Darwen. The Council also proposed that the Coupe Green area (polling district WBA) of All Saints ward should form part of a modified Samlesbury ward. Under the Borough Council's proposals, Samlesbury ward would have an electoral variance of 11 per cent (4 per cent in 2004). The North West Conservatives made the same proposals as the Borough Council in this area.

83 Ribble Valley Conservative Association proposed a modification to the Borough Council's proposed Samlesbury ward, as detailed earlier in this report, with the Higher Walton area (polling district WA) forming part of Samlesbury ward rather than the Coupe Green area (polling district WBA). Under this proposal, Samlesbury ward would have an electoral variance of 8 per cent (2 per cent in 2004).

84 We have carefully considered the representations we received. We noted that change in the warding pattern was inevitable in the Samlesbury area, given the significant electoral imbalances in the area. As mentioned above, we are recommending adopting Ribble Valley Conservative Association's modification to the Borough Council's All Saints ward (which we propose renaming Gregson Lane ward), and therefore we are also adopting Ribble Valley Conservative Association's modification as it applies to Samlesbury ward, again to reflect the settlement pattern and statutory criteria in the area. Our proposals for Samlesbury ward are shown in more detail on Map A3 at the back of the report.

Electoral Cycle

85 At Stage One we received no proposals on the electoral cycle of the borough. Accordingly, we make no recommendation for change to the present system of whole-council elections every four years.

Conclusions

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

- there should be an increase in council size from 54 to 55 members;
- there should be 27 wards, five more than at present;
- the boundaries of 21 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of five wards;
- elections should continue to be held for the whole council.

87 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the Borough Council's proposals. We propose a number of minor boundary modifications to utilise more recognisable ground features, which would not adversely impact upon electoral equality, as noted in the main body of this report. However, we propose to depart substantially from the Borough Council's proposals in the following areas:

- In the north-east of the borough, we propose modifying the Council's proposed Samlesbury & Cuerdale and All Saints wards, so that the Higher Walton area of the existing All Saints ward would form part of our proposed Samlesbury ward and the Coupe Green area of All Saints ward would form part of our proposed Gregson Lane ward.
- In consultation with officers at the Council, we are proposing our own ward names to complement the Council's proposals and our modifications.

88 Figure 5 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1999 electorate figures and with forecast electorates for the year 2004.

Figure 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	1999 electorate		2004 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	54	55	54	55
Number of wards	22	27	22	27
Average number of electors per councillor	1,495	1,468	1,524	1,496
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	5	6	13	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	1	2	3	0

89 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for South Ribble Borough Council would result in a slight increase in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from five to six. However, by 2004 no ward is forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough under our proposals, whereas 13 wards would vary by more than 10 per cent by 2004 should the present arrangements remain unchanged.

Draft Recommendation
 South Ribble Borough Council should comprise 55 councillors serving 27 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover. Elections should continue to be held for the whole council.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

90 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply, as far as is reasonably practicable, with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Farington, Hutton, Longton and Penwortham to reflect the proposed borough wards.

91 The parish of Farington is currently served by eight councillors representing two wards: North (four councillors) and South (four councillors). For borough warding purposes we have adopted the Borough Council’s proposal, with a minor modification, that Farington parish should form two borough wards: Farington West and Farington East. These recommendations require

consequential parish warding. Neither the Borough nor the Parish Council submitted proposals for revised parishing arrangements and therefore we are formulating our own draft recommendations.

92 We recommend that the parish of Farington should comprise two parish wards: Farington East (which would be coterminous with the proposed borough ward of Farington East) and Farington West (which would be coterminous with the proposed borough ward of Farington West). Each ward would return four parish councillors.

Draft Recommendation
Farington Parish Council should comprise eight councillors, as at present, representing two wards: East (returning four councillors) and West (four). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

93 The parish of Hutton is currently served by seven councillors and is not warded. The Parish Council in its submission did not support Hutton parish forming parts of two borough wards, as proposed by the Borough Council. However, we judge that to achieve reasonable electoral equality and have regard to the statutory criteria, we should recommend the Borough Council’s proposed borough warding pattern in Hutton. The Borough Council did not propose any parish warding to complement its proposed borough warding in Hutton, and therefore we are putting forward our own recommendations.

94 We propose that Hutton parish should comprise two parish wards, East and West, which would be coterminous with the proposed borough wards, and return four and three councillors respectively. Although there is no statutory requirement for electoral equality at parish ward level, we note that Hutton would form two parish wards of broadly equal size under our proposals, and we particularly welcome views on the appropriate number of councillors for the parish during Stage Three.

Draft Recommendation
Hutton Parish Council should comprise seven councillors, as at present, representing two wards: East (returning four councillors) and West (three councillors). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed borough wards, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

95 The parish of Longton is currently divided into three parish wards: East (returning four councillors), Central (two) and West (six). The Borough Council proposed modified borough warding in the parish, which we are adopting in our draft recommendations, so consequential parish warding is required. However, neither the Borough Council nor the Parish Council submitted proposals for revised parishing arrangements, and therefore we are formulating our own.

96 We recommend that the parish of Longton should comprise two parish wards: West ward (comprising that part of the parish within the proposed borough ward of Hutton & Longton) and East ward (comprising that part of the parish within the proposed borough ward of New Longton). We recommend that East parish ward should return five parish councillors and that West parish ward should return seven parish councillors.

Draft Recommendation
Longton Parish Council should comprise 12 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: East ward (returning five councillors) and West ward (returning seven councillors). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundary, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

97 The parish of Penwortham is currently served by 17 town councillors representing six town council wards: Charnock, Kingsfold, Middleforth Green, Howick, Manor and Priory. Each ward currently returns three councillors, apart from Charnock which returns two councillors. Each town ward is currently coterminous with a borough ward of the same name. The Borough Council did not put forward proposals to re-ward the parish to reflect its proposed borough wards in the area. Penwortham Town Council stated its preference for an increase in the number of town councillors from 17 to 18 in order that the existing Charnock town ward should return three town councillors.

98 As we have adopted the Borough Council’s proposed borough warding pattern for Penwortham in our draft recommendations, we must also ward the parish of Penwortham in order to reflect our proposed borough warding pattern. We therefore propose six new parish wards which would be coterminous with our proposed borough wards and, as at present, would also carry the same names as the borough wards. We are content to reflect the proposals from Penwortham Town Council that each of the parish wards in Penwortham should return three town councillors.

Draft Recommendation
Penwortham Town Council should comprise 18 councillors, one more than at present, representing six wards: Broad Oak, Castle, Charnock, Kingsfold, Middleforth and Whitefields. Each ward should return three councillors. The boundaries between the wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of this report.

99 We are not proposing any change to the electoral cycle of parish and town councils in the borough.

Draft Recommendation

For parish and town councils, whole-council elections should continue to take place every four years, on the same cycle as that of the Borough Council.

100 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for South Ribble and welcome comments from the Borough Council and others relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, electoral cycle, ward names, and parish and town council electoral arrangements. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

Map 2: The Commission’s Draft Recommendations for South Ribble

5 NEXT STEPS

101 We are putting forward draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for South Ribble. Now it is up to the people of the area. We will take fully into account all representations received by 5 June 2000. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment at the offices of the Commission and the Borough Council, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission after the end of the consultation period.

102 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

Review Manager
South Ribble Review
Local Government Commission for England
Dolphyn Court
10/11 Great Turnstile
London WC1V 7JU

Fax: 020 7404 6142

E-mail: reviews@lgce.gov.uk

www.lgce.gov.uk

103 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to the Secretary of State, who cannot make an order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after he receives them.

APPENDIX A

Draft Recommendations for South Ribble: Detailed Mapping

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

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

Map A2 illustrates the proposed boundary between Longton & Hutton and New Longton wards.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed boundary in Gregson Lane and Samlesbury wards.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for the Central area of the borough.

Map A1: Draft Recommendations for South Ribble: Key Map.

Map A2: Proposed Boundary between Longton & Hutton and New Longton wards.

Map A3: Proposed boundary between Gregson Lane and Samlesbury wards.

APPENDIX B

The Statutory Provisions

Local Government Act 1992: the Commission's Role

1 Section 13(2) of the Local Government Act 1992 places a duty on the Commission to undertake periodic electoral reviews of each principal local authority area in England, and to make recommendations to the Secretary of State. Section 13(3) provides that, so far as reasonably practicable, the first such review of any area should be undertaken not less than 10 years, and not more than 15 years, after this Commission's predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), submitted an initial electoral review report on the county within which that area, or the larger part of the area, was located. This timetable applies to districts within shire and metropolitan counties, although not to South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear¹. Nor does the timetable apply to London boroughs; the 1992 Act is silent on the timing of periodic electoral reviews in Greater London. Nevertheless, these areas will be included in the Commission's review programme. The Commission has no power to review the electoral arrangements of the City of London.

2 Under section 13(5) of the 1992 Act, the Commission is required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State for any changes to the electoral arrangements within the areas of English principal authorities as appear desirable to it, having regard to the need to:

- (a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
- (b) secure effective and convenient local government.

3 In reporting to the Secretary of State, the Commission may make recommendations for such changes to electoral arrangements as are specified in section 14(4) of the 1992 Act. In relation to principal authorities, these are:

- the total number of councillors to be elected to the council;
- the number and boundaries of electoral areas (wards or divisions);
- the number of councillors to be elected for each electoral area, and the years in which they are to be elected; and
- the name of any electoral area.

¹ The Local Government Boundary Commission did not submit reports on the counties of South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear.

4 Unlike the LGBC, the Commission may also make recommendations for changes in respect of electoral arrangements within parish and town council areas. Accordingly, in relation to parish or town councils within a principal authority's area, the Commission may make recommendations relating to:

- the number of councillors;
- the need for parish wards;
- the number and boundaries of any such wards;
- the number of councillors to be elected for any such ward or, in the case of a common parish, for each parish; and
- the name of any such ward.

5 In conducting the review, section 27 of the 1992 Act requires the Commission to comply, so far as is practicable, with the rules given in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 for the conduct of electoral reviews.

Local Government Act 1972: Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements

6 By virtue of section 27 of the Local Government Act 1992, in undertaking a review of electoral arrangements the Commission is required to comply so far as is reasonably practicable with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. For ease of reference, those provisions of Schedule 11 which are relevant to this review are set out below.

7 In relation to shire districts:

Having regard to any changes in the number or distribution of the local government electors of the district likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration (by the Secretary of State or the Commission):

- (a) the ratio of the number of local government electors to the number of councillors to be elected shall be, as nearly as may be, the same in every ward in the district;
- (b) in a district every ward of a parish council shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district;
- (c) in a district every parish which is not divided into parish wards shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district.

8 The Schedule also provides that, subject to (a)–(c) above, regard should be had to:

- (d) the desirability of fixing ward boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and

(e) any local ties which would be broken by the fixing of any particular ward boundary.

9 The Schedule provides that, in considering whether a parish should be divided into wards, regard shall be had to whether:

(f) the number or distribution of electors in the parish is such as to make a single election of parish councillors impracticable or inconvenient; and

(g) it is desirable that any area or areas of the parish should be separately represented on the parish council.

10 Where it is decided to divide any such parish into parish wards, in considering the size and boundaries of the wards and fixing the number of parish councillors to be elected for each ward, regard shall be had to:

(h) any change in the number or distribution of electors of the parish which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration;

(i) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and

(k) any local ties which will be broken by the fixing of any particular boundaries.

11 Where it is decided not to divide the parish into parish wards, in fixing the number of councillors to be elected for each parish regard shall be had to the number and distribution of electors of the parish and any change which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the fixing of the number of parish councillors.