

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Stockton-on-Tees

May 2002

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CONTENTS

	page
WHAT IS THE BOUNDARY COMMITTEE FOR ENGLAND?	5
SUMMARY	7
1 INTRODUCTION	13
2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS	15
3 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED	19
4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	21
5 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?	37
APPENDIX	
Code of Practice on Written Consultation	39

A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for Stockton-on-Tees is inserted inside the back cover of this report.

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 their implementation.

Members of the Committee are:

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

Archie Gall (Director)

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

SUMMARY

The Local Government Commission for England (LGCE) began a review of the electoral arrangements for Stockton-on-Tees on 16 October 2001. As a consequence of the transfer of functions referred to earlier, it falls to us to complete the work of the LGCE.

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

We found that the current arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Stockton-on-Tees:

- **in 22 of the 30 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and 15 wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 22 wards and by more than 20 per cent in 16 wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 89-90) are that:

- **Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council should have 55 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 26 wards, instead of 30 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of four.**

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

- **In 23 of the proposed 26 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to improve further with the number of electors per councillor in 25 wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2006.**

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

- **new warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Grindon, Thornaby and Wolviston;**
- **new warding arrangements and an increase in the number of parish councillors representing Ingleby Barwick Parish Council.**

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

- **We will consult on these proposals for eight weeks from 14 May 2002. We take this consultation very seriously. We may decide to move away from our draft recommendations in the light of comments or suggestions that we receive. It is**

therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.

- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission which will be responsible for implementing change to local authority electoral arrangements.**
- **The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. It will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to us at the address below by 8 July 2002:

**Team Leader
Stockton-on-Tees Review
Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London
SW1P 2HW**

Table 1: Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Billingham Central	2	part of Charltons ward; part of Glebe ward; part of St Aidens ward	Large map
2	Billingham East	2	part of Charltons ward; part of Grange ward; part of Marsh House ward	Large map
3	Billingham North	3	part of Wolviston parish (the proposed Wolviston East parish ward); part of Marsh House ward	Large map
4	Billingham South	2	part of Charltons ward; St Cuthberts ward	Large map
5	Billingham West	2	part of Grindon parish (the proposed Grindon East parish ward); part of Glebe ward; part of Northfield ward; part of St Aidans ward	Large map
6	Egglescliffe & Preston	3	the parishes of Aislaby, Egglescliffe, Newsham and Preston-on-Tees; part of Parkfield ward	Large map
7	Ingleby Barwick East	2	the parishes of Hilton and Maltby; part of Ingleby Barwick parish (the proposed Ingleby Barwick East parish ward)	Large map
8	Ingleby Barwick West	3	part of Ingleby Barwick parish (the proposed Ingleby Barwick West parish ward)	Large map
9	Northern Parishes	1	part of Grindon parish (the proposed Grindon West parish ward); part of Wolviston parish (the proposed Wolviston West parish ward)	Large map
10	Norton North	2	part of Blue Hall ward; part of Norton ward	Large map
11	Norton South	2	part of Blue Hall ward; part of Norton ward; part of Portract & Tilery ward	Large map
12	Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree	2	part of Bishopsgarth ward; part of Elm Tree ward; part of Hardwick ward	Large map
13	Stockton Fairfield	2	part of Bishopsgarth ward; part of Elm Tree ward; part of Hartburn ward	Large map
14	Stockton Glebe	2	part of Glebe ward	Large map
15	Stockton Grangefield	2	Fairfield ward; part of Grangefield ward	Large map
16	Stockton Hardwick	2	part of Mile House ward; part of Newton ward; part of Hardwick ward	Large map
17	Stockton Hartburn	2	part of Hartburn ward	Large map
18	Stockton Newton	2	part of Grangefield ward; part of Newtown ward; Roseworth ward	Large map
19	Stockton Parkfield & Oxbridge	2	part of Grangefield ward; part of Parkfield ward	Large map
20	Stockton Roseworth	2	part of Mile House ward; part of Newtown ward	Large map

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
21	Stockton Town Centre	2	part of Parkfield ward; part of Portrack & Tilery ward	Large map
22	Thornaby North	3	part of Thornaby parish (the proposed Thornaby North parish ward)	Large map
23	Thornaby South	2	part of Thornaby parish (the proposed Thornaby South parish ward)	Large map
24	Thornaby West	2	part of Thornaby parish (the proposed Thornaby West parish ward)	Large map
25	Western Parishes	1	the parishes of Carlton, Elton, Longnewton, Redmarshall and Stillington & Whitton	Map 2 and large map
26	Yarm	3	the parishes of Castlelevington, Kirklevington and Yarm	Map 2 and large map

Notes: 1 The areas of Billingham and Stockton are the only unparished parts of the borough.

2 Map 2 and the large map in the back of the report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.

Table 2: Draft Recommendations for Stockton-on-Tees

	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	Billingham Central	2	5,415	2,708	7	5,215	2,608	2
2	Billingham East	2	5,084	2,542	1	4,898	2,449	-4
3	Billingham North	3	7,252	2,417	-4	7,491	2,497	-2
4	Billingham South	2	5,037	2,519	0	4,878	2,439	-5
5	Billingham West	2	5,054	2,527	0	4,866	2,433	-5
6	Egglescliffe & Preston	3	7,967	2,656	5	8,150	2,717	6
7	Ingleby Barwick East	2	3,492	1,746	-31	5,431	2,716	6
8	Ingleby Barwick West	3	7,064	2,355	-7	8,074	2,691	5
9	Northern Parishes	1	1,734	1,734	-31	2,226	2,226	-13
10	Norton North	2	5,094	2,547	1	5,084	2,542	-1
11	Norton South	2	5,311	2,656	5	5,193	2,597	1
12	Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree	2	5,100	2,550	1	5,073	2,537	-1
13	Stockton Fairfield	2	5,073	2,537	1	4,885	2,443	-5
14	Stockton Glebe	2	5,137	2,569	2	5,218	2,609	2
15	Stockton Grangefield	2	4,934	2,467	-2	4,937	2,469	-4
16	Stockton Hardwick	2	5,196	2,598	3	5,214	2,607	2
17	Stockton Hartburn	2	5,699	2,850	13	5,489	2,745	7
18	Stockton Newton	2	5,234	2,617	4	5,011	2,506	-2
19	Stockton Parkfield & Oxbridge	2	5,055	2,528	0	5,353	2,677	5
20	Stockton Roseworth	2	5,460	2,730	8	5,259	2,630	3
21	Stockton Town Centre	2	4,906	2,453	-3	5,397	2,699	5
22	Thornaby North	3	7,497	2,499	-1	7,208	2,403	-6
23	Thornaby South	2	5,134	2,567	2	4,947	2,474	-3

	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 %
24	Thornaby West	2	5,027	2,514	0	4,918	2,459	-4
25	Western Parishes	1	2,494	2,494	-1	2,460	2,460	-4
26	Yarm	3	8,123	2,708	7	7,892	2,631	3
	Totals	55	138,573	-	-	140,767	-	-
	Averages	-	-	2,520	-	-	2,559	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's submission.

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains the proposals for the electoral arrangements for the borough of Stockton-on-Tees, on which we are now consulting. We are now reviewing Stockton-on-Tees as part of the 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 Stockton-on-Tees's last review was carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which reported to the Secretary of State in November 1975 (Report no. 97). Since undertaking that review, Stockton-on-Tees has become a unitary authority on 1 April 1996.

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:
 - (a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
 - (b) secure effective and convenient local government; and
 - (c) achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of Stockton-on-Tees was conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (LGCE, fifth edition published in October 2001). 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 and town councils in the borough.

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

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

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

Table 3: Stages of the Review

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

9 Stage One began on 16 October 2001, when the LGCE wrote to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. It also notified Cleveland Police Authority, the local authority associations, Cleveland Local Councils Association, parish and town councils in the borough, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the Cleveland and Yorkshire North Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. It placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 7 January 2002.

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

11 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 14 May 2002 and will end on 8 July 2002, involves publishing the draft proposals in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.**

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

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

13 The borough of Stockton-on-Tees is situated in the heart of Teeside and is bounded by the borough of Middlesbrough to the east, the borough of Darlington to the west and the borough of Hartlepool to the north. The borough of Stockton-on-Tees covers an area of 20,020 hectares and has a population of 179,000. It has three principal urban settlements, Billingham in the north of the borough, Stockton in the centre of the borough and Thornaby in the east of the borough. Stockton-on-Tees is predominantly urban in character and contains 17 parishes primarily in the south and the west of the borough.

14 The electorate of the borough is 138,573 (February 2001). The Council presently has 55 members who are elected from 30 wards, 25 of which are relatively urban in character with the remainder being predominantly rural. Twenty-five of the wards are each represented by two councillors and five are single-member wards. The Council is elected as a whole every four years.

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'.

16 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,520 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,559 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 22 of the 30 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, 15 wards by more than 20 per cent and six wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Ingleby Barwick ward, where the councillor represents 356 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Stockton-on-Tees

Table 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Bishopsgarth	2	6,146	3,073	22	5,920	2,960	16
2	Blue Hall	2	4,564	2,282	-9	4,423	2,212	-14
3	Charltons	2	3,591	1,796	-29	3,458	1,729	-32
4	Egglescliffe	2	6,386	3,193	27	6,621	3,311	29
5	Elm Tree	1	3,816	3,816	51	3,675	3,675	52
6	Fairfield	2	3,883	1,942	-23	3,925	1,963	-23
7	Glebe	2	5,137	2,569	2	5,218	2,609	2
8	Grange	2	3,024	1,512	-40	2,914	1,457	-43
9	Grangefield	2	3,891	1,946	-23	3,746	1,873	-27
10	Hardwick	2	3,329	1,665	-34	3,483	1,742	-32
11	Hartburn	2	5,452	2,726	8	5,251	2,626	3
12	Ingleby Barwick	1	11,486	11,486	356	14,464	14,464	465
13	Mandale	2	4,909	2,455	-3	4,715	2,358	-8
14	Marsh House	2	6,254	3,127	24	6,487	3,244	27
15	Mile House	2	4,293	2,147	-15	4,228	2,114	-17
16	Newton	2	4,208	2,104	-16	4,023	2,012	-21
17	Northfield	2	3,795	1,898	-25	3,655	1,828	-29
18	Norton	2	4,807	2,404	-5	4,842	2,421	-5
19	Parkfield	2	4,574	2,287	-9	5,036	2,518	-2
20	Portrack & Tilery	2	4,240	2,120	-16	4,625	2,313	-10
21	Preston	1	2,435	2,435	-3	2,378	2,378	-7
22	Roseworth	2	3,902	1,951	-23	3,759	1,880	-27
23	St Aidan's	2	3,739	1,870	-26	3,600	1,800	-30
24	St Cuthbert's	2	4,493	2,247	-11	4,354	2,177	-15
25	Stainsby	2	4,258	2,129	-15	4,080	2,040	-20
26	Victoria	2	4,419	2,210	-12	4,255	2,128	-17
27	Village	2	4,072	2,036	-19	4,023	2,012	-21
28	Whitton	1	3,559	3,559	41	4,021	4,021	57

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 %
29 Wolviston	1	2,718	2,718	8	2,661	2,661	4
30 Yarm	2	7,193	3,597	43	6,927	3,464	35
Totals	55	138,573	-	-	140,767	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,520	-	-	2,559	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Stockton-on-Tees 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 Grange ward were relatively over-represented by 40 per cent, while electors in Ingleby Barwick ward were substantially under-represented by 356 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

17 At the start of the review the LGCE invited members of the public and other interested parties to write to it giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

18 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the LGCE visited the area and met officers and members from the Borough Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. Seven representations were received during Stage One, including two borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the Borough Council.

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

19 The Borough Council put forward two schemes, Option 1 and Option 2. Under Option 1 the Council proposed a council size of 57, an increase of two councillors, and 27 wards, a net reduction of three. The Borough Council proposed a reconfiguration of all the existing wards and proposed a mixed pattern of wards. By 2006 five wards are forecast to have an electoral variance over 10 per cent from the borough average. Under Option 2 the Council proposed a council size of 56, an increase of one councillor and 25 wards, a net reduction of five. The Borough Council proposed a reconfiguration of all but one of the existing wards, and a pattern of two- and three-member wards. By 2006 two wards are forecast to have an electoral variance over 10 per cent from the borough average.

20 The primary differences between Option 1 and Option 2 are the warding arrangements for the parishes in the north, west and in the south of the borough and in the western wards in Stockton town itself. The Borough Council undertook a consultation exercise prior to the submission of its proposals, evidence of which was included in its submission.

The Conservative Group

21 The Conservatives stated that their submission was based on a council size of “approximately” 55 members. They broadly supported the Borough Council’s Option 1 in the Wolviston area and Option 2 in the remainder of the wards in the borough. The Conservatives, although generally in favour of the Borough Council’s Option 2 in the Stockton town centre wards, proposed several amendments to the central and western Stockton town wards.

The Labour Group

22 The Labour Group generally supported the Borough Council’s Option 1.

The Liberal Democrats

23 The Liberal Democrats expressed a preference for the Borough Council’s Option 1 in the Wolviston area and Option 2 in the remainder of the borough. However, in the Stockton town area they stated that they were unable to offer their full support to either Option 1 or Option 2 and submitted their own proposals based on four three-member wards.

Parish Councils

24 We received representations from one parish council. Ingleby Barwick Parish Council expressed support for the Borough Council’s proposals, under Option 1 and Option 2, to divide the parish between two borough wards. It also proposed that the parish council be served by 12 parish councillors serving two parish wards.

Other Representations

25 We received a further two representations, from a community group and a local resident. Norton Grange Community Forum opposed the Borough Council's proposals in the Norton area. One local resident expressed a preference for warding the parish of Wolviston.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

26 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Stockton-on-Tees and welcome comments from all those interested relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, 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.

27 As described earlier, our prime aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Stockton-on-Tees is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the identities and interests 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”.

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

29 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.

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

Electorate Forecasts

31 Since 1975 there has been a 17 per cent increase in the electorate of Stockton-on-Tees borough. The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 2 per cent from 138,573 to 140,767 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in Ingleby Barwick. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council 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.

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

Council Size

33 Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council presently has 55 members. The Borough Council stated in its submission that “no community has been divided and natural boundaries have been used wherever possible” resulting in an increase of two councillors under Option 1 and an increase of one councillor under Option 2. As stated in our *Guidance*, any proposals relating to council size, whether these are for an increase, a reduction or no change, should be supported by

evidence and argumentation. We note the proposed increase in council size of two and one under the Borough Council's Option 1 and Option 2 respectively but also note that the arguments in support of their increases, or indeed any council size, are weak. We acknowledge the Conservative's comment that "the Council remains with approximately" 55 members. We also note that on current and the 2006 projected electorate, the parish of Ingleby Barwick is entitled to five borough councillors and not six as the Council proposed. The additional councillor appears to have been allocated in the anticipation of development scheduled to take place after 2006. We have therefore decided to base our draft recommendations on Option 2, as a starting point, as it gives better electoral equality than Option 1. We have decided to retain the current council size of 55 as this further improves upon the electoral equality achieved under Option 2 and gives the correct allocation of councillors throughout the borough.

34 Having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we conclude that the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 55 members.

Electoral Arrangements

35 We have considered carefully the representations received at Stage One, including both borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council. From these representations some considerations have emerged which have assisted us in preparing our draft recommendations.

36 We note that both borough-wide schemes from the Council would provide for a significant improvement in the level of electoral equality for the borough as a whole. However, under Option 1 five wards are forecast to have an electoral variance over 10 per cent from the borough average by 2006, while under Option 2 this applies to only two wards. The differences between the two schemes relates to the warding arrangements in the Ingleby Barwick area, their effect on the surrounding parishes, in the Wolviston area, in the western parishes area and in the wards in the west of the Stockton town area. In particular, while both Option 1 and Option 2 propose two three-member wards covering the Ingleby Barwick area, Option 1 transfers from the existing Ingleby Barwick ward the parishes of Hilton and Maltby, and Option 2 retains the parishes of Hilton and Maltby in the proposed Ingleby Barwick West ward.

37 In relation to the Wolviston area, Option 1 divides Wolviston parish between the proposed Billingham North and Northern Parishes wards, while Option 2 retains Wolviston parish in the proposed Billingham North ward. The proposed warding arrangements for the Wolviston area, under both options, have a consequential effect on the warding arrangements of the parishes in the north and in the west of the borough. Under Option 1, the Borough Council proposed two single-member wards to cover this area: Northern Parishes ward and Western Parishes ward. Under Option 2, however, the Borough Council proposed a two-member Western Parishes ward containing the parishes in the north and in the west of the borough.

38 In relation to the proposed warding arrangements in the west of the town of Stockton, both Option 1 and Option 2 propose three two-member wards covering the existing Bishopsgarth, Elm Tree and Fairfield wards but with minor boundary amendments to reflect community identity. The Borough Council stated that in this particular area of Stockton it proved difficult to identify clear communities "particularly as the residents themselves have a view based on personal preference rather than geographic or historic evidence". As a result, it argued that Option 1 and Option 2 represent the "best compromise" that could be achieved, identifying "clear communities by estates". We also note the Conservatives' proposals in the town of Stockton. The Conservatives proposed 12 two-member wards in the town area, based largely on the Borough Council's proposals under Option 2. They put forward four minor boundary amendments, affecting six of the Borough Council's proposed wards in the town, and stated that the proposed amendments "more appropriately distinguish the communities" in the area.

39 The Liberal Democrats proposed four three-member wards in the Stockton town area and stated that “three-member wards provide the only solution for a distribution of wards that keep together natural communities”. The Borough Council also proposed a number of parish boundary amendments, affecting no or few electors, to reflect firm ground detail. Where the Borough Council has proposed amendments to parish boundaries which would result in insufficient electors to sustain a viable parish ward, we have retained the existing parish boundary. Such amendments to the external boundaries of parishes cannot be dealt with under this review but can be considered by the Borough Council in a separate parish review, under the Local Government and Rating Act 1997, following this PER.

40 As previously stated, we noted that the Borough Council included evidence of local consultation in its submission; we also noted the absence of local consultation in the Liberal Democrats’ scheme for warding arrangements in Stockton town. We also noted that under the Conservatives’ scheme two of their proposed amendments to the Borough Council’s warding arrangements would affect no electors and two of their proposed amendments would worsen overall electoral equality in the town wards. We also note the degree of local support for the Borough Council’s Option 2. We have therefore decided to base our draft recommendations on Option 2, as a starting point, as it gives better electoral equality than Option 1. Under Option 2 however, the proposed Western Parishes ward would have an electoral variance of 20 per cent by 2006. We have therefore decided to adopt the Option 1 proposals in this area because it offers a better reflection of the statutory criteria.

41 However, to improve electoral equality further and having regard for local community identities and interests, we are moving away from the Borough Council’s proposals in six areas. In particular, in the Billingham and Ingleby Barwick areas we propose boundary modifications to further improve electoral equality. We also propose three minor boundary amendments to the Stockton town wards, two amendments to better reflect community identity and one amendment to improve electoral equality. In the Thornaby area we propose two minor amendments to better reflect community identities and interests. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Eggescliffe, Northfield, Preston, Whitton and Wolviston wards;
- (b) Charltons, Grange, Marsh House, St Aidan’s and St Cuthbert’s wards;
- (c) Blue Hall, Glebe, Norton, Parkfield and Portrack & Tilery wards;
- (d) Bishopsgarth, Elm Tree, Hardwick, Mile House, Newton and Roseworth wards;
- (e) Fairfield, Grangefield and Hartburn wards;
- (f) Mandale, Stainsby, Victoria and Village wards;
- (g) Ingleby Barwick and Yarm wards.

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

Eggescliffe, Northfield, Preston, Whitton and Wolviston wards

43 The wards of Eggescliffe, Preston and Whitton comprise the parished area of the borough running from the north to the southern boundary of the borough. The two-member Eggescliffe ward, comprising the parish of the ward name, is currently 27 per cent under-represented (29 per cent more by 2006). The single-member Preston ward, comprising the parishes of Aislaby, Elton, Longnewton, Newsham and Preston-on-Tees, is currently over-represented, with 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (7 per cent fewer by 2006). The single-member Whitton ward, comprising the parishes of Carlton, Grindon, Redmarshall and Stillington & Whitton, is currently 41 per cent under-represented (57 per cent more by 2006).

44 The unparished two-member Northfield ward, comprising part of an area known locally as Billingham, and single-member Wolviston ward which is coterminous with the parish of Wolviston, both share a western boundary with the parish of Grindon. At present the wards of

Northfield and Wolviston have 25 per cent fewer and 8 per cent more electors than the borough average respectively (29 per cent fewer and 4 per cent more by 2006).

45 At Stage One we received four representations in relation to this area. The Borough Council proposed a new three-member Egglecliffe & Preston ward and a new two-member Billingham West ward which were the same under Option 1 and Option 2 of its Stage One submission. Egglecliffe & Preston ward would contain the parishes of Aislaby, Egglecliffe, Newsham and Preston-on-Tees. The Council also proposed transferring from the existing Parkfield ward an area containing 43 electors to its proposed Egglecliffe & Preston ward. The new Billingham West ward would be based on the existing Northfield ward. The Borough Council also proposed transferring from Grindon parish an area containing 942 electors to its proposed Billingham West ward. The Borough Council also proposed extending southwards, the southern boundary of the existing Northfield ward to provide for a boundary which is tied to firm ground detail. This boundary modification would not affect any electors.

46 In the remainder of the area, Option 1 and Option 2 of the Borough Council's proposals put forward different warding arrangements. Under Option 1 the Borough Council proposed a new single-member Northern Parishes ward and a new single-member Western Parishes ward. The proposed Northern Parishes ward would contain Grindon parish and part of Wolviston parish, Wolviston Village. The Borough Council proposed transferring from the existing Wolviston ward the Wolviston Village area containing 714 electors, to its proposed Northern Parishes ward. The Borough Council proposed that the remainder of the existing Wolviston ward form part of a new Billingham North ward, discussed in more detail later. The proposed Western Parishes ward would contain the parishes of Carlton, Redmarshall and Stillington & Whitton, currently in Whitton ward, and the parishes of Elton and Longnewton, currently in Preston ward. Under Option 1 Northern Parishes and Western Parishes wards would contain 29 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, improving to 10 per cent fewer and equal to the average electors per councillor by 2006.

47 Under Option 2 the Borough Council proposed a new two-member Western Parishes ward containing the parishes of Carlton, Redmarshall, Stillington & Whitton and part of Grindon parish currently in Whitton ward and the parishes of Elton and Longnewton currently in Preston ward. The Borough Council proposed that the existing Wolviston ward form part of a new three-member Billingham North ward. Under Option 2 the proposed Western Parishes ward would contain 29 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (20 per cent fewer by 2006). The Borough Council stated that in the case of Wolviston, Option 1 retains the rural area of Wolviston parish in a rural ward and provides for better electoral equality than under Option 2. Under Option 2, however, the Borough Council argued that the rural area of Wolviston parish is "so close to the urban area of Billingham" that it could be considered part of Billingham.

48 The Conservatives stated that Wolviston Village is "predominantly of rural character" and should therefore be included in a rural ward. They argued that the creation of one large rural ward running the length of the borough, as under Option 2, would be "far too extensive for appropriate representation" and gave their support to the Borough Council's Option 1 in this area. The Conservatives also expressed support for the Borough Council's proposals in the Egglecliffe and Preston areas. The Labour Group expressed broad support for the Borough Council's Option 1 in the Western and Northern Parishes wards and stated that "the creation of a very large ward would not be conducive to a sense of identity or to good communications". The Labour Group also expressed support for the Borough Council's Option 1 in the Billingham area.

49 The Liberal Democrats broadly supported the Borough Council's Option 1 for the proposed Western Parishes and Northern Parishes wards. They stated that although the parish of Wolviston could be considered as part of the Billingham area, the proposed two-member Western Parishes ward put forward under the Borough Council's Option 2 was "far too big and unwieldy to be properly served by two councillors". The Liberal Democrats also expressed

broad support for the Borough Council's proposed Egglecliffe & Preston ward but proposed two minor boundary modifications to better reflect community identity. The Liberal Democrats proposed dividing Longnewton parish between the Borough Council's proposed Egglecliffe & Preston and Western Parishes wards. They proposed transferring the southern part of Longnewton parish, the area south of Burnwood Beck and west of Longnewton Lane, from the Borough Council's proposed Western Parishes ward to the proposed Egglecliffe & Preston ward. They stated that if the electors in this area were included in the same borough ward as the remainder of Longnewton parish, their only access to the Western Parishes ward would be through the proposed Egglecliffe & Preston ward or through the neighbouring borough of Darlington. The Liberal Democrats also put forward an amendment to the northern boundary of the proposed Egglecliffe & Preston ward, to provide for a boundary which is tied to firm ground detail.

50 We have carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One and note the local support for the Borough Council's proposed Egglecliffe & Preston ward which is identical under Option 1 and Option 2. While we note the Liberal Democrats' proposed amendments to the Borough Council's Egglecliffe & Preston ward, we also note that their amendment in the Longnewton area would result in the creation of an unviable parish ward, while the amendment to the northern boundary of the ward cannot be dealt with under this review but could be considered by the Borough Council in a separate parish review, under the Local Government and Rating Act 1997, following this review. We have decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposed Egglecliffe & Preston ward as part of our draft recommendations. We have also decided to adopt its proposals under Option 1 in the western and northern parished areas of the borough as we consider this to best reflect the statutory criteria. We also note that Option 1 provides for better electoral equality than Option 2. Furthermore, having visited the area, we consider that Wolviston Village should be retained in the proposed rural Northern Parishes ward. We have also decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposed Billingham West ward subject to a minor amendment to the eastern boundary. We propose transferring 317 electors from Billingham Central ward to the proposed Billingham West ward, as we consider this provides a better reflection of the statutory criteria than the Borough Council's warding arrangements in this area.

51 Under our draft recommendations the proposed wards of Billingham West, Egglecliffe & Preston, Northern Parishes and Western Parishes would have equal to, 5 per cent more, 31 per cent fewer and 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (5 per cent fewer, 6 per cent more, 13 per cent fewer and 4 per cent fewer by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2, and the large map at the back of this report.

Charltons, Grange, Marsh House, St Aidan's and St Cuthbert's wards

52 The two-member wards of Charltons, Grange, Marsh House, St Aidan's and St Cuthberts are located in the north-east corner of the borough, in an unparished area known locally as Billingham. The wards of Charltons, Grange, St Aidan's and St Cuthbert's are each currently over-represented, with 29 per cent, 40 per cent, 26 per cent and 11 per cent fewer electors than the borough average respectively (32 per cent, 43 per cent, 30 per cent and 15 per cent fewer by 2006). Marsh House ward varies by 24 per cent more than the borough average (27 per cent more by 2006).

53 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed a reconfiguration of the wards in this area, resulting in three two-member wards - Billingham Central ward based on the existing St Aidan's ward, Billingham East ward in the Charltons and Grange areas and Billingham South ward in the St Cuthbert's area. These proposed wards were identical under Option 1 and Option 2 of the Borough Council's submission. The Borough Council also put forward a new three-member Billingham North ward in the Marsh House and Wolviston area which was different under Option 1 and Option 2 of its submission. The Borough Council proposed extending the southern boundary of the existing St Aidan's ward to increase the electorate and improve electoral

equality. This would result in the transfer of 1,993 electors from the current Charltons ward to the proposed Billingham Central ward. The Council put forward two boundary amendments to the existing Grange ward, in the north-west of the ward and in the south of the ward. In the north-west of the ward it proposed extending the boundary westwards to take in part of the existing Marsh House ward. In the south of the ward it proposed transferring 1,054 electors from the current Charltons ward to its proposed Billingham East ward.

54 In the Marsh House area under Option 1 the Borough Council proposed extending the western boundary to follow the road known locally as the “old” A19. This would result in the division of Wolviston parish between two borough wards and in the transfer from the existing Wolviston ward of 2,004 electors to the proposed Billingham North ward. The remainder of the existing Wolviston ward would form part of the proposed Northern Parishes ward (as discussed earlier). Under Option 2 the Borough Council proposed retaining Wolviston parish in its proposed Billingham North ward. Finally in this area, the Borough Council proposed transferring 544 electors from the existing Charltons ward to its proposed Billingham South ward.

55 We received a further two representations in relation to this area at Stage One. The Labour Group expressed broad support for the Borough Council’s proposals. The Liberal Democrats also expressed broad support for the Borough Council’s proposals in the Billingham area and stated that “the proposed new boundaries make sense in covering the natural communities within Billingham”.

56 We have carefully considered the submissions received at Stage One and note the local support for the Borough Council’s proposals in this area. We also note that under the Borough Council’s proposals there is a substantial improvement in electoral equality during the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. We have therefore decided to adopt, as part of our draft recommendations, the Borough Council’s proposals in the Billingham area. In relation to the proposed Billingham North ward we have decided to put forward the Borough Council’s Option 1 proposals as part of our draft recommendations as we consider that they best reflect the statutory criteria.

57 Under our draft recommendations the proposed wards of Billingham Central, Billingham East, Billingham North and Billingham South would have 7 per cent more, 1 per cent more, 4 per cent fewer and equal to the average number of electors per councillor respectively (2 per cent more, 4 per cent fewer, 2 per cent fewer and 5 per cent fewer by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of this report.

Blue Hall, Glebe, Norton, Parkfield and Portrack & Tilery wards

58 The two-member wards of Blue Hall, Glebe, Norton, Parkfield and Portrack & Tilery are located in the north and eastern parts of the unparished Stockton town area. At present, Glebe ward has 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, both initially and by 2006. The wards of Blue Hall, Norton, Parkfield and Portrack & Tilery all have fewer electors per councillor than the borough average; 9 per cent, 5 per cent, 9 per cent and 16 per cent respectively (14 per cent, 5 per cent, 2 per cent and 10 per cent fewer by 2006).

59 During Stage One the Borough Council proposed five new two-member wards in this area, four of which were identical under Options 1 and 2. The Borough Council proposed one minor boundary modification, affecting no electors, to the existing Glebe ward, and put forward a new ward name, Stockton Glebe. The Borough Council also proposed dividing the existing Blue Hall and Norton wards between its proposed Norton North and Norton South wards. The Borough Council proposed extending the eastern boundary of the current Blue Hall ward eastwards to follow the A19, transferring 1,651 electors from the current Norton ward to its proposed Norton North ward. The proposed Norton South ward would contain the remainder of the existing Norton and Blue Hall wards and 1,034 electors from the existing Portrack & Tilery wards. The Borough Council also put forward a new two-member Stockton Town Centre ward based on the

existing Portrack & Tilery ward. It also proposed transferring an area containing 1,700 electors from the current Parkfield ward to the new Stockton Town Centre ward. Finally in this area, the Borough Council put forward a new Stockton Parkfield & Oxbridge ward based on the existing Parkfield ward, less the area transferred to Stockton Town Centre ward as described above. It also put forward a boundary modification to the western boundary of the current Parkfield ward, transferring an area containing 2,224 electors from the existing Grangefield ward to the proposed Stockton Town Centre ward.

60 We received a further four submissions in relation to this area at Stage One. The Conservatives expressed broad support for the Borough Council's proposals under Option 2 in this part of Stockton town. The Labour Group expressed support for the Borough Council's proposals under Option 1 and stated that it better reflected "the communities and housing styles". The Liberal Democrats also expressed broad support for the Borough Council's proposals. Norton Grange Community Forum opposed the Borough Council's proposals to include part of the existing Blue Hall ward in the proposed Norton wards.

61 We have carefully considered all the representation received at Stage One. We note that the Borough Council's proposals would provide for a significant improvement in electoral equality in this part of the town and the support that they have received. While we note Norton Grange Community Forum's opposition to the Borough Council's proposals we also note the absence of alternative warding arrangements in this area. In the light of the evidence received we have decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposals in this area as part of our draft recommendations.

62 Under our draft recommendations the proposed wards of Norton North, Norton South, Stockton Glebe, Stockton Parkfield & Oxbridge, and Stockton Town Centre wards would have 1 per cent more, 5 per cent more, 2 per cent more, equal to, and 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1 per cent fewer, 1 per cent more, 2 per cent more, 5 per cent more and 5 per cent more by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of this report.

Bishopsgarth, Elm Tree, Hardwick, Mile House, Newton and Roseworth wards

63 The two-member Bishopsgarth ward and single-member Elm Tree wards are located in the unparished Stockton town area. At present both wards have 22 per cent more and 51 per cent more electors than the borough average respectively (16 per cent more and 52 per cent more by 2006). The two-member wards of Hardwick, Mile House, Newton and Roseworth have 34 per cent fewer, 15 per cent fewer, 16 per cent fewer and 23 per cent fewer electors than the borough average respectively (32 per cent, 17 per cent, 21 per cent and 27 per cent fewer by 2006).

64 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed a reconfiguration of the warding arrangements in this area, resulting in four new two-member wards. Under Option 1 and Option 2 of the Borough Council's submission three of the proposed four wards were identical. The Borough Council proposed a Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree ward based on the existing Bishopsgarth and Elm Tree wards, a Stockton Hardwick ward based on the current Hardwick ward, a Stockton Newton ward based on the existing Roseworth ward and a Stockton Roseworth ward in the Mile House and Newton wards area. The Borough Council proposed transferring an area containing 3,203 electors from the existing Elm Tree ward to its proposed Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree ward. It also proposed transferring from the existing Bishopsgarth, Hardwick and Mile House wards 1,686, 199 and 12 electors respectively to the proposed Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree ward. In the Hardwick area the Borough Council proposed transferring an area containing 2,055 electors from the existing Mile House ward to the existing Hardwick ward, less the 12 electors as described above.

65 In the Newton area the Borough Council proposed transferring from the Mile House and Roseworth wards 250 and 418 electors respectively to the existing Newton ward and proposed renaming it Stockton Newton. In the Roseworth area, the Borough Council's proposed Stockton Roseworth ward would contain the majority of electors from the existing Roseworth ward, less an area containing 418 electors described above. The Borough Council also proposed transferring 1,976 electors from the existing Mile House ward to its proposed Stockton Roseworth ward. In its submission the Borough Council stated that "in the Stockton area, by starting with Hardwick and working clockwise, clear communities have been identified that also represent electoral balance".

66 We received a further three representations in relation to this area at Stage One. The Conservatives expressed broad support for the Borough Council's proposals under Option 2 in the Stockton area but submitted alternative proposals in the Stockton Town wards. The Conservatives' proposals were identical to the Borough Council's warding arrangements in this area albeit for two minor boundary modifications to the Borough Council's proposed Stockton Newton ward. They proposed an amendment to the north-western boundary affecting no electors and an amendment to the southern ward boundary affecting all those properties south of Bishopston Road down to Grange Avenue. They stated that although their alternative proposals were "minor changes" to the Borough Council's proposals, the changes would "more appropriately distinguish the communities" in the area. The Conservatives also proposed retaining the existing Hardwick and Roseworth ward names and put forward new ward names for the Borough Council's proposed Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree and Stockton Newton wards.

67 The Labour Group expressed broad support for the Borough Council's Option 1 in the Stockton area and stated that the proposals under this option "reflected the communities and housing styles" in the area. The Liberal Democrats stated that although they supported "most" of the Borough Council's proposals for Stockton, they were unable to support the Borough Council's proposals in the west of Stockton. The Liberal Democrats put forward alternative warding arrangements in this part of western Stockton based on a uniform warding pattern of three-member wards. They argued that three-member wards would "provide the only solution for a distribution of wards that keep together natural communities". They proposed a ward in the western area based on the Borough Council's proposed Stockton Newton and Stockton Parkfield & Oxbridge wards and a ward in the northern area extending from the Bishopsgarth area to the Newham Grange area. The Liberal Democrats also stated that if we were not minded to accept a uniform pattern of three-member wards in this part of western Stockton we should consider a two-member ward based on the existing Elm Tree ward. The Liberal Democrats proposed extending eastwards the existing north-eastern boundary of Elm Tree ward to encompass the entire area of Newham Grange.

68 We have carefully considered the representations received during Stage One and note the local support for the Borough Council's proposals in this area. We also note that under the Borough Council's proposals there is a substantial improvement in electoral equality during the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. While we note the Conservatives' alternative proposals in the Borough Council's proposed Stockton Newton ward, we also note that one of their proposed amendments does not affect any electors. We do not consider that this amendment provides a better reflection of the statutory criteria than the Borough Council's proposals and do not propose adopting it as part of our draft recommendations. We also note that their proposed amendment to the southern boundary of the ward provides a better reflection of the statutory criteria than the Borough Council's proposals. While we note the Liberal Democrats' proposals for two three-member wards in the western area of Stockton we have not been persuaded by the evidence received that this would best reflect the statutory criteria. In the light of the representations and evidence received we have decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposals in this area as part of our draft recommendations subject to two boundary amendments. In the Stockton Newton ward we are proposing an amendment to the southern boundary, similar to that put forward by the Conservatives, affecting 369 electors, to further

improve electoral equality. We are also proposing a minor boundary amendment to the proposed Stockton Hardwick ward, affecting 11 electors and having no effect on electoral equality, to better reflect community identity.

69 Under our draft recommendations the proposed wards of Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree, Stockton Hardwick, Stockton Newton and Stockton Roseworth would have 1 per cent more, 3 per cent more, 4 per cent more and 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1 per cent fewer, 2 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of this report.

Fairfield, Grangefield and Hartburn wards

70 The two-member wards of Fairfield, Grangefield and Hartburn are located in the south of the unparished Stockton town area. At present, the wards of Fairfield, Grangefield and Hartburn have 23 per cent fewer, 23 per cent fewer and 8 per cent more electors than the borough average respectively (23 per cent fewer, 27 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more by 2006).

71 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed three two-member wards in this area - Stockton Fairfield ward, based on the southern part of the existing Bishopsgarth ward, Stockton Grangefield ward, based on the existing Fairfield ward and Stockton Hartburn ward, based on the current Hartburn ward. The proposed warding arrangements in this area differed between Option 1 and 2 of the Borough Council's submission. The Borough Council proposed that Stockton Fairfield ward would contain all properties south of Darlington Back Lane down to the current boundary of the Bishopsgarth ward. It also proposed transferring from the existing Elm Tree ward and Hartburn ward 613 electors and 27 electors respectively to the proposed Stockton Fairfield ward. The Borough Council also put forward a boundary amendment to the existing Fairfield ward. It proposed extending the western boundary to follow Lustrum Beck. This amendment would transfer 1,393 electors from the existing Grangefield ward to the proposed Stockton Grangefield ward. Finally in this area, the Borough Council put forward a minor boundary modification to the existing Hartburn ward. It proposed transferring 274 electors from the existing Grangefield ward to its proposed Stockton Hartburn ward.

72 We received a further three representations in relation to this area at Stage One. The Conservatives expressed broad support for the Borough Council's proposals but put forward some alternative warding arrangements which they considered would "more appropriately distinguish the communities and areas involved". The Conservatives' proposed Fairfield and Hartburn wards were identical to the Borough Council's proposed Stockton Fairfield and Stockton Hartburn wards. They also put forward a boundary amendment to the northern boundary of the Borough Council's proposed Stockton Grangefield ward, as discussed earlier and proposed extending the south-eastern boundary of the ward to follow the Hartburn Beck. The Labour Group expressed support for the Borough Council's Option 1 proposals in this area.

73 The Liberal Democrats stated that although they supported the majority of the Borough Council's proposals in the Stockton area, in the western part of Stockton they put forward alternative warding arrangements based on a uniform pattern of three-member wards. The Liberal Democrats proposed a revised Hartburn ward broadly similar to the Borough Council and the Conservatives' proposals in this area. They proposed transferring from the existing Fairfield and Grangefield wards a large number of electors to facilitate a three-member ward. The Liberal Democrats also proposed a three-member ward extending from the Fairfield area to the Grangefield area.

74 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One and note the local support for the Borough Council's proposals in this area. We also note that under the Borough Council's proposals there is a substantial improvement in electoral equality in this area over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. While we note the Conservatives' alternative warding

arrangements, we also note that their proposed wards are broadly similar to the Borough Council's proposed Stockton Fairfield, Stockton Grangefield and Stockton Hartburn wards. In relation to the Conservatives' proposed Grangefield ward, we do not consider that it provides a better reflection of the statutory criteria than the Borough Council's proposals and have therefore decided not to adopt it as part of our draft recommendations.

75 We also note that the Labour Group expressed support for the Borough Council's Option 1 in this area of Stockton which was based on a council size of 57. Our draft recommendations are based on a council size of 55 and consequently we have been unable to adopt the Borough Council's proposals under Option 1 in this part of Stockton. While we note the Liberal Democrats' proposals for two three-member wards here we have not been persuaded by the evidence received that this would best reflect the statutory criteria. In the light of the representations and evidence received we have decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposals in this area as part of our draft recommendations subject to two boundary amendments to the proposed Stockton Grangefield ward. We are proposing a boundary amendment to the northern boundary, as discussed previously, and a minor boundary modification, affecting 27 electors, to better reflect community interests and identities.

76 Under our draft recommendations the proposed wards of Stockton Fairfield, Stockton Grangefield and Stockton Hartburn would have 1 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer and 13 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (5 per cent fewer, 4 per cent fewer and 7 per cent more by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Mandale, Stainsby, Victoria and Village wards

77 The two-member wards of Mandale, Stainsby, Victoria and Village are each contained within the parish of Thornaby in the east of the borough. At present the wards of Mandale, Stainsby, Victoria and Village have 3 per cent fewer, 15 per cent fewer, 12 per cent fewer and 19 per cent fewer electors than the borough average respectively (8 per cent, 20 per cent, 17 per cent and 21 per cent fewer by 2006).

78 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed a reconfiguration of the four wards in this area, resulting in a net reduction of one to three wards. The proposed warding arrangements were identical under Option 1 and Option 2 of the Borough Council's submission. It put forward a new three-member Thornaby North ward and two-member Thornaby South and Thornaby West wards. The proposed Thornaby North ward would contain the existing Victoria ward plus an area transferred from the current Mandale ward containing 3,038 electors. The Borough Council also proposed a Thornaby South ward, based on the existing Stainsby ward less an area transferred to its proposed Thornaby West ward, containing 1,219 electors. It would also contain the remainder of the existing Mandale ward; that is, all properties to the east of Mitchell Avenue. Finally, the Borough Council put forward a new Thornaby West ward based on the existing Village ward plus the area containing 1,219 electors described above.

79 We received a further two submissions in relation to this area at Stage One. The Labour Group and the Liberal Democrats expressed broad support for the Borough Council's proposals in the Thornaby area.

80 We have carefully considered all the representations and evidence received at Stage One and we note the local support for the Borough Council's proposals in this area. We also note that the Borough Council's proposals provide for an improvement in electoral equality in this area over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. In the light of these considerations we have decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposals in this area subject to two minor boundary amendments. We propose transferring an area containing 224 electors from Thornaby West ward to Thornaby South ward to better reflect community interests and identities. We also

propose an amendment to Thornaby North ward affecting, 40 electors, to better reflect the statutory criteria.

81 Under our draft recommendations the proposed wards of Thornaby North, Thornaby South and Thornaby West would have 1 per cent fewer, 2 per cent more and be equal to the average number of electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (6 per cent fewer, 3 per cent fewer and 4 per cent fewer by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of this report.

Ingleby Barwick and Yarm wards

82 The single-member Ingleby Barwick ward comprising the parishes of Castlelevington, Hilton, Ingleby Barwick, Kirklevington and Maltby is substantially under-represented, due to substantial development within the parish boundaries of Ingleby Barwick since the last review, and is forecast to continue to grow. At present, Ingleby Barwick ward has 356 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average. This variance is expected to worsen considerably by 2006; the variance is projected to be 465 per cent more than the average. The two-member Yarm ward, which is coterminous with the parish of Yarm, currently has 43 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (35 per cent more by 2006).

83 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed a reconfiguration of parishes in this area, resulting in a net increase of one ward in the south of the borough. It proposed dividing the parish of Ingleby Barwick between two borough wards. The proposed warding arrangements of Ingleby Barwick East ward were identical under Option 1 and Option 2 of the Borough Council's submission. The Borough Council proposed that a new three-member Ingleby Barwick East ward would contain an area of Ingleby Barwick parish to the east of Barwick Way and to the north of Ingleby Way. Under Option 1 the Borough Council proposed a new three-member Ingleby Barwick West ward containing an area of Ingleby Barwick parish to the west of Barwick Way and to the north of Low Lane. It also proposed a new single-member Southern Parishes ward containing the parishes of Castlelevington, Hilton, Kirklevington and Maltby, currently in Ingleby Barwick ward. The Borough Council also proposed a revised three-member Yarm ward containing the parish of Yarm.

84 Under Option 2 the Borough Council proposed a new three-member Ingleby Barwick West ward containing an area of Ingleby Barwick parish to the west of Barwick Way and the parishes of Hilton and Maltby. It also proposed a revised three-member Yarm ward containing the parishes of Castlelevington, Kirklevington and Yarm. The Borough Council stated that although the rural areas of Hilton and Maltby were put with a neighbouring urban area to "produce balanced electorates" the rural areas are "no longer distinct and become merged with the urban developments".

85 The Conservatives expressed broad support for Option 2 in this area and stated that although Hilton, Kirklevington and Maltby "appear to have rural identities they rely significantly on the social, economic and educational facilities of Ingleby Barwick". The Labour Group expressed broad support for the Borough Council's Option 1 in the Ingleby Barwick area. The Liberal Democrats expressed support for the Borough Council's Option 2 in the area. They argued that the parish of Kirklevington is "virtually an offshoot" of Yarm and that residents of Kirklevington have a community of interest and identity with the Yarm area. They also supported the Borough Council's Option 2 in the Ingleby Barwick area and stated that it was important that the Ingleby Barwick wards received the correct number of councillors to facilitate effective and convenient local government. Ingleby Barwick Parish Council expressed its support for the Borough Council's proposal to ward the parish between two borough wards. It also supported the Borough Council's proposal to increase the number of councillors from one to six.

86 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One and we note the local support for the Borough Council's proposals in this area. We also note that the Borough

Council's proposals would provide for a significant improvement in electoral equality over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. We also note that on the current and the 2006 projected electorate, the parish of Ingleby Barwick is entitled to five borough councillors and not six as the Council proposed. The additional councillor appears to have been allocated in the anticipation of development scheduled to take place after 2006. We have therefore decided to base our draft recommendations on the Borough Council's Option 2 proposals. However, we are proposing two amendments to the proposed Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards. We propose transferring 1,218 electors from Ingleby Barwick East ward to the proposed Ingleby Barwick West ward. We also propose that Ingleby Barwick East ward be represented by two councillors instead of the proposed three councillors. We consider that our proposed amendments provide a better balance of the statutory criteria than those arrangements put forward by the Borough Council. We also note the level of local support for the Borough Council's proposed Yarm ward and are have decided to adopt the proposed Yarm ward as part of our draft recommendations.

87 Under our draft recommendations the proposed wards of Ingleby Barwick East, Ingleby Barwick West and Yarm would have 31 per cent fewer, 7 per cent fewer and 7 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (6 per cent more, 5 per cent more and 3 per cent more by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of this report.

Electoral Cycle

88 By virtue of the amendments made to the Local Government Act 1992 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001, we have no powers to make recommendations concerning electoral cycle.

Conclusions

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

- a council of 55 members should be retained;
- there should be 26 wards;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of four wards.

90 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the Borough Council's Option 2 proposals, but propose to depart from them in the following areas:

- in the north of the borough we propose adopting the Borough Council's Option 1 proposal for the wards of Northern Parishes and Western Parishes;
- we propose departing from the Borough Council's proposals in the Ingleby Barwick area to improve electoral equality;
- we propose two further boundary amendments in the Thornaby area to reflect community interests and identities;
- we propose a further boundary amendment to Billingham West ward to improve electoral equality;

- we propose departing from the Borough Council's proposals in three areas of Stockton town to better reflect the statutory criteria.

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

Table 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	55	55	55	55
Number of wards	30	26	30	26
Average number of electors per councillor	2,520	2,520	2,559	2,559
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	22	3	22	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	15	2	16	0

92 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 22 to three. By 2006 only one ward is forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent.

Draft Recommendation

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council should comprise 55 councillors serving 26 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

93 When reviewing parish electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different borough wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Grindon, Ingleby Barwick, Thornaby and Wolviston.

94 The parish of Grindon is currently served by seven councillors and is not warded. In the light of our draft recommendations in this area, we are proposing to create two new parish wards, Grindon East ward and Grindon West ward, to facilitate the division of the parish between the proposed Billingham West and Northern Parishes borough wards. The boundary between the proposed Grindon East and Grindon West parish wards would reflect the proposed borough ward boundary. We propose that Grindon East ward should return three councillors and Grindon West ward should return four councillors.

Draft Recommendation

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

95 The parish of Ingleby Barwick is currently served by eight councillors and is not warded. At Stage One, Ingleby Barwick Parish Council proposed that the parish should be represented by 12 councillors and two wards should be created, each represented by six councillors. In the light of our draft recommendations in this area, we are proposing to modify the boundaries between the Borough Council's proposed borough wards. Therefore, while we support Ingleby Parish Council's proposal that the parish should be represented by 12 councillors we are proposing a different allocation. We propose to create two new parish wards, Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West, to facilitate the division of the parish between the proposed Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West borough wards. We propose that the Ingleby Barwick East ward should return four councillors and the Ingleby Barwick West ward should return eight councillors.

Draft Recommendation

Ingleby Barwick Parish Council should comprise 12 parish councillors, four more than at present, representing two wards: Ingleby Barwick East, returning four councillors, and Ingleby Barwick West, returning eight councillors. The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

96 The parish of Thornaby is currently served by 13 councillors and is not warded. In the light of our draft recommendations in this area, we are proposing to create three new parish wards, Thornaby North, Thornaby South and Thornaby West, to facilitate the division of the parish between the proposed Thornaby North, Thornaby South and Thornaby West borough wards. We propose that the Thornaby North ward should return seven councillors, and the Thornaby South and Thornaby West wards should each return three councillors.

Draft Recommendation

Thornaby Parish Council should comprise 13 parish councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Thornaby North, returning seven councillors, and Thornaby South and Thornaby West (each returning three councillors). The boundaries between the three parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

97 The parish of Wolviston is currently served by 10 councillors and is not warded. In the light of our draft recommendations in this area, we are proposing to create two new parish wards, Wolviston East and Wolviston West, to facilitate the division of the parish between the proposed Billingham North and Northern Parishes borough wards. The boundary between the proposed Wolviston East and Wolviston West parish wards would reflect the proposed borough ward boundary. We propose that the Wolviston East ward should return seven councillors and the Wolviston West ward should return three councillors.

Draft Recommendation

Wolviston Parish Council should comprise 10 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Wolviston East, returning seven councillors, and Wolviston West, returning three councillors. The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

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

Draft Recommendation

Parish and town council elections should continue to take place every four years, at the same time as elections for the borough ward of which they are part.

Map 2: Draft Recommendations for Stockton-on-Tees

5 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

99 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Stockton-on-Tees contained in this report. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 8 July 2002. Any received *after* this date may not be taken into account. All responses may be inspected at our offices and those of the Borough Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

100 Express your view by writing directly to us:

Team Leader
Stockton-on-Tees Review
Boundary Committee
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW

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

APPENDIX

Code of Practice on Written Consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm, requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Although the Boundary Committee for England is not a Government body we seek to follow the Code.

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

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

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