

Final Recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Ribble Valley in Lancashire

Report to the Secretary of State for the
Environment, Transport and the Regions

September 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Ribble Valley is inserted inside the back cover of the report.



Local Government Commission for England

5 September 2000

Dear Secretary of State

On 7 September 1999 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Ribble Valley under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in April 2000 and undertook a nine-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We are confirming our draft recommendations as final, without modification. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Ribble Valley.

We recommend that Ribble Valley Borough Council should be served by 40 councillors representing 24 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that the whole council should continue to be elected together.

The Local Government Bill, containing legislative proposals for a number of changes to local authority electoral arrangements, is currently being considered by Parliament. However, until such time as new legislation is in place we are obliged to conduct our work in accordance with current legislation, and to continue our current approach to periodic electoral reviews.

I would like to thank members and officers of the Borough Council and other local people who have contributed to the review. Their co-operation and assistance have been very much appreciated by Commissioners and staff.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Malcolm Grant'.

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Ribble Valley on 7 September 1999. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 4 April 2000, after which we undertook a nine-week period of consultation.

- **This report summarises the representations we received during consultation on our draft recommendations, and contains our final recommendations to the Secretary of State.**

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

- **in 13 of the 24 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough, in five wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 20 per cent, and two wards vary by more than 30 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 14 wards, by more than 20 per cent in five wards and by more than 30 per cent in two wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 94-95) are that:

- **Ribble Valley Borough Council should have 40 councillors, one more than at present;**
- **there should be 24 wards, as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 21 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in the retention of the existing number of wards, with three wards retaining their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place for the whole council every four years.**

These 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 all but one of the proposed 24 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 forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in all 24 wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2004.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Billington & Langho, Clitheroe and Longridge.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 17 October 2000:

**The Secretary of State
Local Government Sponsorship Division
Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU**

Figure 1: The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Aighton, Bailey & Chaigley	1	Aighton, Bailey & Chaigley ward; Ribchester ward (part - Dutton parish); Waddington ward (part - Bashall Eaves parish)	Map 2
2	Alston & Hothersall	2	Alston ward (part - part of Longridge parish); Ribchester ward (part - Hothersall parish)	Maps 2 and A3
3	Billington & Old Langho	2	Billington ward (part - part of Billington & Langho parish)	Maps 2 and A2
4	Bowland, Newton & Slaidburn	1	Bowland, Newton & Slaidburn ward (part - the parishes of Bowland Forest Low, Easington, Newton and Slaidburn); Bolton-by-Bowland ward (part - Bolton-by-Bowland parish)	Map 2
5	Chatburn	1	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
6	Chipping	1	Chipping ward (part - Bowland-with-Leagram and Chipping parishes); Bowland, Newton & Slaidburn ward (Bowland Forest High parish)	Map 2
7	Clayton-le-Dale with Ramsgreave	2	Clayton-le-Dale & Salesbury ward; Mellor ward (part - Osbaldeston and Ramsgreave parishes)	Map 2
8	Derby & Thornley	2	Chipping ward (part - Thornley-with-Wheatley parish); Dilworth ward (part - part of Longridge parish)	Maps 2 and A3
9	Dilworth	2	Dilworth ward (part - part of Longridge parish)	Maps 2 and A3
10	Edisford & Low Moor	2	Edisford, Low Moor & Trinity ward (part - part of Clitheroe parish); St James's ward (part - part of Clitheroe parish)	Map 2 and large map
11	Gisburn, Rimington	1	Gisburn, Rimington ward; Bolton-by-Bowland ward (part - Gisburn Forest parish)	Map 2
12	Langho	2	Billington ward (part - Dinckley parish and part of Billington and Langho parish)	Maps 2 and A2

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
13 Littlemoor	2	Grammar School ward (part - part of Clitheroe parish); Ribblesdale ward (part - part of Clitheroe parish); St James's ward (part - part of Clitheroe parish)	Map 2 and large map
14 Mellor	2	Mellor ward (part - Balderstone and Mellor parishes)	Map 2
15 Primrose	2	Edisford, Low Moor and Trinity ward (part - part of Clitheroe parish); St James's ward (part - part of Clitheroe parish)	Map 2 and large map
16 Read & Simonstone	2	Read ward; Simonstone ward	Map 2
17 Ribchester	1	Ribchester ward (part - Ribchester parish)	Map 2
18 St Mary's	2	Edisford, Low Moor and Trinity ward (part - part of Clitheroe parish); Grammar School ward (part - part of Clitheroe parish)	Map 2 and large map
19 Sabden	1	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
20 Salthill	2	Grammar School ward (part - part of Clitheroe parish); Ribblesdale ward (part - part of Clitheroe parish)	Map 2 and large map
21 Waddington & West Bradford	2	Bolton-by-Bowland ward (part - Sawley parish); Grindleton & West Bradford ward; Waddington ward (part - Waddington parish)	Map 2
22 Whalley	2	Whalley ward; Waddington ward (part - Great Mitton parish); Wiswell & Pendleton ward (part - Little Mitton parish)	Map 2
23 Wilpshire	2	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
24 Wiswell & Pendleton	1	Wiswell & Pendleton ward (part - the parishes of Mearley, Pendleton, Wiswell and Worston)	Map 2

Note: Map 2 and Appendix A, including the large map in the back of the report, illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Ribble Valley

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 Aighton, Bailey & Chaigley	1	1,066	1,066	1	1,050	1,050	-1
2 Alston & Hothersall	2	1,991	996	-6	1,973	987	-7
3 Billington & Old Langho	2	1,629	815	-23	1,950	975	-8
4 Bowland, Newton & Slaidburn	1	956	956	-9	1,020	1,020	-4
5 Chatburn	1	1,036	1,036	-2	1,020	1,020	-4
6 Chipping	1	1,046	1,046	-1	1,040	1,040	-2
7 Clayton-le-Dale with Ramsgreave	2	2,030	1,015	-4	2,040	1,020	-4
8 Derby & Thornley	2	2,218	1,109	5	2,196	1,098	4
9 Dilworth	2	2,028	1,014	-4	2,011	1,006	-5
10 Edisford & Low Moor	2	2,296	1,148	9	2,250	1,125	6
11 Gisburn, Rimington	1	989	989	-6	1,020	1,020	-4
12 Langho	2	2,026	1,013	-4	1,970	985	-7
13 Littlemoor	2	2,291	1,146	8	2,246	1,123	6
14 Mellor	2	2,066	1,033	-2	2,090	1,045	-1
15 Primrose	2	2,330	1,165	10	2,284	1,142	8
16 Read & Simonstone	2	2,170	1,085	3	2,130	1,065	0
17 Ribchester	1	1,128	1,128	7	1,160	1,160	9
18 St Mary's	2	2,249	1,125	6	2,205	1,103	4
19 Sabden	1	1,082	1,082	2	1,070	1,070	1
20 Salthill	2	2,270	1,135	7	2,225	1,113	5
21 Waddington & West Bradford	2	2,206	1,103	4	2,170	1,085	2
22 Whalley	2	2,139	1,070	1	2,305	1,153	9
23 Wilpshire	2	1,959	980	-7	1,930	965	-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 Wiswell & Pendleton	1	1,050	1,050	-1	1,045	1,045	-1
Totals	40	42,251	–	–	42,400	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,056	–	–	1,060	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Ribble Valley Borough Council.

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Ribble Valley in Lancashire on which we are now consulting. We have now reviewed the 12 districts in Lancashire (excluding Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool) as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. We expect to review the unitary authorities of Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool in 2001. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Ribble Valley. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in September 1990 (Report No. 82). The electoral arrangements of Lancashire County Council were last reviewed in 1980 (Report No. 399). We intend reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

- the statutory criteria in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992, i.e. 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 have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties*, which 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 borough's electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, or that changes should be made to the size of a borough council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other districts.

9 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, ie 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. The proposals are now being taken forward in a Local Government Bill, published in December 1999, and are currently being considered by Parliament.

10 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/2000 PER programme, including the Lancashire districts, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in our *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.

11 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 7 September 1999, when we wrote to Ribbles Valley Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Lancashire County Council, Lancashire Police Authority, the local authority associations, the Members of Parliament and 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. At

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

12 Stage Three began on 4 April 2000 with the publication of our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Ribble Valley in Lancashire*, and ended on 5 June 2000. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

13 The borough of Ribble Valley is situated in central east Lancashire, and is bordered to the north-west by Lancaster borough, to the north-east by North Yorkshire, to the south and east by the boroughs of Pendle, Burnley, Hyndburn and Blackburn with Darwen, and to the west by the boroughs of Preston, South Ribble and Wyre. The borough is the largest district council area in Lancashire, covering around 58,400 hectares, but has the smallest population at some 52,000. It comprises the market towns of Clitheroe and Longridge, together with over 45 surrounding villages. Ribble Valley contains some of the most scenic countryside in the North West and a large part of it is within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Agriculture forms a significant part of the economy of Ribble Valley, while manufacturing activity by large industrial companies is concentrated on the fringes of the borough. The south of the borough is served by the M65 motorway and the River Ribble runs through its heart.

14 The whole of the borough is parished, with two towns and a further 47 separate parishes. Some of these parishes have combined parish councils, and eight parishes are without a council.

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 The electorate of the borough is 42,251 (February 1999). The Council at present has 39 members who are elected from 24 wards. Five of the wards are each represented by three councillors, five are each represented by two councillors and 14 are single-member wards. The whole council is elected together every four years.

17 Since the last electoral review there has been little change in the electorate in Ribble Valley borough. Currently, each councillor represents an average of 1,083 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,087 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 13 of the 24 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, in five by more than 20 per cent and in two wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalances are in Bolton-by-Bowland ward and Bowland, Newton & Slaidburn ward where each councillor represents 32 per cent and 34 per cent fewer electors than the borough average respectively.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Ribble Valley

Figure 3: 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 Aighton, Bailey & Chaigley	1	791	791	-27	770	770	-29
2 Alston	2	2,779	1,390	28	2,760	1,380	27
3 Billington	3	3,655	1,218	12	3,920	1,307	20
4 Bolton-by-Bowland	1	732	732	-32	750	750	-31
5 Bowland, Newton & Slaidburn	1	714	714	-34	750	750	-31
6 Chatburn	1	1,036	1,036	-4	1,020	1,020	-6
7 Chipping	1	1,186	1,186	9	1,180	1,180	9
8 Clayton-le-Dale & Salesbury	1	1,267	1,267	17	1,270	1,270	17
9 Dilworth	3	3,100	1,033	-5	3,070	1,023	-6
10 Edisford, Low Moor & Trinity	3	3,767	1,256	16	3,670	1,223	13
11 Gisburn, Rimington	1	877	877	-19	910	910	-16
12 Grammar School	3	3,891	1,297	20	3,850	1,283	18
13 Grindleton & West Bradford	1	1,200	1,200	11	1,180	1,180	9
14 Mellor	3	2,829	943	-13	2,860	953	-12
15 Read	1	1,180	1,180	9	1,130	1,130	4
16 Ribblesdale	2	1,956	978	-10	1,910	955	-12
17 Ribchester	1	1,377	1,377	27	1,410	1,410	30
18 Sabden	1	1,082	1,082	0	1,070	1,070	-2
19 St James's	2	1,822	911	-16	1,780	890	-18
20 Simonstone	1	990	990	-9	1,000	1,000	-8
21 Waddington	1	1,003	1,003	-7	990	990	-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 %
22 Whalley	2	1,983	992	-8	2,150	1,075	-1
23 Wilpshire	2	1,959	980	-10	1,930	965	-11
24 Wiswell & Pendleton	1	1,075	1,075	-1	1,070	1,070	-2
Totals	39	42,251	–	–	42,400	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,083	–	–	1,087	–

Source: *Electorate figures are based on information provided by Ribble Valley 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 Bolton-by-Bowland ward were relatively over-represented by 32 per cent, while electors in Alston ward were relatively under-represented by 28 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.*

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

18 During Stage One we received eight representations, including borough-wide schemes from Ribble Valley Borough Council and Ribble Valley Liberal Democrats. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Ribble Valley in Lancashire*.

19 Our draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council's and Liberal Democrats' proposals where they were in agreement and on the Liberal Democrats' proposals in the area where the two schemes did not agree, which achieved substantial improvements in electoral equality, and provided a mix of single- and two-member wards across the district. Our main draft recommendations were that:

- Ribble Valley Borough Council should be served by 40 councillors, one more than at present, representing 24 wards, the same as at present;
- the boundaries of 21 of the existing wards should be modified, while three wards should remain the same;
- there should be revised warding arrangements for the parishes of Billington & Langho, Clitheroe and Longridge.

Draft Recommendation

Ribble Valley Borough Council should comprise 40 councillors, serving 24 wards. The council should continue to be elected together every four years.

20 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 23 of the 24 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to continue, with no ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2004.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

21 During the consultation on our final recommendations report, 19 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Ribble Valley Borough Council and the Commission.

Ribble Valley Borough Council

22 Ribble Valley Borough Council stated that “it has been agreed that rather than the Council making an official response to the draft recommendations each group will make their own response to the Commission”. However, the Borough Council informed us that Councillor Bailey, an Independent member for Chipping ward, supported the Commission’s proposal for Chipping ward. The Council also informed us that Chipping Parish Council had indicated that they shared Councillor Bailey’s view.

Ribble Valley Borough Council Conservative Group

23 The Conservative Group considered that insufficient attention had been given to “local ties” and that “the widely spread sparsely populated nature of some of the wards have not been adequately taken into account”. The Conservative Group put forward revised proposals for many of the wards in the north and west of the borough, which it considered would better reflect community identities and interests and the sparsity of the rural wards. It included two alternative proposals for warding in the Waddington and West Bradford areas. It also reiterated its Stage One proposal that Osbaldeston parish should remain in Mellor ward. Under the Conservative Group’s proposals, at least five wards would vary by more than 10 per cent from the borough average both now and in 2004.

Ribble Valley Liberal Democrats

24 The Liberal Democrats, writing on behalf of the “Liberal Democrat Group on the Borough Council ... and the wider local membership”, supported our draft recommendations. They also included further evidence in support of the draft recommendations, particularly in the case of the two-member Read & Simonstone ward.

Parish & Town Councils

25 At Stage Three we received representations directly from seven parish councils and one town council. In addition, the Borough Council provided seven further representations from parish councils which it had received. Wiswell Parish Council considered that the removal of Little Mitton parish from the existing Wiswell & Pendleton ward would have “little implication”.

Aighton, Bailey & Chaigley Parish Council, Clitheroe Town Council, Ribchester Parish Council and West Bradford Parish Council each supported the draft recommendations.

26 Balderstone, Mellor and Osbaldeston parish councils proposed that Osbaldeston parish should be retained in the same ward as at present. Clayton-le-Dale and Salesbury parish councils referred to the distance between Ramsgreave parish and Clayton-le-Dale and Salesbury parishes. Clayton-le-Dale and Salesbury parish councils also proposed that Clayton-le-Dale with Ramsgreave ward should be renamed Clayton-le-Dale, Osbaldeston, Ramsgreave & Salesbury. Bashall Eaves & Mitton Parish Council proposed that Bashall Eaves, Great Mitton and Little Mitton parishes should be represented by the same borough councillor and form part of the revised Aighton, Bailey & Chaigley ward. Whalley Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations for Whalley ward. Read and Simonstone parish councils opposed the draft recommendations creating a two-member Read and Simonstone ward. Slaidburn & Easington Parish Council proposed a ward comprising the Slaidburn & Easington, Newton in Bowland, Dunsop Bridge, Lane Ends and Tosside areas.

Other Representations

27 During Stage Three we received a further two representations from local residents, both of whom supported the draft recommendations.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

28 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Ribble Valley is, so far as reasonably practicable and consistent with the statutory criteria, 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”.

29 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 also must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken.

30 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.

31 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, such an objective 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 absolute electoral equality and only then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity and interests. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of change in electorates.

Electorate Forecasts

32 At Stage One, the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting a small increase in the electorate of less than 1 per cent from 42,251 to 42,400 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expected the growth to be unevenly distributed across the district, with several wards experiencing a small decrease in their electorate. The most noticeable increase in electorate was forecast to be in Billington ward (265 electors). 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. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries was obtained. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that forecasting electorates is an

inexact science and, having given consideration to the Borough Council's figures, we were content that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at this time.

33 At Stage Three Bashall Eaves & Mitton Parish Council queried whether the development of Calderstones Hospital site would have a negative impact on electoral equality in Whalley ward. Having contacted officers at the Borough Council, we understand that this development was included in the five-year electorate forecasts which they provided to us and we therefore remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates available at present.

Council Size

34 As already explained, the Commission's starting point is to assume that the current council size facilitates convenient and effective local government. Ribble Valley Borough Council currently has 39 members. The Borough Council proposed increasing the existing council size to 40, comprising 14 two-member wards and 12 single-member wards. The Liberal Democrat Party also proposed an increase in council size to 40, comprising 16 two-member wards and eight single-member wards. A resident of the borough proposed that the current council size should be reduced to a maximum of 30, but did not provide any detailed proposals.

35 In our draft recommendations report we stated that, having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the agreement between the two borough-wide schemes regarding such an increase, we concluded in our draft recommendations that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 40 members.

36 During Stage Three we received no further proposals or evidence regarding council size. Therefore, we are confirming our draft recommendations for a council size of 40 as final.

Electoral Arrangements

37 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we gave careful consideration to the views which we received during Stage One, and in particular the borough-wide schemes received from the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats. We noted in particular that there was significant agreement between the two schemes for proposals across the borough. Moreover, in such areas where agreement existed, we noted that under these proposals there would generally be substantial improvements to electoral equality while, we judged, satisfactorily reflecting the other statutory criteria. Consequently we adopted the proposals agreed between the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats as part of our draft recommendations. In the remaining area where the two schemes did not agree, we noted that the proposals put forward by the Liberal Democrats would achieve better electoral equality while, we judged, taking into account the other statutory criteria. Therefore in the remaining area we adopted the Liberal Democrats' proposals as the basis for our draft recommendations.

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

- (i) Clitheroe town (the wards of Edisford, Low Moor & Trinity, Grammar School, Ribblesdale and St James's);
- (ii) Clayton-le-Dale & Salesbury, Mellor and Wilpshire wards;
- (iii) Billington ward;
- (iv) Read, Simonstone and Whalley wards;
- (v) Chatburn, Sabden and Wiswell & Pendleton wards;
- (vi) Bolton-by-Bowland, Bowland, Newton & Slaidburn, Gisburn, Rimington, Grindleton & West Bradford and Waddington wards;
- (vii) Aighton, Bailey & Chaigley and Ribchester wards;
- (viii) Alston, Chipping and Dilworth wards.

39 Details of our final 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.

Clitheroe town (the wards of Edisford, Low Moor & Trinity, Grammar School, Ribblesdale and St James's)

40 Clitheroe town is the largest settlement in the borough, comprising some 25 per cent of its overall population, and has a town council. Edisford, Low Moor & Trinity and Grammar School wards are each represented by three councillors, while Ribblesdale and St James's wards are each represented by two. The number of electors per councillor is 16 per cent above the borough average in Edisford, Low Moor & Trinity ward (13 per cent in 2004), 20 per cent above in Grammar School ward (18 per cent in 2004), 10 per cent below in Ribblesdale ward (12 per cent in 2004) and 16 per cent below in St James's ward (18 per cent in 2004).

41 At Stage One the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats submitted identical proposals for warding arrangements in Clitheroe town, proposing a pattern of five new two-member wards. Under their proposals a new Littlemoor ward would cover much of the existing Ribblesdale ward and a new Primrose ward would cover the majority of St James's ward, together with part of Edisford, Low Moor & Trinity ward to the east of Henthorn Road and an area of Grammar School ward around Parson Lane. A new Edisford & Low Moor ward would comprise most of Edisford, Low Moor & Trinity ward lying to the west of Henthorn Road, together with an area in the north of St James's ward generally to the north of Brown Street. In the north of the town, they proposed that a new St Mary's ward should cover that part of Grammar School ward generally to the west of York Street, Princess Avenue, Pimlico Road and the railway line, together with part of Edisford, Low Moor & Trinity ward around Buccleuch Avenue. A new Salthill ward would comprise the remainder of Grammar School ward, together with part of Ribblesdale ward around Derby Street. The Borough Council stated that Clitheroe Town Council had supported these proposals.

42 Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent above the borough average in Edisford & Low Moor ward (6 per cent in 2004), 8 per cent above in Littlemoor ward (6 per cent in 2004), 10 per cent above in Primrose ward (8 per cent in 2004), 6 per cent above in St Mary's ward (4 per cent in 2004) and 7 per cent above in Salthill ward (5 per cent in 2004).

43 In arriving at our draft recommendations we gave careful consideration to the views which we had received regarding Clitheroe town. We noted the agreement between the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats regarding warding arrangements in the town and that such proposals enjoyed some local support. Consequently, in view of the improvements to electoral equality which would result under these proposals, together with the use of clearly defined boundaries, we adopted them as part of our draft recommendations.

44 At Stage Three Clitheroe Town Council and the Liberal Democrats supported our draft recommendations for Clitheroe town. We received no further representations regarding our proposals for Clitheroe and we have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations in this area as final. Our final recommendations for the town are shown on the large map at the back of the report.

Clayton-le-Dale & Salesbury, Mellor and Wilpshire wards

45 These three wards are situated in the south-west of the borough. Clayton-le-Dale & Salesbury ward (which comprises Clayton-le-Dale and Salesbury parishes) is represented by one councillor, Mellor ward (which comprises the parishes of Balderstone, Mellor, Osbaldeston and Ramsgreave) is represented by three councillors, and Wilpshire ward (comprising the parish of the same name) is represented by two councillors. The number of electors per councillor is 17 per cent above the average in Clayton-le-Dale & Salesbury ward both now and in 2004, 13 per cent below in Mellor ward (12 per cent below in 2004) and 10 per cent below in Wilpshire ward (11 per cent in 2004).

46 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed a configuration of three two-member wards which, it argued, would appear to satisfy the preferences of most of the parishes in the area, while securing improvements to electoral equality. Consequently, the Borough Council proposed transferring Ramsgreave parish from Mellor ward to Clayton-le-Dale & Salesbury ward, and renaming the ward Clayton-le-Dale & Ramsgreave. It proposed that Wilpshire ward should remain unchanged. Under the Borough Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 10 per cent below the borough average in Clayton-le-Dale & Ramsgreave both now and in 2004, 4 per cent above in Mellor ward (5 per cent above in 2004) and 7 per cent below in Wilpshire ward (9 per cent in 2004).

47 The Liberal Democrats also proposed a pattern of three two-member wards in this area. They proposed transferring the parishes of Osbaldeston and Ramsgreave from Mellor ward to a new Clayton-le-Dale with Ramsgreave ward, while retaining Wilpshire ward on its existing

boundaries. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent below the borough average in Clayton-le-Dale with Ramsgreave ward both now and in 2004, 2 per cent below in Mellor ward (1 per cent below in 2004) and 7 per cent below the borough average in Wilpshire ward (9 per cent in 2004).

48 In arriving at our draft recommendations we gave careful consideration to the views which we had received concerning this area. In particular, we noted the agreement between the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats on retaining the existing arrangements for Wilpshire ward. While we noted that under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be forecast to worsen slightly over the five-year period, we considered that the proposal would achieve a reasonable level of electoral equality while taking into account the statutory criteria. We therefore adopted the proposal to retain Wilpshire ward on its existing boundaries as part of our draft recommendations. In the case of the alternative schemes for the remaining area, we noted that the proposals put to us by the Liberal Democrats would provide better levels of electoral equality while, we judged, providing a satisfactory balance of the other statutory criteria. Consequently, we adopted the Liberal Democrats' proposals for Clayton-le-Dale with Ramsgreave ward and Mellor ward as part of our draft recommendations.

49 At Stage Three the Conservative Group and Balderstone, Mellor and Osbaldeston parish councils each opposed our draft recommendations for Mellor ward, instead proposing that Osbaldeston parish should be retained in Mellor ward, assessing that this would provide a better reflection of local community identities and interests. Clayton-le-Dale and Salesbury parish councils referred to the distance between Ramsgreave parish and Clayton-le-Dale and Salesbury parishes. They proposed that Clayton-le-Dale with Ramsgreave ward should be renamed Clayton-le-Dale, Osbaldeston, Ramsgreave & Salesbury. Under the proposal to include Osbaldeston parish in Mellor ward, the number of electors per councillor would be 10 per cent below the borough average in Clayton-le-Dale with Ramsgreave ward both now and in 2004 and 4 per cent above the average in Mellor ward (5 per cent above in 2004).

50 We have given careful consideration to the views which we have received in this area. In particular we note the concerns of a number of respondents regarding our draft recommendation transferring Osbaldeston parish from Mellor ward to Clayton-le-Dale with Ramsgreave ward. While we note the arguments regarding community identities in this area, we do not consider that these considerations sufficiently justify the worse levels of electoral equality which would result under such proposals. We note the proposal to rename Clayton-le-Dale with Ramsgreave ward but do not consider that there is sufficient evidence of support for the proposed name to justify such a change. Consequently, in the absence of alternative proposals in this area, we are confirming our draft recommendations for the wards of Clayton-le-Dale with Ramsgreave, Mellor and Wilpshire as final.

51 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent below the borough average in Clayton-le-Dale with Ramsgreave ward both now and in 2004, 2

per cent below in Mellor ward (1 per cent below in 2004) and 7 per cent below the borough average in Wilpshire ward (9 per cent in 2004).

Billington ward

52 The three-member Billington ward is situated in the south of the borough. The ward comprises Billington & Old Langho and Dinckley parishes. Due to the substantial amount of new housing developments which are forecast to be built in the area, the present level of under-representation is forecast to worsen by 2004, with the number of electors per councillor being 12 per cent above the average in Billington ward currently, worsening to 20 per cent in 2004.

53 At Stage One the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats each submitted the same proposals for this area. Specifically they proposed that this area should be covered by two two-member wards. A new Billington & Old Langho ward would comprise the northern part of Billington & Langho parish and would include an area of new development at the Brockhall hospital site. A new Langho ward would comprise the southern part of Billington & Langho parish together with Dinckley parish. The Borough Council stated that these proposals would achieve improvements to electoral equality by 2004, while enjoying some support from the local parishes. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 23 per cent below the borough average in Billington & Old Langho ward (8 per cent in 2004) and 4 per cent below the average in Langho ward (7 per cent in 2004).

54 In arriving at our draft recommendations we gave careful consideration to the proposals which we had received for this area and, in view of the consensus between the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats, we adopted their proposals without amendment. While we noted that there would be substantial electoral inequality in Billington & Old Langho ward initially, we also noted that the new residential development in the area would lead to significant improvements in electoral equality over the five-year period.

55 At Stage Three we received no further views regarding our proposals for this area, and we are, therefore, confirming our draft recommendations for the wards of Billington & Old Langho and Langho wards as final. Our proposals for these two wards are shown on Map A2.

Read, Simonstone and Whalley wards

56 These three wards are situated in the south-east of the borough. Read and Simonstone wards (each of which comprises the parish of the same name) are each represented by a single councillor, while Whalley ward (which also comprises the parish of the same name) is represented by two councillors. The number of electors per councillor is currently 9 per cent above the borough average in Read ward (4 per cent in 2004), 9 per cent below the average in Simonstone ward (8 per cent in 2004) and 8 per cent below the average in Whalley ward (1 per cent in 2004).

57 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed that the wards of Read, Simonstone and Whalley should be retained on their existing boundaries, as it argued that this would offer the best reflection of local community identities. Under its proposals for a council size of 40, the number of electors per councillor would be 12 per cent above the borough average in Read ward (7 per cent in 2004), 6 per cent below the borough average in Simonstone ward both now and in 2004, and 6 per cent below the borough average in Whalley ward (1 per cent above in 2004).

58 The Liberal Democrats alternatively proposed that Simonstone and Read wards should be combined to form a new two-member Read & Simonstone ward, arguing that this would provide improved electoral equality while providing a better reflection of local settlement patterns. They proposed that Whalley parish should be represented by two councillors and should be expanded to include Great Mitton and Little Mitton parishes. Under their proposal the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the borough average in Read & Simonstone ward (equal to the average in 2004) and 1 per cent above in Whalley ward (9 per cent in 2004).

59 In arriving at our draft recommendations, we gave careful consideration to the views which we had received during Stage One. With regard to the proposals for Read and Simonstone wards, we noted that the Borough Council proposed retaining the two single-member wards on their existing boundaries, while the Liberal Democrats proposed that they should be combined to form a two-member ward. Having visited the area, we did not consider that to combine these parishes in a single ward, as proposed by the Liberal Democrats, would have an adverse impact on community identities locally and, in the light of the improvements to electoral equality which would be secured, we adopted their proposed Read & Simonstone ward as part of our draft recommendations. In the case of Whalley ward, we also adopted the Liberal Democrats' proposal for a two-member ward in this area as we considered that it would achieve reasonable electoral equality and reflect the statutory criteria while facilitating proposals which would meet our objectives across the wider borough area.

60 At Stage Three, the Conservative Group opposed the draft recommendations for Whalley ward, instead reiterating the Borough Council's Stage One proposal that this ward should be retained on its existing boundaries. Bashall Eaves & Mitton Parish Council and Whalley Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations for Whalley ward. Read and Simonstone parish councils opposed the draft recommendations creating a two-member Read and Simonstone ward. The Liberal Democrats supported our draft recommendations, in particular referring to the geographical proximity of Read and Simonstone parishes.

61 We have given careful consideration to the views which we have received during Stage Three in this area. With regard to the opposition which we have received to the draft recommendation for a two-member Read & Simonstone ward, we continue to consider that, having visited the area, such a warding arrangement would provide a good reflection of local community identities and would provide significantly better electoral equality than retaining two single-member wards in this area. In the absence of further alternative proposals we are therefore confirming our draft recommendation for a two-member Read & Simonstone ward as final. In

the case of the proposal to retain Whalley ward on its existing boundaries, we note that this proposal would achieve better electoral equality in Whalley ward than under our draft recommendations. However, in conducting this review we are unable to have regard to any single area in isolation, but must consider the impact which any proposal would have upon the level of electoral equality achieved across the wider area. In this case we note that this proposal is not compatible with our recommendations for wards to the north-west. Consequently, we are not adopting this proposal and, in the absence of alternative proposals, are confirming our draft recommendation for Whalley ward as final.

Chatburn, Sabden and Wiswell & Pendleton wards

62 The three single-member wards of Chatburn, Sabden and Wiswell & Pendleton are situated in the south east of the borough. Chatburn ward comprises the parishes of Chatburn, Downham and Twiston, Sabden ward comprises the parish of that name while Wiswell ward comprises the parishes of Little Mitton, Mearley, Pendleton, Wiswell and Worston. The number of electors per councillor is 4 per cent below the borough average in Chatburn ward (6 per cent below in 2004), equal to the average in Sabden ward (2 per cent above in 2004) and 1 per cent below the average in Wiswell & Pendleton ward (2 per cent below in 2004).

63 At Stage One both the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats proposed that the wards of Chatburn and Sabden should be retained on their existing boundaries, while Little Mitton parish would be transferred from Wiswell & Pendleton ward to form part of a new ward to the west. Each ward would retain its existing level of representation. Under the Borough Council's and Liberal Democrats' schemes, the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent below the borough average in Chatburn ward (4 per cent in 2004), 2 per cent above in Sabden ward (1 per cent in 2004) and 1 per cent below in Wiswell & Pendleton ward both now and in 2004.

64 We considered the proposals in this area and concluded that in view of the good levels of electoral equality which would result, together with the consensus which existed between the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats, we should adopt their proposals as part of our draft recommendations.

65 At Stage Three, Wiswell Parish Council considered that "the removal of the parish of Little Mitton from the existing Wiswell & Pendleton borough ward would have little or no implications". Bashall Eaves & Mitton Parish Council proposed that the parishes of Little Mitton and Great Mitton should form part of a revised Aighton, Bailey & Chaigley ward. Under such a proposal the number of electors per councillor would be 16 per cent above the borough average in Aighton, Bailey & Chaigley ward initially (14 per cent in 2004).

66 We have carefully considered Bashall Eaves & Mitton Parish Council's proposal that Great Mitton and Little Mitton parishes should be included in a revised Aighton, Bailey & Chaigley ward. While we note that the Parish Council considers that such a warding arrangement would

better reflect local community identities, we are concerned at the poor levels of electoral equality that would result under such a proposal in the proposed ward. In this case, we do not consider that the arguments relating to community identities and interests justify the poor levels of electoral equality which would result under such proposals, particularly as there is a viable alternative available. Consequently, in the light of the general consensus which exists in support of our draft recommendations for the wards in this area, we are confirming our draft recommendations for the wards of Chatburn, Sabden and Wiswell & Pendleton as final.

67 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent below the borough average in Chatburn ward (4 per cent in 2004), 2 per cent above in Sabden ward (1 per cent in 2004) and 1 per cent below in Wiswell & Pendleton ward both now and in 2004.

Bolton-by-Bowland, Bowland, Newton & Slaidburn, Gisburn, Rimington, Grindleton & West Bradford and Waddington wards

68 These five single-member wards are situated in the centre and north-east of the borough. The area as a whole is over-represented; the number of electors per councillor is 32 per cent below the borough average in Bolton-by-Bowland ward (31 per cent in 2004), 34 per cent below the average in Bowland, Newton & Slaidburn ward (31 per cent in 2004), 19 per cent below in Gisburn, Rimington ward (16 per cent in 2004), 11 per cent above in Grindleton & West Bradford ward (9 per cent in 2004) and 7 per cent below in Waddington ward (9 per cent in 2004). Bolton-by-Bowland ward comprises the parishes of Bolton-by-Bowland, Gisburn Forest and Sawley; Bowland, Newton & Slaidburn ward comprises the parishes of Bowland Forest High, Bowland Forest Low, Easington, Newton & Slaidburn; Gisburn, Rimington ward comprises the parishes of Gisburn, Horton, Middop, Newsholme, Paythorne and Rimington; Grindleton & West Bradford ward comprises Grindleton and West Bradford parishes; and Waddington ward comprises the parishes of Bashall Eaves, Great Mitton and Waddington.

69 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that Gisburn, Rimington ward should be expanded to include the parish of Gisburn Forest (currently in Bolton-by-Bowland ward). It proposed that the remainder of Bolton-by-Bowland ward should be combined with the parishes of Easington, Newton and Slaidburn (currently in Bowland, Newton & Slaidburn ward) to form a new Newton, Slaidburn, Sawley & Bolton-by-Bowland ward. The Borough Council proposed that Grindleton & West Bradford ward should be retained on its existing boundaries. It proposed that Waddington ward should be expanded to include Little Mitton parish (currently in Wiswell & Pendleton ward). The Council stated that while its proposals would not satisfy all of the parties who responded to its own consultation exercise, it considered its proposals “to be the best of the options available”, as they secured improvements to electoral equality across the area concerned. Under the Borough Council’s scheme the number of electors per councillor would be 6 per cent below the borough average in Gisburn, Rimington ward (4 per cent in 2004), 14 per cent above in Grindleton & West Bradford ward (11 per cent in 2004), 2 per cent above in Newton,

Slaidburn, Sawley & Bolton-by-Bowland ward (7 per cent in 2004) and 3 per cent below in Waddington ward (4 per cent in 2004).

70 While the Liberal Democrats agreed with the Borough Council's proposed modification to Gisburn, Rimington ward, in the remaining area they proposed an alternative warding configuration to that put forward by the Borough Council. They proposed that a new two-member Waddington & West Bradford ward should comprise Grindleton & West Bradford ward together with Sawley parish (currently in Bolton-by-Bowland ward) and Waddington parish (currently in the ward of that name). The Liberal Democrats also proposed that a modified Bowland, Newton & Slaidburn ward should comprise the parishes of Bowland Forest Low, Easington, Newton and Slaidburn (currently in Bowland, Newton & Slaidburn ward) together with Bolton-by-Bowland parish (currently in Bolton-by-Bowland ward). The Liberal Democrats argued that their proposals would achieve a more equitable distribution of the electorate while providing a satisfactory reflection of community identities locally. Under the alternative proposals included in the Liberal Democrats' scheme the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent below the borough average in Bowland, Newton & Slaidburn ward (4 per cent in 2004) and 4 per cent above in Waddington & West Bradford ward (2 per cent in 2004).

71 Bowlands Forest Lower Division Parish Council supported retaining the existing arrangements in its area. West Bradford Parish Council supported the proposal to form a two-member ward together with Grindleton parish and Waddington parish.

72 In formulating our draft recommendations, we gave careful consideration to the views which we received in this area. We noted the agreement between the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats regarding the warding arrangements for Gisburn, Rimington ward and therefore included this ward as part of our draft recommendations. In the remaining area, while we noted the preference of the Borough Council for retaining a pattern of single-member wards, we also noted that such proposals would result in a substantial electoral imbalance in one ward. Consequently, having visited the area, we adopted the Liberal Democrats' proposals for the wards of Bowland, Newton & Slaidburn and Waddington & West Bradford as we considered that they offered a satisfactory balance of the need to improve electoral equality and the other statutory criteria.

73 At Stage Three, the Conservative Group proposed an alternative arrangement of wards in this area, which it stated would better reflect local community identities and interests and would pay greater attention to "the practical problems of representing a ward with a large but sparsely populated geographical area". Consequently the Conservative Group proposed that Bowland, Newton & Slaidburn ward should be retained on its existing boundaries. Under this proposal, the number of electors per councillor would be 32 per cent below the borough average in Bowland, Newton & Slaidburn ward (29 per cent in 2004). The Conservative Group submitted proposals for two modified wards for the area in the centre of the borough, a single-member ward comprising the existing Waddington ward together with Little Mitton parish and a two-member ward comprising Grindleton and West Bradford parishes together with Bolton by Bowland and

Sawley parishes. Under this proposal the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent below the average in the modified Waddington ward (4 per cent in 2004) and 14 per cent below in Grindleton & West Bradford ward both now and in 2004. It also submitted an alternative proposal for these two wards to be combined to form a three-member ward, which it stated would achieve better electoral equality than utilising two single-member wards. Under this alternative proposal the number of electors per councillor would be 10 per cent below the borough average in a Waddington and West Bradford ward (11 per cent in 2004).

74 The Liberal Democrats supported our draft recommendations for the wards in this area. West Bradford Parish Council supported our draft recommendations for Waddington & West Bradford ward. Slaidburn & Easington Parish Council considered that the Slaidburn & Easington, Newton in Bowland, Dunsop Bridge, Lane Ends and Tosside areas should remain in a ward together, arguing that “it would be a shame to break up community ties that have existed for a large number of years”.

75 We have carefully considered the further views which we have received in this area. With regard to the Conservative Group’s alternative proposals, retaining Bowland, Newton & Slaidburn ward on its existing boundaries and offering alternative warding arrangements in the remaining area, we note their concerns regarding community identities in this area. However we also note that to retain Bowland, Newton & Slaidburn ward on its existing boundaries would lead to very severe electoral inequalities in that ward both now and in 2004, and we are not therefore persuaded that the concerns regarding community identity can justify such electoral inequalities. Similarly we note that the Conservative Group’s proposals for the remainder of this area would not provide as equitable a distribution of the electorate as under our draft recommendations, and would not be compatible with our proposals for the wider area. Consequently, and in the absence of further proposals in this area, we are confirming our draft recommendations as final.

76 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent below the borough average in Bowland, Newton & Slaidburn ward (4 per cent in 2004) and 4 per cent above in Waddington & West Bradford ward (2 per cent in 2004).

Aighton, Bailey & Chaigley and Ribchester wards

77 These two single-member wards are situated in the centre and west of the borough. The number of electors per councillor is 27 per cent below the borough average in Aighton, Bailey & Chaigley ward (29 per cent in 2004) and 27 per cent above the average in Ribchester ward (30 per cent above in 2004). Aighton, Bailey & Chaigley ward comprises the parish of the same name, while Ribchester ward comprises the parishes of Dutton, Hothersall and Ribchester.

78 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that Aighton, Bailey & Chaigley ward should be expanded to include Bowland Forest Low parish (currently in Bowland, Newton & Slaidburn ward) and Dutton parish (currently in Ribchester ward). It proposed that Ribchester ward should then comprise that parish alone, thereby transferring Hothersall parish to form part of a ward to

the west, described later. The Council argued that such an arrangement would provide a good balance of the need to seek improvements to electoral equality while having regard to the other statutory criteria. Under the Borough Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent above the borough average in Aighton, Bailey & Chaigley ward (1 per cent in 2004) and 7 per cent above the average in Ribchester ward (9 per cent in 2004).

79 The Liberal Democrats proposed that Aighton, Bailey & Chaigley ward should be expanded to include Dutton parish (currently in Ribchester ward) and Bashall Eaves parish (currently in Waddington ward). The Liberal Democrats agreed with the Borough Council's proposed Ribchester ward. Under their alternative proposal, the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent above the borough average in Aighton, Bailey & Chaigley ward (1 per cent below in 2004).

80 In arriving at our draft recommendations we gave careful consideration to the views which we had received. In view of the consensus between the two schemes with regard to the proposed Ribchester ward, which we judged would meet our objectives, we adopted this ward as part of our draft recommendations. In the case of the differing proposals for Aighton, Bailey & Chaigley ward, we noted that each scheme would provide similarly good levels of electoral equality. However, in conducting this review we noted that we were unable to look at any single area in isolation but must consider the impact which any proposals would have upon our scheme for the wider area. Consequently, we adopted the Liberal Democrats' proposal for Aighton, Bailey & Chaigley ward, as we judged that it would provide a good level of electoral equality, while facilitating an improved scheme for the wider area.

81 In addition to the views of Bashall Eaves & Mitton Parish Council, detailed above, during Stage Three the Conservative Group proposed that the existing Aighton, Bailey & Chaigley ward should be modified to include Dutton parish. Under this proposal the number of electors per councillor would be 11 per cent below the borough average in Aighton, Bailey & Chaigley ward initially, worsening to 13 per cent below in 2004.

82 The Liberal Democrats considered that its Stage One proposals for Aighton, Bailey & Chaigley ward achieved satisfactory electoral equality while facilitating improvements in electoral equality for the wider area. Ribchester Parish Council supported our draft recommendations for Ribchester ward.

83 We have considered carefully the views which we have received in relation to these two wards. In particular, we note the general consensus regarding our proposals for Ribchester ward and are therefore confirming our draft recommendation for this ward as final. With regard to the Conservative Group's proposed modifications to Aighton, Bailey & Chaigley ward, we are concerned at the worse electoral equality which would result from such proposals and note that these proposals would not be compatible with our scheme for the wider borough area. Consequently we are not adopting the Conservative Group's proposed Aighton, Bailey &

Chaigley ward and, in the absence of further proposals, are confirming our draft recommendations for the wards of Aighton, Bailey & Chaigley and Ribchester as final.

Alston, Chipping and Dilworth wards

84 These three wards are situated in the west of the borough. Chipping ward is represented by a single councillor, Alston ward by two councillors and Dilworth ward by three councillors. The number of electors per councillor is 28 per cent above the average in Alston ward (27 per cent in 2004), 9 per cent above in Chipping ward both now and in 2004 and 5 per cent below in Dilworth ward (6 per cent in 2004). Chipping ward comprises the parishes of Bowland-with-Leagram, Chipping and Thornley-with-Wheatley, while Alston ward and Dilworth ward each comprise a ward of Longridge parish.

85 At Stage One the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats submitted the same proposals for warding in this area. Specifically, they proposed that a modified single-member Chipping ward should comprise the parishes of Bowland-with-Leagram and Chipping (currently in Chipping ward) together with Bowland Forest High parish (currently in Bowland, Newton & Slaidburn ward). The remaining area would be covered by three two-member wards: a new Derby & Thornley ward would comprise Thornley-with-Wheatley parish together with the western part of the existing Dilworth ward; the remainder of Dilworth ward would be combined with an area in the north of Alston ward to form a modified Dilworth ward; the remainder of Alston ward would be combined with Hothersall parish to form a new Alston & Hothersall ward.

86 Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 6 per cent below the borough average in Alston & Hothersall ward (7 per cent in 2004), 1 per cent below the average in Chipping ward (2 per cent in 2004), 5 per cent above the average in Derby & Thornley ward (4 per cent in 2004) and 4 per cent below in Dilworth ward (5 per cent in 2004).

87 In considering the evidence which we have received in this area, we noted that the proposals which were put to us by the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats achieved significant improvements to electoral equality while, we judged, adequately reflecting the statutory criteria. We therefore adopted the proposals for these wards as part of our draft recommendations.

88 At Stage Three, the Conservative Group proposed that the existing Chipping ward should be retained on its existing boundaries, arguing that this reflected the preference which the parishes concerned had expressed during the Borough Council's own initial consultation exercise. The Conservative Group proposed that the remaining area, comprising Hothersall and Longridge parishes, should be served by five borough councillors, although it did not propose specific ward boundaries for this area. Under such proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 12 per cent above the borough average in Chipping ward (11 per cent in 2004) while, based on an equal division of the electorate between councillors, each of the five councillors for the Longridge/Hothersall area would represent 13 per cent more electors than the borough average initially (12 per cent in 2004).

89 Ribble Valley Borough Council informed us that Councillor Bailey, member for Chipping ward, while expressing disappointment that Chipping ward could not be retained on its existing boundaries, supported our draft recommendation for the ward. The Borough Council also indicated that Chipping Parish Council had informed them that they shared Councillor Bailey's view.

90 We have given careful consideration to the views which we have received in this area. While we acknowledge the alternative proposals which have been put to us by the Conservative Group, we note that under such proposals the wards in this area would be significantly under-represented. Therefore, in view of the good electoral equality which would be secured under our draft recommendations, which we consider would provide a generally good reflection of the statutory criteria, we are confirming our draft recommendations for these wards as final. Our final recommendations for Longridge are illustrated on Map A3.

91 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor would be 6 per cent below the borough average in Alston & Hothersall ward (7 per cent in 2004), 1 per cent below the average in Chipping ward (2 per cent in 2004), 5 per cent above the average in Derby & Thornley ward (4 per cent in 2004) and 4 per cent below in Dilworth ward (5 per cent in 2004).

Electoral Cycle

92 The Borough Council commented that it wished to continue to be elected together every four years. A resident of the borough proposed that the Council should be elected by thirds. We received no other proposals in relation to the electoral cycle of the borough. Accordingly, in the absence of evidence of general support for a change in the Council's electoral cycle, we did not recommend any change to the present system of whole-council elections every four years in our draft recommendations.

93 At Stage Three no further comments were received to the contrary, and we confirm our draft recommendation as final.

Conclusions

94 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided to endorse our draft recommendations without amendment.

95 We conclude that, in Ribble Valley:

- there should be an increase in council size from 39 to 40;
- there should be 24 wards, as at present;
- the boundaries of 21 of the existing wards should be modified, while three wards should remain the same;
- the whole council should continue to be elected together every four years.

96 Figure 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1999 electorate figures and forecast electorates for the year 2004.

Figure 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	1999 electorate		2004 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	39	40	39	40
Number of wards	24	24	24	24
Average number of electors per councillor	1,083	1,056	1,087	1,060
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	13	1	14	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	5	1	5	0

97 As Figure 4 shows, our final recommendations for Ribble Valley Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from 13 to one. By 2004 electoral equality is anticipated to continue to improve with no ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average.

Final Recommendation
 Ribble Valley Borough Council should comprise 40 councillors serving 24 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. The Council should continue to be elected together every four years.

Parish Council Electoral Arrangements

98 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 Local Government 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 Billington & Langho, Clitheroe and Longridge.

99 Billington & Langho Parish Council is currently served by nine councillors and the parish is unwarded. In order to facilitate its proposals for district warding in this area, the District Council proposed that Billington & Langho parish should be warded into two, one parish ward covering the Langho settlement, to be called Langho, and the other covering the remainder of the parish, to be called Billington & Old Langho. The Borough Council did not include proposals for distributing the councillors between these two wards. As this proposal formed part of our draft recommendations, we adopted the Borough Council's parish warding arrangements for Billington & Langho Parish Council. In the absence of specific proposals relating to the distribution of councillors between the two wards concerned, we proposed that Billington & Old Langho parish ward should be represented by five councillors, while Langho parish ward should be represented by four.

100 No further comments were received in response to our consultation report. Therefore, having considered all the evidence received, and in the light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for warding Billington & Langho parish as final.

Final Recommendation

Billington & Langho Parish Council should comprise nine councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Billington & Old Langho (five councillors) and Langho (four). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A2.

101 Clitheroe Town Council is currently served by 10 councillors who represent four wards - Edisford, Low Moor & Trinity, Grammar School, Ribblesdale and St James's - which are coterminous with the borough wards. Edisford, Low Moor & Trinity and Grammar School wards are each represented by three councillors, while Ribblesdale and St James's are each represented by two. In the light of our draft recommendations for borough warding in Clitheroe, we proposed creating five new parish wards - Edisford & Low Moor, Littlemoor, Primrose, St Mary's and Salthill - to correspond with the five new borough wards proposed by the Borough Council. We proposed that each parish ward should return two councillors.

102 At Stage Three no alternative proposals were received in this area. Therefore, having considered all the evidence received, and in the light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for warding Billington & Langho parish as final.

Final Recommendation

Clitheroe Town Council should comprise 10 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Edisford & Low Moor, Littlemoor, Primrose, St Mary's and Salthill, each returning two councillors. The boundaries between the five parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

103 Longridge Town Council is currently served by 10 councillors representing two wards, Alston and Dilworth, each of which is represented by five councillors. In the light of our draft recommendations for district warding in Longridge parish, which reflected the Borough Council's proposals, we proposed modifying the parish ward boundaries to correspond with those of the borough wards within the parish. This would create a new Derby parish ward. The Borough Council proposed that each parish ward should be represented by four councillors, an increase of two for the parish as a whole. We considered that such a proposal was justified and included it as part of our draft recommendations.

104 Having considered all the evidence received, and in the light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for warding Longridge parish as final.

Final Recommendation

Longridge Town Council should comprise 12 councillors, two more than at present, representing three wards: Alston, Derby and Dilworth, each returning four councillors. The boundaries between the three parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map A3.

105 In our draft recommendations report we proposed that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the district, and are confirming this as final.

Final Recommendation

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

Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Ribble Valley

6 NEXT STEPS

106 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Ribble Valley and submitted our final recommendations to the Secretary of State, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992.

107 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an order. Such an order will not be made before 17 October 2000.

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

The Secretary of State
Local Government Sponsorship Division
Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for Ribble Valley: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for the Ribble Valley 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 warding of Billington & Langho parish.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed re-warding of Longridge parish.

The large map inserted in the back of the report illustrates the proposed warding arrangements for Clitheroe.

Map A1: Final Recommendations for Ribble Valley: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Warding of Billington & Langho Parish

Map A3: Proposed Re-warding of Longridge Parish