

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Rossendale in Lancashire

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

September 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

Members of the Commission are:

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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Rossendale 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 Rossendale under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in February 2000 and undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although some modifications have been made (see paragraph 76) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Rossendale.

We recommend that Rossendale Borough Council should be served by 36 councillors representing 14 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 Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

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 that 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

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Rossendale on 7 September 1999. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 15 February 2000, after which we undertook an eight-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 Rossendale:

- **in seven of the 13 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and six wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average. This level of electoral inequality is projected to remain constant over the next five years.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 76-77) are that:

- **Rossendale Borough Council should have 36 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 14 wards, instead of 13 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all but one of the existing wards should be modified;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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 of the proposed 14 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 projected to remain constant over the next five years.**

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

- **new warding arrangements for Whitworth town.**

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
Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
Local Government Sponsorship Division
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	Crawshawbooth & Loveclough	2	Cribden ward (part)	Large map
2	Cribden	2	Cribden ward (part); Hareholme ward (part)	Large map and Map A1
3	Eden	2	<i>Unchanged</i>	Large map
4	Facit & Shawforth	2	Facit & Shawforth ward as proposed of Whitworth town	Large map
5	Greenfield	3	Greenfield ward (part); Helmshore ward (part); Longholme ward (part)	Large map
6	Greensclough	3	Greensclough ward (part); Irwell ward (part)	Large map, Map A2 and Map A3
7	Hareholme	3	Hareholme ward (part); Whitewell ward (part)	Large map and Map A1
8	Healey & Whitworth	2	Healey & Whitworth parish ward as proposed of Whitworth town	Large map
9	Helmshore	3	Helmshore ward (part)	Large map
10	Irwell	3	Irwell ward (part); Greensclough ward (part); Stacksteads ward (part)	Large map and Map A2
11	Longholme	3	Longholme ward (part); Cribden ward (part)	Large map
12	Stacksteads	2	Stacksteads ward (part)	Large map and Map A3
13	Whitewell	3	Whitewell ward (part); Stacksteads ward (part)	Large map
14	Worsley	3	Worsley ward; Greenfield ward (part)	Large map

Notes: 1 Whitworth is the only parish in the borough, and is covered by Facit & Shawforth and Healey & Whitworth wards.

2 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 Rossendale

	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	Crawshawbooth & Loveclough	2	2,806	1,403	0	2,810	1,405	0
2	Cribden	2	2,647	1,324	-6	2,910	1,455	4
3	Eden	2	2,793	1,397	0	2,760	1,380	-2
4	Facit & Shawforth	2	2,839	1,420	1	2,820	1,410	0
5	Greenfield	3	4,271	1,424	1	4,243	1,414	1
6	Greensclough	3	4,038	1,346	-6	4,070	1,357	-4
7	Hareholme	3	4,312	1,437	2	4,260	1,420	1
8	Healey & Whitworth	2	2,860	1,430	2	2,830	1,415	1
9	Helmshore	3	4,400	1,467	4	4,420	1,473	5
10	Irwell	3	3,862	1,287	-10	3,910	1,303	-8
11	Longholme	3	4,213	1,404	0	4,170	1,390	-1
12	Stacksteads	2	2,955	1,478	5	2,930	1,465	4
13	Whitewell	3	4,267	1,422	1	4,210	1,403	0
14	Worsley	3	4,291	1,430	2	4,257	1,440	1
	Totals	36	50,554	-	-	50,600	-	-
	Average	-	-	1,404	-	-	1,406	-

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

Notes: 1 The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

2 There are a number of small variations in the electorate figures supplied, and as a result the electorate figures in this table and in the draft recommendations table vary slightly from our final recommendations data.

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Rossendale in Lancashire. We have now reviewed 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. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004. We expect to undertake a PER of Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool unitary authorities in 2001.

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Rossendale. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in September 1975 (Report No. 110). The electoral arrangements of Lancashire County Council were last reviewed in November 1980 (Report No. 399). We intend reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements in time for the 2005 county elections.

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

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

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 councils in the borough.

5 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (third edition published in October 1999), 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 to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the borough as a whole. Having regard to our statutory criteria, our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable. 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 borough 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, nor that changes should be made to the size of a borough council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other boroughs.

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, i.e. in year one half of the district council would be elected, in year two half the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities. The proposals were 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 1999/00 PER programme, including the Lancashire districts, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the October 1999 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State's intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas.

11 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 7 September 1999, when we wrote to Rossendale Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Lancashire County Council, Lancashire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Lancashire Association of Parish & Town Councils, Whitworth Town Council, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough 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 15 February 2000 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Rossendale in Lancashire*, and ended on 10 April 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 Rossendale is situated in the south-east of Lancashire, and abuts Greater Manchester to the south and West Yorkshire to the east. The majority of Rossendale residents live in the towns of Bacup, Haslingden, Rawtenstall and Whitworth, which are located in a series of deeply cut interconnected valleys surrounded by moorland. Whitworth is the only part of the borough which is parished.

14 The borough has good communication links with Manchester and adjacent areas, via the motorway network. It contains a number of leisure resources, including the East Lancashire Steam Railway, which runs through the borough, and one of the few artificial ski slopes in the north-west of England.

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 50,508 (February 1999). The Council presently has 36 members who are elected from 13 wards. Ten wards are each represented by three councillors and three are each represented by two councillors. The Council is elected by thirds.

17 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Rossendale borough, with around 8 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing development and demographic change. The most notable increases have been in Cribden and Helmshore wards, with each having about 1,300 more electors than 20 years ago. However, there have been significant decreases in Stacksteads and Worsley wards, with each having around 500 fewer electors than 20 years ago.

18 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,403 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will remain largely unchanged over the next five years 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 seven of the 13 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average and in six wards by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Helmshore ward where each of the three councillors represents 29 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Rossendale

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 Cribden	3	5,444	1,815	29	5,710	1,903	35
2 Eden	2	2,793	1,397	0	2,760	1,380	-2
3 Facit & Shawforth	2	2,194	1,097	-22	2,170	1,085	-23
4 Greenfield	3	4,513	1,504	7	4,490	1,497	7
5 Greensclough	3	3,597	1,199	-15	3,640	1,213	-14
6 Hareholme	3	4,403	1,468	5	4,350	1,450	3
7 Healey & Whitworth	2	3,505	1,753	25	3,470	1,735	23
8 Helmshore	3	5,412	1,804	29	5,450	1,817	29
9 Irwell	3	4,187	1,396	-1	4,220	1,407	0
10 Longholme	3	4,083	1,361	-3	4,040	1,347	-4
11 Stacksteads	3	3,097	1,032	-26	3,070	1,023	-27
12 Whitewell	3	4,260	1,420	1	4,220	1,407	0
13 Worsley	3	3,020	1,007	-28	2,990	997	-29
Totals	36	50,508	-	-	50,580	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,403	-	-	1,405	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Rossendale Borough Council

Notes: 1 The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1999, electors in Healey & Whitworth ward were relatively over-represented by 25 per cent, while electors in Greensclough ward were significantly under-represented by 15 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

2 There are a number of small variations in the electorate figures supplied, and as a result the electorate figures in this table and in the draft recommendations table vary slightly from our final recommendations data.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

19 During Stage One we received two representations, including a borough-wide scheme from Rossendale Borough Council, which included both minority and majority proposals for the communities of Bacup and Haslingden. 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 Rossendale in Lancashire*.

20 Our draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council's majority proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality, and provided a pattern of two- and three-member wards. However, we put forward minor boundary modifications to four of the Borough Council's proposed 14 wards. We proposed that:

- Rossendale Borough Council should be served by 36 councillors, as at present, representing 14 wards, one more than at present;
- the boundaries of 12 of the existing wards should be modified, while one ward should retain its existing boundaries;
- there should be new warding arrangements for Whitworth town.

Draft Recommendation

Rossendale Borough Council should comprise 36 councillors, serving 14 wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

21 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in all of the 14 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average, both initially and over the next five years.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

22 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, three representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Rossendale Borough Council and the Commission by appointment.

Rossendale Borough Council

23 The Borough Council broadly supported our draft recommendations, but proposed alternative names for our proposed Bacup East, Bacup North, Cribden North and Cribden South wards.

The Conservative Group on the Borough Council

24 The Conservative Group on the Council ('the Conservatives') also broadly supported our draft recommendations, but reiterated the Borough Council's Stage One minority proposal for warding arrangements in Bacup and Haslingden.

Members of Parliament

25 Greg Pope, Member of Parliament for Hyndburn, supported our proposed electoral arrangements for Rossendale borough.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

26 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Rossendale is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to the statutory criteria set out in the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the 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”.

27 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.

28 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.

29 Our *Guidance* states that, while 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

30 At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting that the number of electors in the borough would remain constant over the next five years, with around 50,600 electors. However, it expected that there would be growth in Cribden ward, due to ongoing residential development. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

31 At Stage Three the Borough Council revisited its electoral projections, and made minor modifications in the light of the latest electoral register. The Conservatives argued that the electorate forecasts did not take into account “the large number of approved planning applications for residential development in the proposed Bacup North ward.” In the light of these concerns, we sought further clarification from officers at the Borough Council regarding their electoral

forecasts. Having reconsidered the electoral forecasts for Bacup North ward in the light of the evidence received, and following further advice from the Borough Council, we are content that the Borough Council's electoral projection for Bacup North ward represents the best estimate of electorate growth over the next five years that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council Size

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

33 Rossendale Borough Council is at present served by 36 councillors. At Stage One the Borough Council proposed retaining the existing council size. In our draft recommendations report we considered that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council size of 36.

34 We received no further representations relating to council size at Stage Three and we remain content that a council size of 36 members would provide effective and convenient local government for electors in the borough.

Electoral Arrangements

35 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including the borough-wide scheme from the Borough Council, which put forward majority and minority proposals for Bacup and Haslingden. From these representations, some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations.

36 While both the majority and minority proposals would provide much improved electoral equality for wards in the borough, we concluded that the majority proposals would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. However, to improve electoral equality further and having regard to local community identities and interests, we decided to move away from the Borough Council's proposal in two areas.

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

- (a) Haslingden (three wards) and Eden ward;
- (b) Rawtenstall (four wards);
- (c) Bacup (three wards);
- (d) Whitworth (two wards).

38 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.

Haslingden (three wards) and Eden ward

39 Haslingden is situated in the west of the borough and is covered by three wards: Greenfield, Helmshore and Worsley, each represented by three councillors. Eden ward is served by two councillors and covers the communities of Edenfield and Stubbins, together with adjoining moorland. Under current arrangements, Greenfield and Helmshore wards have 7 per cent and 29 per cent more electors than the borough average respectively. Worsley ward has 28 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average, while the number of electors per councillor in Eden ward is equal to the average. This electoral imbalance is projected to remain largely unchanged over the next five years.

40 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that Eden ward should retain its existing boundaries. However, it submitted two alternative proposals for wards in Haslingden, both of which retained three three-member wards for the town. The majority proposal argued that the B6232 Grane Road should be retained as a ward boundary as it formed a “natural break in the development pattern”. It proposed modifying the boundary between Greenfield ward and Worsley ward to the east of the town centre, with the area north of Hillside Road forming part of Worsley ward. Under the majority proposal, the revised boundary between Greenfield and Helmshore wards would follow Jubilee Road and part of the B6214 Helmshore Road, before following Elizabeth Drive and the western side of the Knowsley Road Industrial Estate and then crossing Rossendale Golf Course. Under this proposal, the number of electors per councillor in all three wards in Haslingden would vary by no more than 3 per cent from the borough average. This electoral equality is projected to remain constant over the next five years.

41 The minority proposal was broadly similar to the majority scheme for Haslingden. However, it argued that the boundary between Helmshore and Worsley wards should be modified to include the area adjoining Calf Hey, Holden Wood and Ogden reservoirs and electors north of Windsor Avenue and west of the A56 in Worsley ward. The minority proposal would also include electors on roads which are only accessible from Grane Road, together with the area north of Wells Street, in Worsley ward. It also proposed retaining part of Broadway as Greenfield’s south-eastern ward boundary. Under the minority proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Greenfield, Helmshore and Worsley wards would vary by 1 per cent, 8 per cent and 1 per cent from the borough average respectively in both 1999 and 2004.

42 In our draft recommendations report we noted that there was consensus regarding the number of councillors and wards that would best represent Haslingden under a council size of 36, and we concurred with this view. There was less agreement regarding ward boundaries within the town. While both proposals would achieve much improved electoral equality, we considered that the majority proposal would achieve the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

43 However, we put forward a minor modification to the Borough Council’s majority proposal for the boundary between Greenfield and Helmshore wards. We proposed that it should follow the north side of the Sports Centre grounds, as we considered that both the majority and minority proposals would divide the B6214 Helmshore Road arbitrarily. This modification would affect a total of 108 electors. We were therefore content to endorse the Borough Council’s majority proposal, subject to this minor modification.

44 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported our draft recommendations for this area. The Conservatives supported our proposal to retain Eden ward, but reiterated the Borough Council's Stage One minority proposal for wards in Helmshore, arguing that the minority proposal better reflected community ties, particularly in the Ewood Bridge area. They also noted that our proposal would divide Hillside Road between two wards.

45 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have not been persuaded to depart from our draft recommendations. We consider that our proposal would provide the best possible balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. While we note the Conservatives' concern regarding the representation of the Ewood Bridge community, we consider that our proposed Greenfield ward comprises communities with similar identities and interests.

46 We have not been persuaded that their alternative proposal would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, as the Conservatives' proposed Greenfield ward would straddle Rossendale Golf Course, and their proposed Worsley ward would combine diverse areas such as the Rising Bridge community in the north of Haslingden and electors on Warburton Street and adjoining roads, which is more centrally situated in the town. Furthermore, the Conservatives' proposed Helmshore ward boundary would divide five minor roads between Helmshore ward and adjoining wards, and we remain of the view that this would satisfactorily reflect the interests and identities of communities in these areas.

47 We also note the Conservatives' concern regarding our proposal to divide Hillside Road between Greenfield and Worsley wards. In the light of their comments, we propose that Hillside Road should be wholly represented in our proposed Greenfield ward. We consider that this proposed modification would better reflect community ties, while having a negligible effect on electoral equality.

48 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Greenfield, Helmshore and Worsley wards would vary by 1 per cent, 4 per cent and 2 per cent more than the average respectively. This electoral equality is not projected to change significantly over the next five years.

Rawtenstall (four wards)

49 Rawtenstall is the largest town in the borough, and is covered by four three-member wards: Cribden, Hareholme, Longholme and Whitewell. Under current arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Cribden, Hareholme, Longholme and Whitewell wards varies by 29 per cent, 5 per cent, 3 per cent and 1 per cent from the average respectively. This electoral imbalance is not projected to significantly change in three of these wards over the next five years, however electoral inequality is expected to deteriorate further in Cribden ward, with the number of electors per councillor projected to vary by more than 30 per cent from the average by 2004.

50 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that Rawtenstall should be represented by 13 councillors, one more than at present, due to housing development in Cribden ward. It proposed that Cribden should be represented by two two-member wards, with the area north of Hugh Rake and Short Clough Lane forming a new Cribden North ward, while the rest of the existing Cribden

ward, less the area bounded by Haslingden Old Road and the moorland adjoining Oakenhead Wood Old Road, would form a new Cribden South ward. It proposed that the area north of Haslingden Old Road should be transferred to a revised Longholme ward.

51 The Borough Council also proposed that the area bounded by Hurst Lane and Newchurch Road should be transferred from Hareholme ward to the new Cribden South ward, to improve electoral equality. It suggested that a small area to the south of the A681 Bacup Road, including Stansfield Road and Duke Street, should be transferred from Whitewell ward to Hareholme ward to correct a “local anomaly”, while an area east of Fearn Moss and Fearn Hall in Stacksteads ward would be included in Whitewell ward. In addition, it proposed a minor modification between Longholme and Greenfield wards, which would not affect any electors, to provide a more easily identifiable ward boundary. Hareholme, Longholme and Whitewell wards would continue to each be represented by three councillors. The Council noted that it wished to give further consideration to ward names in this area at Stage Three.

52 Under the Borough Council’s proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Cribden South, Hareholme and Whitewell wards would vary by 5 per cent, 3 per cent, and 2 per cent from the borough average respectively, while the number of electors per councillor in Cribden North and Longholme wards would be equal to the average. This level of improved electoral equality is forecast to be largely unchanged over the next five years.

53 In our draft recommendations report we noted that the Borough Council’s proposal would secure the correct level of representation for Rawtenstall, given a council size of 36. We considered that the Council’s scheme would provide the best possible balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and we were content to endorse it without modification.

54 At Stage Three the Borough Council and the Conservatives supported our draft recommendations for ward boundaries in Rawtenstall. However, the Borough Council proposed that Cribden North and Cribden South wards should be renamed Crawshawbooth & Loveclough and Cribden respectively. It argued that these alternative names would better reflect the wards’ constituent communities.

55 We have given careful consideration to the representations received, and are content to endorse our draft recommendations as final, subject to adopting the Borough Council’s alternative ward names. We are content that Crawshawbooth & Loveclough and Cribden wards would better reflect the communities they contain, and therefore adopt them as part of our final recommendations.

56 Under our final recommendations Cribden, Hareholme and Whitewell wards would vary by 6 per cent, 2 per cent, and 1 per cent from the borough average respectively, while the number of electors per councillor in Crawshawbooth & Loveclough and Longholme wards would be equal to the average. This improved electoral equality is forecast to be largely unchanged over the next five years.

Bacup (three wards)

57 The town of Bacup straddles the A671 Rochdale Road and the A681 Todmorden Road, and comprises the wards of Greensclough, Irwell and Stacksteads, each represented by three councillors. Under current arrangements, the number of electors per councillor varies by 15 per cent, 1 per cent and 26 per cent respectively. This level of electoral inequality is not expected to change significantly over the next five years.

58 At Stage One the Borough Council submitted a majority and minority scheme for wards in Bacup. Both proposals would largely retain the current Stacksteads ward and would reduce the number of councillors for the ward from three to two. Both schemes also proposed including the area east of Fearn Moss in the proposed Whitewell ward, as indicated previously, and transferring the part of Stacksteads ward bounded by Fernhill Drive and the area north of the dismantled railway to Irwell ward. In addition, the Borough Council noted that it wished to give further consideration to ward names in Bacup at Stage Three.

59 There was less agreement regarding the proposed boundaries between Greensclough and Irwell wards, although both schemes proposed that the area should continue to be divided between two three-member wards. The majority proposal held that the existing boundary between these wards was “arbitrary and difficult to identify”. It proposed that a new Bacup East ward should include electors to the south of the A681 Todmorden Road and to the east of the A671 Rochdale Road and Lane End Road, and that a new Bacup North ward should cover the area to the north and west of the A671 and A681 roads, to the east of Stacksteads ward.

60 Under the majority proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Bacup East, Bacup North and Stacksteads ward would vary by 6 per cent, 10 per cent and 5 per cent from the borough average respectively. This level of electoral equality is not projected to change significantly over the next five years.

61 The minority proposal sought to substantially retain the existing arrangements, arguing that they reflect the interests and communities in Bacup. It proposed minor boundary modifications so that the boundary between these wards would follow main roads through the town centre, with the area to the north of Bankside Lane and west of the A671 Burnley Road, together with the area east of Gladstone Street and the area bounded by St James Street and South Street, being transferred from Irwell ward to Greensclough ward.

62 Under the minority proposal, the number of electors per councillor in Greensclough, Irwell and Stacksteads ward would vary by 7 per cent, 6 per cent and 5 per cent from the borough average respectively. This electoral equality is projected to remain largely unchanged over the next five years.

63 In our draft recommendations report we noted that both proposals would provide improved electoral equality. There was consensus that Bacup merits eight councillors, under a council size of 36, and we concurred with this view. We proposed endorsing the majority proposals for Bacup, as we considered that the A671 Rochdale Road and the A681 Todmorden Road form strong and easily identifiable boundaries. We were not persuaded that the boundaries proposed

under the minority scheme would be as strong, as they would utilise minor roads, which we were not persuaded would be easily identifiable ward boundaries.

64 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported our draft recommendations for ward boundaries in Bacup, but suggested that our proposed Bacup East and Bacup North wards should be renamed Irwell and Greensclough respectively. The Conservatives supported the Borough Council's Stage One minority proposals, arguing that our draft recommendations would provide a higher degree of electoral imbalance. They also stated that our proposals would not satisfactorily reflect community ties, arguing that the proposed Bacup North ward would combine the part of Bacup adjoining Burnley borough with the area adjoining Stacksteads ward. In addition, they argued that our proposed ward boundaries were "arbitrary and difficult to identify".

65 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period. We have re-examined the Conservatives' proposed warding arrangements in this area but, on balance, have not been persuaded that their proposal would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We do not consider that the Conservatives' proposed ward boundaries in this area would be as strong or as easily identifiable as our draft recommendations. In our judgement, Gladstone Street, South Street and Rose Street would not form boundaries as strong as our proposal to utilise the A681 Todmorden Road and A671 Rochdale Road as ward boundaries. While we note their concern that our proposed Bacup North ward would combine electors in the east of Bacup with electors in the area adjoining Stacksteads ward, we have not been persuaded, on the evidence provided, that this ward would not satisfactorily reflect electors' interests and identities.

66 While we note that the Conservatives' proposals would provide a marginally better level of electoral equality than our draft recommendations, we have not been persuaded that their proposals would achieve a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than our draft recommendations. We therefore propose endorsing our draft recommendations for ward boundaries in Bacup as final.

67 However, we consider that the Borough Council's proposed alternative ward names for Bacup East and Bacup North ward have merit and we have been persuaded that Irwell and Greensclough would more closely reflect the local communities than our draft recommendations. Furthermore, we note that the Conservatives also put forward Greensclough and Irwell as ward names. We propose adopting these alternative names as our part of our final recommendations.

68 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Greensclough, Irwell and Stacksteads wards would vary by 6 per cent, 10 per cent and 5 per cent from the borough average respectively. By 2004 the number of electors per councillor in Greensclough, Irwell and Stacksteads wards is projected to vary by 4 per cent, 8 per cent and 4 per cent from the average respectively.

Whitworth (two wards)

69 Whitworth is the only parish in the borough and is situated in the south-east of the Rossendale, neighbouring Calderdale and Rochdale metropolitan boroughs, in West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester respectively. Under current arrangements, Facit & Shawforth ward has

22 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average, while Healey & Whitworth ward has 25 per cent more electors per councillor than the average. This electoral inequality is not projected to change significantly over the next five years.

70 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed retaining two two-member wards for the town, but put forward a revised boundary between the two wards. It proposed that all electors west of Market Street and north of Lloyd Street, together with the Cowm Park Estate to the east of Cowm Park Way, should be transferred from Healey & Whitworth ward to Facit & Shawforth ward. The Borough Council forwarded a submission from Whitworth Town Council, supporting the Borough Council's proposal for Whitworth.

71 In our draft recommendations report, we concluded that the Borough Council's proposal achieved the best possible balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. However, we put forward a minor modification to the boundary between these wards, so that the boundary would follow geographical features as it crosses the moorland adjoining the urban area. We endorsed the Borough Council's proposals as our draft recommendations, subject to this minor modification.

72 At Stage Three the Borough Council and the Conservatives supported our draft recommendations.

73 Having carefully considered the representations received we remain content that our draft recommendations would provide the best possible balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, and therefore endorse them as final without modification. Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Facit & Shawforth and Healey & Whitworth wards would each vary by less than 2 per cent in 1999 and 2004.

Electoral Cycle

74 At Stage One we received no proposals in relation to the electoral cycle of the borough. Accordingly, we made no recommendation for change to the present system of elections by thirds in our draft recommendations report.

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

Conclusions

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

- Hillside Road should be wholly represented in Greenfield ward;
- Bacup East and Bacup North wards should be named Irwell and Greensclough respectively;

- Cribden North and Cribden South ward should be named Crawshawbooth & Loveclough and Cribden respectively.

77 We conclude that, in Rossendale:

- a council of 36 members should be retained;
- there should be 14 wards, one more than at present;
- the boundaries of 12 of the existing wards should be modified;
- the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

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

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	36	36	36	36
Number of wards	13	14	13	14
Average number of electors per councillor	1,403	1,404	1,405	1,406
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	7	0	7	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	6	0	6	0

79 As Figure 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from seven to none, with no wards varying by more than 20 per cent from the borough average in both 1999 and 2004. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Rossendale Borough Council should comprise 36 councillors serving 14 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Town Council Electoral Arrangements

80 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different 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, in our draft recommendations report we proposed consequential changes to the warding arrangements for Whitworth Town Council to reflect the proposed borough wards.

81 The parish of Whitworth is currently served by 12 councillors representing four wards: Facit, Healey, Shawforth and Whitworth. In our draft recommendations report we proposed modifying the boundary between Facit & Shawforth and Healey & Whitworth borough wards, as indicated previously, and we suggested that Whitworth parish should be divided between two town wards: Facit & Shawforth and Healey & Whitworth, which would be coterminous with the proposed borough wards. We also proposed that the parish should continue to be represented by 12 councillors.

82 In response to our consultation report, the Borough Council and Whitworth Town Council supported our draft recommendations for revised electoral arrangements for the Town Council.

83 Having considered all the evidence received, and in the light of the confirmation of our proposed borough wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for Whitworth town’s electoral arrangements as final.

Final Recommendation
Whitworth Town Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Facit & Shawforth and Healey & Whitworth (each returning six councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of this report.

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

Final Recommendation
Elections for Whitworth Town Council should continue to be held at the same time as elections for the principal authority.

Map 2: The Commission’s Final Recommendations for Rossendale

6 NEXT STEPS

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

86 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.

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

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

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for Rossendale: Detailed Mapping

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

Map A1 illustrates the proposed boundary between Cribden and Hareholme wards;

Map A2 illustrates the proposed boundary between Greensclough and Irwell wards;

Map A3 illustrates the proposed boundary between Greensclough and Stacksteads wards.

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

Map A1: Proposed boundary between Cribden and Hareholme wards

Map A2: Proposed boundary between Greensclough and Irwell wards

Map A3: Proposed boundary between Greensclough and Stacksteads wards

APPENDIX B

Draft Recommendations for Rossendale

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of two wards, where our draft proposals are set out below. The only other change from draft to final recommendations, which is not included in Figures B1 and B2, is that we propose to rename Bacup East, Bacup North, Cribden North and Cribden South wards as Irwell, Greensclough, Crawshawbooth & Loveclough and Cribden respectively.

Figure B1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Greenfield	Greenfield ward (part); Helmshore ward (part); Longholme ward (part)
Worsley	Worsley ward; Greenfield ward (part)

Figure B2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

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 %
Greenfield	3	4,208	1,402	0	4,180	1,393	-2
Worsley	3	4,354	1,451	3	4,320	1,440	3

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Rossendale 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.

