

Final recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements  
for South Ribble 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 South Ribble in Lancashire.

Members of the Commission are:

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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for South Ribble 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 South Ribble under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in April 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 124) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in South Ribble.

We recommend that South Ribble Borough Council should be served by 55 councillors representing 27 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 every four years.

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

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

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT  
Chairman



## SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of South Ribble on 7 September 1999. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 4 April 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 South Ribble:

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

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs (124-125) are that:

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

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

- **In 21 of the proposed 27 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by less 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 Farington, Hutton, Longton and Penwortham;**
- **an increase in the number of councillors serving Penwortham Town Council.**

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  
Eland House  
Local Government Sponsorship Division  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU**

Figure 1: The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

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

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

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

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

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (1999)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average (%)</b>	<b>Electorate (2004)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average (%)</b>
1	Bamber Bridge East	2	3,262	1,631	11	3,258	1,629	9
2	Bamber Bridge North	2	2,729	1,365	-7	3,213	1,607	7
3	Bamber Bridge West	2	3,013	1,507	3	2,926	1,463	-2
4	Broad Oak	2	3,105	1,553	6	3,093	1,547	3
5	Castle	2	3,235	1,618	10	3,088	1,544	3
6	Charnock	2	2,668	1,334	-9	2,775	1,388	-7
7	Coupe Green & Gregson Lane	2	3,028	1,514	3	2,925	1,463	-2
8	Earnshaw Bridge	2	3,029	1,515	3	2,896	1,448	-3
9	Farington East	2	2,394	1,197	-18	2,978	1,489	0
10	Farington West	2	2,967	1,484	1	2,892	1,446	-3
11	Golden Hill	2	3,058	1,529	4	2,912	1,456	-3
12	Hutton & Longton	3	4,538	1,513	3	4,555	1,518	1
13	Kingsfold	2	2,954	1,477	1	3,070	1,535	3
14	Leyland Central	2	2,709	1,355	-8	2,827	1,414	-6
15	Leyland St Ambrose	2	2,603	1,302	-11	3,293	1,647	10
16	Leyland St Mary's	2	3,052	1,526	4	2,919	1,460	-2
17	Little Hoole & Much Hoole	2	2,913	1,457	-1	2,958	1,479	-1
18	Lostock Hall	2	3,186	1,593	9	3,216	1,608	7
19	Lowerhouse	2	3,034	1,517	3	2,922	1,461	-2
20	Middleforth	2	2,943	1,472	0	2,916	1,458	-3
21	Moss Side	2	2,326	1,163	-21	2,827	1,414	-6
22	New Longton	2	3,438	1,719	17	3,263	1,632	9
23	Samlesbury & Walton	2	3,165	1,583	8	3,041	1,521	2
24	Seven Stars	2	2,931	1,466	0	2,788	1,394	-7

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (1999)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average (%)</b>	<b>Electorate (2004)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average (%)</b>
25	Tardy Gate	2	2,976	1,488	1	2,854	1,427	-5
26	Walton-le-Dale	2	2,448	1,224	-17	2,986	1,493	0
27	Whitefield	2	3,037	1,519	3	2,912	1,456	-3
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>80,741</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>82,303</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
	<b>Average</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,468</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,496</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: *Electorate figures are based on information provided by South Ribble 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 The total electorate differs from that shown in Figure 3 by 1 and 7 electors respectively, which will have negligible impact on variances*

# 1 INTRODUCTION

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

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of South Ribble. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in July 1975 (Report No. 28). The electoral arrangements of Lancashire County Council were last reviewed in November 1980 (Report No. 399). We intend reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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 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* (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 district as a whole. Our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable, having regard to our statutory criteria. We will require particular justification for schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification

8 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the general assumption that the existing council size already secures effective and convenient local government in that district but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified: in particular, we do not accept that an increase in a district's electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a district council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other districts.

9 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 1999/2000 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 South Ribble Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Lancashire County Council, Lancashire Police Authority, the local authority associations, the Member of Parliament, the Members of the European Parliament for the North West Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 29 November 1999. 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 South Ribble 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 South Ribble lies to the south of the River Ribble, with the districts of Fylde and Preston to its north and Chorley, West Lancashire and Blackburn with Darwen to its south. The central area of the borough contains three main urban settlements: Bamber Bridge, Leyland and Penwortham. The western and eastern ends of South Ribble are predominantly rural in nature. The borough is served by three motorways, the M61, M6 and M65 and the main London to Glasgow and Preston to Liverpool railway lines run through the borough.

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

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

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

*Map 1: Existing Wards in South Ribble*

Figure 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	All Saints	3	4,140	1,380	-8	4,000	1,333	-13
2	Bamber Bridge Central	3	4,581	1,527	2	4,630	1,543	1
3	Bamber Bridge South	3	4,080	1,360	-9	4,080	1,360	-11
4	Charnock	1	1,399	1,399	-6	1,670	1,670	10
5	Farington	3	4,944	1,648	10	5,470	1,823	20
6	Howick	2	2,760	1,380	-8	2,660	1,330	-13
7	Hutton & New Longton	3	3,970	1,323	-11	3,800	1,267	-17
8	Kingsfold	3	4,592	1,531	2	4,520	1,507	-1
9	Leyland Central	2	3,224	1,612	8	3,270	1,635	7
10	Leyland St Ambrose	2	3,021	1,511	1	3,690	1,845	21
11	Leyland St John's	3	4,285	1,428	-4	4,140	1,380	-9
12	Leyland St Mary's	3	4,815	1,605	7	4,620	1,540	1
13	Little Hoole & Much Hoole	2	2,913	1,457	-3	2,960	1,480	-3
14	Longton Central & West	3	4,006	1,335	-11	4,010	1,337	-12
15	Lostock Hall	3	5,109	1,703	14	5,140	1,713	12
16	Manor	2	2,958	1,479	-1	2,910	1,455	-5
17	Middleforth Green	2	3,499	1,750	17	3,490	1,745	14
18	Moss Side	3	4,673	1,558	4	5,060	1,687	11
19	Priory	2	2,734	1,367	-9	2,600	1,300	-15
20	Samlesbury & Cuerdale	1	964	964	-36	930	930	-39
21	Seven Stars	2	3,142	1,571	5	3,000	1,500	-2
22	Walton-le-Dale	3	4,933	1,644	10	5,660	1,887	24
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>80,742</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>82,310</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
	<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,495</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,524</b>	<b>-</b>



### 3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

18 During Stage One we received five representations, including a borough-wide scheme from South Ribble Borough Council, and representations from the North West Conservatives, Ribble Valley Conservative Association, Hutton Parish Council and Penwortham Town Council. 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 South Ribble in Lancashire*.

19 Our draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality and provided a pattern of two-member wards in the borough. However, we moved away from the Borough Council's scheme in the north-east of the borough, proposing that the Higher Walton area of the existing All Saints ward should form part of our proposed Samlesbury ward and the Coupe Green area of All Saints ward should form part of our proposed Gregson Lane ward. Additionally, we proposed our own ward names for the borough as none were proposed by the Borough Council. We proposed that:

- South Ribble Borough Council should be served by 55 councillors, compared with the current 54, representing 27 wards, five more than at present;
- the boundaries of 21 of the existing wards should be modified, while one ward should retain its existing boundaries;
- there should be new warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Farington, Hutton, Longton and Penwortham.

#### **Draft Recommendation**

South Ribble Borough Council should comprise 55 councillors, serving 27 wards. The whole Council should continue to be elected every four years.

20 Our proposals would have resulted in a slight increase in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from five to six. However, by 2004 no ward is forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough under our proposals, whereas 13 wards would vary by more than 10 per cent by 2004 should the present arrangements remain unchanged.



## 4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

21 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 18 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of South Ribble Borough Council and the Commission.

### **South Ribble Borough Council**

22 The Borough Council supported the majority of the draft recommendations. However, it did propose that the boundary between the proposed Hutton and New Longton wards should be located along the centre of the A59 in order to better reflect local community identities in the area. The Council also reiterated its Stage One proposals for the All Saints area of the borough. Additionally, the Council also proposed a number of minor boundary amendments affecting Middleforth, Kingsfold, Earnshaw Bridge, Lowerhouse and Golden Hill wards.

### **The Conservatives**

23 The North West Region Conservative Party and South Ribble Conservative Association (referred to in this report as the North West Conservatives) stated it “reaffirms its support for the retention of existing links with the minimum disruption to parishes”. The Conservatives stated it “does not oppose the draft proposals in 17 of the 27 proposed wards” in the draft recommendations but elsewhere submitted a modified pattern of wards.

24 We also received a submission from South Ribble Conservative Association - Lostock Hall Ward Committee (referred to as The Lostock Hall Conservatives in this report) which stated it agreed “with the majority of the [Draft] Recommendations”. However, it also submitted alternative proposals for four wards in the north of the borough, which were broadly the same as the North West Conservatives’ proposals for this area.

25 The Ribble Valley Conservative Association supported the draft recommendations in the Samlesbury area.

### **Parish Councils**

26 Hutton Parish Council stated it was “wholly opposed to the warding for the parish” and to address its concerns, submitted a number of alternative proposals for the area. Longton Parish Council “supports the draft recommendations for consequential warding arrangements in the parish”.

### **Other Representations**

27 A further 12 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from local organisations, councillors and residents.

28 Hutton Residents' Association opposed the draft recommendations for the Hutton area for community identity reasons. The Association proposed three alternatives, ranked by preference, to the draft recommendations: first, no change to the existing arrangements; second the Borough Council's alternative proposals utilising the A59; and, finally, Hutton Parish Council's alternative warding pattern.

29 We received six representations from borough councillors. Councillor Hughes, member for Lostock Hall ward, opposed the draft recommendations for the Lostock Hall area of the borough for community identity reasons. Councillors Haworth and Simmons, members for Priory ward, opposed the draft recommendation in the Howick, Manor and Priory wards where they considered "adjustments to ward boundaries should be limited". To address this concern, the councillors proposed a revised warding pattern in the area. Councillor Parkinson, member for Lostock Hall ward, opposed the proposals in the Lostock Hall area. In particular, Councillor Parkinson supported the proposals we received from the Lostock Hall Conservatives. Councillor Mrs Beattie similarly supported the Lostock Hall Conservatives' proposals, stating "two three-member wards for Lostock Hall and Walton-le-Dale is a much better option". Councillor Sumner, member for Howick ward, supported the proposals for the New Longton area. Councillor Watts, member for Bamber Bridge South ward, questioned the forecast electorate data.

30 We received representations from five local residents. One resident of Lostock Hall noted that Wateringpool Lane is a restricted access road and provided an alternative warding pattern for the Carrwood, Walton-le-Dale, Lostock Hall, Bamber Bridge West and Samlesbury wards. However, complete or accurate electorate data was not supplied. Another local resident opposed the draft recommendations for the Lostock Hall area for community identity reasons, also noting Wateringpool Lane is not a through-road for vehicles. One local resident opposed our proposed ward names and made a number of alternative suggestions. He also opposed part of the existing St Ambrose ward forming part of the proposed Farington East ward. One resident supported the proposals from the Lostock Hall Conservatives. Finally, one resident of All Saints ward supported the draft recommendations.

## 5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

31 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for South Ribble 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”.

32 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.

33 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.

34 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**

35 At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 2 per cent from 80,742 to 82,310 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expected most of the growth to be in Charnock, Farington, Leyland St Ambrose and Moss Side wards, although a significant amount is also expected in Walton-le-Dale ward. The Council 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.

36 At Stage Three, we received a submission from Councillor Watts which raised a number of issues relating to the electorate data used in the review. Firstly, Councillor Watts questioned the accuracy of the electorate data for the Bamber Bridge area. We recalculated the electorate for this area and did not find it to be inaccurate. Additionally, the Borough Council also revisited the data in this area and confirmed that “the draft figures are correct”. Secondly, Councillor Watts raised a number of points questioning the validity of forecast electorate projections used in the review.

In a separate submission, Councillors Haworth and Simmons also questioned whether the forecast reduction in electorate in the proposed Priory ward was likely. We approached the Borough Council asking that, in the light of the Councillors' concerns, they still considered the forecast electorate data as accurate. In reply, the Borough Council stated, "The methodology for the calculations of future electorate was agreed on a county wide basis by all districts and the county council. This methodology was then applied to South Ribble. The figures quoted [in the Draft Recommendations] are correct at the present time". Having received this assurance from the Borough Council and re-examined the forecast electorate data, we remain of the view that they remain the best estimates currently available.

37 Councillor Watts also questioned whether the 1999 electorate data was accurate, noting that the *South Ribble Year Book* quotes a current total electorate figure which is 101 higher than that given in the draft recommendations report. The Borough Council have informed us that these additional voters are mainly service voters or residents abroad and have been discounted from the PER as they do not currently reside in the borough, nor have an address in the borough. As this review must be based on the exact location of electors within the borough, we agreed with the Borough Council's view that these electors should not, in this instance, form part of the 1999 electorate. Therefore, we are confident that the total 1999 electorate as stated in the Draft Recommendations report is accurate.

## **Council Size**

38 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 look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case.

39 South Ribble Borough Council is at present served by 54 councillors. At Stage One the Borough Council proposed a small increase in council size from 54 to 55. The North West Conservatives stated "the Conservative Party submits proposals for a 54 member council", although we noted that its borough-wide scheme contained recommendations for only 53 members.

40 In our draft recommendations report we considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, and concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 55 members.

41 During Stage Three, the North West Conservatives "accepted" a 55-member council although preferred a council size of 54. We received no further comments on council size during Stage Three and we are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for a council size of 55 as final.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

42 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. We were concerned that under the North West Conservatives' Stage One proposals,

significant electoral imbalances were likely to persist in 2004, with eight wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average. While we acknowledged that in a number of areas the North West Conservatives' proposals would improve electoral equality, it is not usually possible to adopt discrete areas from one set of proposals due to the consequential impact on adjacent wards. Furthermore, as noted above, we proposed to adopt a council of 55 members which further impinged upon the compatibility between the Borough Council's and North West Conservatives' Stage One proposals.

43 We noted that under the Borough Council's Stage One proposals a significant improvement in electoral equality would be achieved, with no ward varying by more than 10 per cent in 2004. Officers at the Council also indicated that all but one parish council had expressed its support for the scheme. In view of the degree of consensus behind large elements of the Council's proposals, and the significant improvements in electoral equality they would secure across the borough, we concluded that we should base our draft recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme. We considered that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or other proposals submitted at Stage One. We decided to move away from the Borough Council's proposals in one area, Samlesbury, and proposed minor modifications to the ward boundaries in a number of other areas in order to utilise more easily recognisable ground features.

44 At Stage Three, as noted in the previous chapter, we received a number of alternative schemes for parts of the borough. It is relevant to reflect on the nature and status of draft recommendations. The Commission develops draft recommendations which, given the evidence available at the time, we would be content to present to the Secretary of State. We then undertake consultation on these draft recommendations in order to gauge local opinion on the recommendations and to seek further evidence to support or oppose them. We consider that the purpose of Stage Three is primarily to consult on our draft recommendations, and to make any amendments, in the light of the further evidence received, which we consider would result in a demonstrable improvement to the current arrangements and to our draft recommendations. We noted that, while some of the proposed wards suggested under the alternative schemes coming forward at Stage Three utilised the same boundaries as our draft recommendations, other wards were entirely new configurations. Furthermore, we noted that, unlike our draft recommendations, the other Stage Three schemes had not been formally consulted upon locally.

45 As noted earlier, we have sought confirmation from the Borough Council of the accuracy of the electorate data used in our draft recommendations. We remain convinced that the forecast electorate data was, and remains, the best available at the time. However, following the end of Stage Three it became apparent that the current electorate data had been mis-allocated between the proposed Carrwood and Walton-le-Dale wards. Over 1,000 electors which should have formed part of the proposed Carrwood ward were in fact mis-allocated to Walton-le-Dale ward and, consequently, these two proposed wards would in fact suffer electoral variances in excess of 20 per cent in 2004. We considered such variances could not be justified in this instance.

46 We therefore developed an alternative warding pattern for the area covered by the two wards of Carrwood and Walton-le-Dale which would address the substantial electoral variances in the area which would have arisen under the draft recommendations. We wrote to the Borough

Council and all those who wrote to us during Stage Three about the Carrwood and Walton-le-Dale area asking for their comments specifically on the alternative proposal we devised.

47 At the end of our additional consultation period, we received nine replies, none of which supported our alternative proposal. However, the Borough Council developed a further option for the area which allowed for two, two-member wards and achieved a reasonable level of electoral equality without affecting the surrounding area (neither ward varying by more than 5 per cent by 2004). The Borough Council added that the alternative proposals upon which we had consulted was “completely unacceptable” as they did not reflect the Council’s desire for a pattern of two-member wards in the borough, wherever achievable.

48 In forming our final recommendations, we considered all of the Stage Three representations we received, along with the responses to our additional consultation. From these, we developed our final recommendations.

### **Ward Names**

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

50 We noted that a number of alternative ward names were proposed during Stage Three. However, we propose to modify only three ward names which we consider would, based upon the evidence available to us, more accurately reflect the composition of the ward.

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

### **The Unparished Areas**

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

### **The Parished Areas**

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

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

## **The Unparished Area**

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

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

54 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed retaining the railway line as the western ward boundary for Leyland St Ambrose (V) ward with the borough boundary forming the ward's southern and eastern boundaries. The Council proposed modifying the ward's northern boundary, transferring an area broadly west of St David's Road into a modified Farington ward. To the west of Leyland St Ambrose ward, the Council proposed a modified Leyland St Mary's (P) ward which would retain the ward's existing eastern and southern boundaries and the majority of its northern boundary (with an area broadly north of Regent Road forming part of an adjacent Golden Hill (N) ward). The proposed western ward boundary of St Mary's ward would be modified to follow Broadfield Drive and Woodlea Road and the rear of properties in Fox Lane, Parkgate Drive and Cumberland Avenue until it reached the borough boundary. The Council's proposed Leyland Central (Q) ward would broadly reflect the existing Leyland Central ward, although an area north of Hough Lane and west of Churchill Way would form part of a modified Leyland St John's ward, detailed later. Under the Council's proposals, the two-member wards of Leyland St Ambrose, Leyland St Mary's and Leyland Central would have electoral variances of 11 per cent, 4 per cent and 8 per cent (10 per cent, 2 per cent and 6 per cent in 2004).

55 The North West Conservative Party in its Stage One proposals reflected the Council's proposals in a number of areas although elsewhere its proposals differed significantly. Of the seven wards the Conservatives proposed in the Leyland area, five would vary by 10 per cent or more from the average, based upon their estimated 2004 electorate and a council size of 53-members. We did not propose to adopt the Conservatives' proposals in Leyland due to its alternative council size and significant electoral imbalances which would result. Having examined options to further improve electoral equality in the Council's proposed Leyland St Ambrose ward, we concluded that given the location of the ward on the edge of the borough, and the use of the railway line as a strong boundary, alternatives were limited and could lead to a reduction in effective and convenient local government in the area. We concluded that the Council's proposals would achieve a satisfactory balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We therefore adopted the Borough Council's proposals for Leyland St Ambrose, Leyland St Mary's and Leyland Central wards, subject to a number of minor boundary modifications which would not impact upon electorates within the area.

56 At Stage Three, the Borough Council supported the draft recommendations for this area. One local resident opposed the ward names in the area, suggesting renaming St Mary's ward as St Andrews and Lowerhouse ward as St Mary's. The resident also opposed part of the current St

Ambrose ward forming part of the proposed Farington East ward “as the part of the proposed Farington East ward is not in Farington”.

57 We have carefully considered all the representations we received at Stage Three for the Leyland area. While we noted the local resident’s view that part of St Ambrose ward should not form part of Farington East ward, we consider the area around St David’s Road should form part of Farington West ward and, of the options available, best reflects the statutory criteria in the area and a good level of electoral equality. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for Leyland St Ambrose, Leyland St Mary’s and Leyland Central as final. Nor do we consider that the ward names contained in our draft recommendations should be modified as we remain of the view they are appropriate to the areas covered. Our final recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the rear of the report.

### **Leyland St John’s, Seven Stars and Moss Side wards**

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

59 These three wards on the western side of Leyland would form five two-member wards under the Borough Council’s Stage One proposals. Its proposed Lowerhouse (O) ward would comprise that part of the existing Leyland St Mary’s ward not within its proposed Leyland St Mary’s ward, together with that part of the existing Seven Stars ward east of Leyland Lane. The area of Seven Stars ward broadly west of Leyland Lane, together with an area of housing around Moss Side Way currently in Moss Side ward, would form the Council’s proposed Seven Stars (M) ward. To the north, the Council proposed a Golden Hill ward, comprising that part of Leyland Central ward west of Churchill Way and north of Hough Lane, that part of Leyland St Mary’s ward broadly north of Regent Road, and a large part of Leyland St John’s ward east of Broadfield Drive, Bannister Drive and Leyland Lane. The remaining part of Leyland St John’s ward and part of Moss Side East ward (north of Dunkirk Lane and east of Paradise Lane, Titan Way and Reiver Road) would form the Council’s proposed Earnshaw Bridge (L) ward with Moss Side (E) ward comprising the remaining, western area of Moss Side ward. Under the Council’s proposals, Lowerhouse, Seven Stars, Golden Hill, Earnshaw Bridge and Moss Side wards would have electoral variances of 3 per cent, equal to the average, 4 per cent, 3 per cent and 21 per cent respectively (2 per cent, 7 per cent, 3 per cent, 3 per cent and 6 per cent respectively in 2004).

60 We noted that the North West Conservatives’ Stage One proposals, although based on an alternative council size, utilised a number of similar ward boundaries to the Borough Council in this area, and that in particular there was a degree of consensus over the use of Leyland Lane. We noted the Borough Council’s proposals achieve a high degree of electoral equality, seek to reflect the existing settlement pattern, and anticipate development in the formulation of its ward boundaries. We therefore adopted the Council’s proposals as our draft recommendations, albeit with a number of minor amendments to ensure that more recognisable boundaries were followed (affecting no electors).

61 At Stage Three, the Borough Council broadly supported the draft recommendations in the five wards of Lowerhouse, Seven Stars, Golden Hill, Earnshaw Bridge and Moss Side, although it proposed a minor boundary amendment between Earnshaw Bridge, Lowerhouse and Golden Hill wards. The Council proposed that the “boundary line behind the properties on Westfield Drive be continued in almost a straight line moving the 18 properties on Broadfield Drive from Westfield Drive going south, from Earnshaw ward to Lowerhouse Ward”. The Council also proposed that the boundary along Broadfield Drive should continue in a northerly direction to the junction with Earnshaw Drive, thereby transferring a number of properties around St John’s Gardens from Earnshaw Bridge ward to Golden Hill ward. The Council did not provide argumentation in support of its alternative proposals.

62 One local resident proposed renaming Lowerhouse ward as St Mary’s ward as he did not consider the proposed ward name would be locally well-recognised. Furthermore, the resident considered Earnshaw Bridge ward should be renamed Leyland St John’s in order to reflect a “long-established name”. We received no further representations commenting on the area.

63 We carefully considered the Borough Council’s modifications. However, we have not been presented with evidence that they would better address the statutory criteria or that there is any local support for the modifications. Nor would they significantly improve electoral equality in the area. Furthermore, we have not been persuaded that the ward names we proposed in the area do not accurately reflect the wards location. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for Lowerhouse, Seven Stars, Golden Hill, Earnshaw Bridge and Moss Side as final. Our final recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the rear of the report.

#### **All Saints, Bamber Bridge South and Lostock Hall wards**

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

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

66 The North West Conservatives proposed an alternative warding pattern in the area at Stage One, but did not provide detailed mapping in its submission. Using the North West

Conservatives' estimated 2004 electorate, its proposed Bamber Bridge North, Bamber Bridge South, Lostock Hall and All Saints wards would be 6 per cent, 7 per cent, 3 per cent and 8 per cent respectively, based on a council size of 53 members.

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

68 Having carefully considered the Stage One representations commenting on this area, we noted that the North West Conservatives' proposals would not be compatible with our proposals elsewhere in the borough nor would they achieve an acceptable balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We were also concerned that the Borough Council's proposed All Saints ward might not accurately reflect the road pattern in the area and that this may impact upon the effectiveness and convenience of local government in the area. We therefore proposed adopting Ribble Valley Conservative Association's proposals for All Saints ward, comprising the Coupe Green and Gregson Lane areas, which we judged would facilitate a reasonable level of electoral equality in this and surrounding wards, and better reflect the existing communication links, while having regard to the statutory criteria. However, we did not propose retaining the name All Saints, noting that All Saints Church would fall outside the ward, and therefore recommended renaming All Saints as Gregson Lane ward. Elsewhere, we were satisfied that the Council's proposed Lostock Hall, Bamber Bridge West and Bamber Bridge East wards would achieve a high degree of electoral equality and reflect the statutory criteria and adopted its proposals unaltered as our draft recommendations. Under our proposals Gregson Lane ward would have an electoral variance of 3 per cent (2 per cent in 2004).

69 At Stage Three, the Borough Council stated it continued to support its proposed Stage One ward configuration for All Saints and Samlesbury ward. It also stated that, should the draft recommendations for the area be confirmed, then the proposed Samlesbury ward should be renamed Samlesbury & Walton, with Gregson Lane being changed to Coupe Green & Gregson Lane. The Council supported the draft recommendations for Lostock Hall, Bamber Bridge East and Bamber Bridge West.

70 The North West Conservatives' proposed a modified three-member Lostock Hall ward in its scheme, stating its proposal "accords with local opinion" and "retains the core of the existing Lostock Hall ward which has a strong local community of interest". It proposed retaining much of the proposed Lostock Hall ward apart from the areas in the east, around Irongate and the area of properties west of Watkin Lane. In this area it proposed adding properties from Carrwood ward, north of Browndge Road, west of the dismantled railway line, south of the Gas Board Depot and east of the existing boundary. There would, accordingly, be a consequential modification to the western ward boundary of the proposed Bamber Bridge West ward with the area around Irongate forming part of this ward. The North West Conservatives also provided an

alternative option in the area, a minor boundary modification to its Lostock Hall ward which would utilise the entire length of Watkins Lane. Under the North West Conservatives' proposals, based on their supplied 2004 electorate figures, Lostock Hall ward would have an electoral variance of 5 per cent in 2004. The Lostock Hall Conservatives also opposed the draft recommendations for Lostock Hall stating "Lostock Hall is considered by its residents and local organisations as an entity in its own right". Its modified warding pattern was broadly the same as that proposed by the North West Conservatives. A local resident also proposed a broadly similar alternative Lostock Hall ward, while Councillor Hughes, member for Lostock Hall ward, stated his preference for "two, three-member wards for Walton-le-Dale and Lostock Hall".

71 One resident opposed the draft recommendations stating "To add some of the electorate of Walton-le-Dale [to Lostock Hall ward] would be a mistake as the two areas have very little in common". Another resident reflected this view, adding that the Lostock Hall Conservatives' proposals would better reflect community identities in the area than the draft recommendations. A further representation from a local resident noted that Lostock Hall was "a community with a strong sense of identity" and opposed the use of Browndge Road as the northern boundary of the proposed Carrwood ward. A local resident opposed the ward name Lostock Hall, preferring Lostock Hall South.

72 We have carefully considered the representations received for these wards. While we noted the Borough Council's stated preference for its Stage One warding pattern in the Samlesbury area, we do not judge we have been presented with new evidence to support this view. We remain of the view, as stated in our draft recommendations report, that our proposals provide a good reflection of the settlement pattern in the area, and achieve electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. We therefore propose confirming our draft recommendations as final, subject to adopting the Borough Council's proposed alternative ward name of Coupe Green & Gregson Lane, which we consider better reflects the composition of the ward. Our final recommendations for Samlesbury & Walton and Coupe Green & Gregson Lane wards are illustrated on the large map at the rear of the report and on Map A3.

73 We noted that Councillor Watts, member for Bamber Bridge South ward, made a number of comments concerning electorate data in this area which are detailed at the beginning of this chapter. Councillor Watts also opposed the use of Station Road as a boundary between Bamber Bridge West and Bamber Bridge East wards. We received no comments on Bamber Bridge East ward and we remain of the view that this ward achieves the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in the area. We are therefore confirming as final our draft recommendations for this ward. For Bamber Bridge West and Lostock Hall ward, we carefully noted the comments we received at Stage Three. However, we remain of the view that our draft recommendations for these two wards achieve a good level of electoral equality while utilising clearly identifiable ward boundaries and we have not been persuaded that the alternative schemes put forward at Stage Three achieve a significant improvement in electoral equality or better reflect the statutory criteria. We are therefore confirming as final our draft recommendations for Lostock Hall and Bamber Bridge West wards. Our final recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the rear of the report.

## **Bamber Bridge Central and Walton-le-Dale wards**

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

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

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

77 In considering the Stage One proposals we received for this area, we noted that the North West Conservatives' proposals would be compatible with our proposals elsewhere in the borough. We considered that the Borough Council's proposals would facilitate electoral equality in the area and utilise the clearest available ward boundaries, reflecting the existing settlement pattern in the area. We therefore adopted the Council's proposed wards of Carrwood, Walton-le-Dale and Bamber Bridge North as in our draft recommendations.

78 At Stage Three, the Borough Council supported the draft recommendations in Carrwood, Walton-le-Dale and Bamber Bridge North. The North West Conservatives proposed a modified warding pattern in the area noting that, under the draft recommendations, Wateringpool Lane would form the only connection between the northern and southern parts of Carrwood ward within the ward and that this road was no longer open to vehicular access. The North West Conservatives proposed a new three-member Walton-le-Dale ward comprising the whole of the existing Walton-le-Dale ward and the northern part of the proposed Carrwood ward (that part which would not form part of its proposed Lostock Hall ward, detailed above). The North West Conservatives stated "the strong local case, contained in the representation from the Lostock Hall Committee is fully endorsed by the Conservative Party, although not repeated herein". The Lostock Hall Conservatives in its submission also opposed the draft recommendations for Carrwood ward, noting that Wateringpool Lane was not a through-road. The Lostock Hall Conservatives also considered that a "buffer-zone" had been identified in the Council's Local

Plan which supported its argument that the northern part of the proposed Carrwood ward does not share any common links with the southern part and that it should form part of a larger Walton-le-Dale ward. The Lostock Hall Conservatives proposed a modified three-member Walton-le-Dale ward which was broadly the same as that proposed by the North West Conservatives.

79 Councillor Hughes, member for Lostock Hall ward, considered that the draft recommendations “to create a new Carrwood ward, made up of part of Lostock Hall and part of Walton-le-Dale is ill considered and inappropriate”. Furthermore, he considered that a two-member warding pattern in the area adversely impacted upon the statutory criteria in this area. One local resident also commented that Wateringpool Lane is not a through road and commented that “to link Lostock Hall north of Browndge Road and half of Walton Park in one [Carrwood] ward looks as if these are the two bits left over after other areas of the borough have been considered, and it has resulted in the most ill considered ward of the whole exercise”. The resident proposed a modified warding pattern for the area, with that part of Carrwood ward south of the dismantled railway line forming part of three-member Lostock Hall ward (detailed above) and the remaining part of Carrwood ward, together with the whole of the proposed Walton-le-Dale ward and an area of Samlesbury ward broadly west of Higher Walton Road forming a new Walton-le-Dale ward. Based on the resident’s calculations, supplied for 2004 electorates only, the electoral variance in this modified Walton-le-Dale ward would be 10 per cent in 2004. Another resident proposed renaming Carrwood ward as Lostock Hall North ward and Walton-le-Dale ward as Walton-le-Dale South ward.

80 We carefully considered all the representations we received during Stage Three for the Carrwood, Walton-le-Dale and Bamber Bridge North wards. Our attention having being drawn to the fact that Wateringpool Lane is not a through-road, we took the view that, were our proposed warding pattern to remain unaltered, it would impact upon the convenience and effectiveness of local government. We therefore looked at modifications to the Carrwood ward to address this issue. We did not, however, judge that modifications outside this discrete area, as proposed under the alternative schemes coming forward as this stage, were justified. In particular, as noted above, we have not concluded that our proposed Lostock Hall ward should be modified.

81 In considering modifications to Carrwood ward which would address the issue of Wateringpool Lane, it became apparent that the electoral data in the draft recommendations, which were based upon the Borough Council’s Stage One submission, were inaccurate. Specifically, we discovered that approximately 1,000 electors had been mis-allocated into Carrwood ward but should have formed part of the electorate of our proposed Walton-le-Dale ward. Consequently, electoral variances in the proposed Carrwood and Walton-le-Dale wards would be in excess of 20 per cent by 2004 under the proposed boundaries. We noted, however, that the area comprising the proposed Walton-le-Dale and Carrwood wards was correctly entitled to four borough councillors.

82 In the light of the mis-allocated electorate, we did not consider that our draft recommendations for Carrwood and Walton-le-Dale could be taken forward as they stood. We therefore drew up an alternative scheme, for a single-member Walton-le-Dale ward and a three-member Carrwood ward which would retain the proposed external ward boundaries of the two wards. We consulted the Borough Council and those respondents who had commented on this area during Stage Three on our revised proposal. We received eight responses. The Borough

Council did not support our alternative warding pattern, but suggested a further alternative warding pattern for the area which would comprise two, two-member wards. Its proposed Tardy Gate ward would comprise the southern part of the Carrwood ward in our draft recommendations, retaining the southern boundary along Browndge Road unchanged. The western boundary of the ward would follow Penwortham parish boundary, while its eastern boundary would run north along London Way from the junction of London Road and Browndge Road and a line just south of Kilngate. The ward's northern boundary would follow a line west to Todd Lane North, Old Tram Road, south along Wateringpool Lane and the dismantled railway line to the boundary with Penwortham parish. The Council's proposed Walton-le-Dale ward would comprise that part of the proposed Carrwood ward north of the dismantled railway line and the whole of the proposed Walton-le-Dale ward. Under the Council's alternative proposals, Tardy Gate would have a electoral variance of 1 per cent and Walton-le-Dale would have a variance of 17 per cent (5 per cent and equal to the average in 2004 respectively).

83 The Lostock Hall Conservatives continued to support its alternative warding pattern for the wider area contained in its Stage Three submission. One local resident also continued to support the Lostock Hall Conservatives' proposals. We also received comments from Councillor Mrs Beattie, Councillor Watts and Councillor Hughes, none of whom supported our alternative proposal for the Carrwood and Walton-le-Dale area. A local resident proposed a number of amendments to our alternative scheme but did not supply detailed electorate data or mapping. One resident supported the alternative scheme proposed by the Borough Council which he considered "maintains the integrity of the communities of Walton Park and the northern part of Lostock Hall".

84 We carefully considered all the Stage Three representations concerning Carrwood and Walton-le-Dale wards, together with the further evidence we received about the area during the period of additional consultation. We were not persuaded that the schemes from the North West Conservatives, the Lostock Hall Conservatives or the local resident were compatible with our draft recommendations elsewhere in the area, notably Lostock Hall ward. We received no support for our alternative proposals upon which we consulted. However, we noted the Borough Council's alternative proposal for two two-member wards which achieves good electoral equality and addresses the issue of access on Wateringpool Lane. The Borough Council indicated that it had copied its proposals to the other Stage Three respondents we consulted, one of which, a local resident, supported the proposals. We are therefore adopting the Borough Council's proposed Tardy Gate and Walton-le-Dale wards as part of our final recommendations, as shown on the large map at the rear of this report.

## **The Parished Areas**

### **Charnock, Kingsfold and Middleforth Green wards**

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

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

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

88 We carefully considered the Stage One proposals in this area. We noted that the ward boundaries proposed by the Council achieved improvements in electoral equality and broadly reflect the settlement pattern in the area. In contrast, we judged that the North West Conservatives proposals did not provide an acceptable level of electoral equality in the area and we did not receive any significant evidence, in terms of the statutory criteria, to warrant such imbalances regarding the statutory criteria to justify this. We, therefore, adopted the Council's proposals for Charnock, Middleforth and Kingsfold wards as our draft recommendations, albeit with a number of minor boundary modifications to utilise more recognisable ground features in the area, affecting no electors.

89 At Stage Three, the Borough Council supported the proposed Charnock ward but proposed a minor boundary amendment between Middleforth and Kingsfold wards along the Pope Lane, affecting six properties. The North West Conservatives stated that the "existing Charnock ward has a unique identity" and proposed an alternative single-member Charnock ward comprising that part of the existing ward east of the railway line. It also proposed a new three-member Kingsfold ward which would comprise the remaining part of Charnock ward together with the majority of our proposed Kingsfold ward and area of the proposed Broad Oak ward broadly east of Penwortham Way. Its proposed Middleforth ward would be broadly similar to our draft recommendations. Under the North West Conservatives' proposals, based on its 2004 electorate data only, Charnock, Kingsfold and Middleforth wards would have electoral variances of 5 per cent 1 per cent and 8 per cent respectively.

90 Councillors Haworth and Simmons, members for Priory ward, stated "It is our opinion that the wholesale changes to Howick, Manor and Priory wards proposed in the draft recommendations do not reflect the feelings of the community and neighbourhoods of the Higher

Penwortham area”. They proposed a number of modifications to the existing wards in the area although did not provide electorate data or mapping.

91 We have carefully considered the representations we received for this area. We do not judge we have been presented with any persuasive evidence to support modifications to our draft recommendations. We noted the Borough Council did not supply supporting evidence for its proposed amendment to Middleforth and Kingsfold wards. We also considered the amendments proposed by the North West Conservatives in the area would not provide a significant improvement in terms of reflecting the statutory criteria than our draft recommendations, nor that they would provide better electoral equality in the area. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for Charnock, Middleforth and Kingsfold wards. Our final recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the rear of the report.

### **Howick, Manor and Priory wards**

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

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

94 The North West Conservatives in its Stage One submission proposed broadly retaining the existing three wards unchanged, noting that “Priory would lose the unique local identity it currently enjoys if it were subject to change”. Under the North West Conservatives’ proposed council size of 53 members, Priory, Manor and Howick wards would have electoral variances in 2004 of 16 per cent, 6 per cent and 14 per cent.

95 We carefully considered the Stage One proposals for these three wards in Penwortham. We were satisfied that the Borough Council’s proposals achieved a high degree of electoral equality while reflecting the settlement pattern in the area and, where compatible with electoral equality and the statutory criteria, utilise clearly identifiable ward boundaries. We did not consider that the North West Conservatives’ proposals in this area would achieve an acceptable level of electoral equality or be compatible with our proposed warding pattern elsewhere in the borough. We therefore adopted the Borough Council’s Broad Oak, Castle and Whitefield wards as our draft recommendations.

96 At Stage Three, the Borough Council supported the draft recommendations for this area. The North West Conservatives opposed the draft recommendations. It proposed a new two-member Manor ward which would retain much of the proposed eastern boundary of Broad Oak ward, although it would follow Millbrook Way in the far south east of the ward. Its western boundary would follow the existing Manor ward boundary from the junction of the dismantled railway and the A582, together with an area of the adjacent ward. It also proposed a new Castle ward which would comprise all of the existing Priory ward along with an area of the existing Manor ward north of Valley Road around Oak Woods. The North West Conservatives proposed a new Howick ward which would comprise the western half of the proposed Whitefields wards, the southern part of Broad Oak ward and the southern part of the proposed Castle ward. Based on the electorate data supplied by the North West Conservatives, its proposed Manor, Priory and Howick wards would have an electoral variance of 6 per cent, 8 per cent and 1 per cent in 2004.

97 Councillors Haworth and Simmons, members for Priory ward, stated “we feel that the existing boundaries should be adjusted to increase electorates in Howick, Manor and Priory wards but that the alterations to achieve this should be kept to a minimum”. The Councillors’ proposed modifications in this area were broadly similar to those proposed by the North West Conservatives, although they did not supply detailed mapping or electorate data.

98 We carefully considered the representations we received for this area during Stage Three. We have not been persuaded that the North West Conservatives’ alternative proposals in this area would better reflect the statutory criteria than our draft recommendations or achieve a significantly improved level of electoral equality. We are, therefore, confirming our draft recommendations for these wards as final. Our final recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the rear of the report.

### **Farington ward**

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

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

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

102 We carefully examined the Stage One proposals for the Farington area. We considered that the Borough Council’s use of the railway line forms a natural boundary within the parish, and

facilitates a warding pattern which achieves a high degree of electoral equality. We therefore included its proposals for Farington in our draft recommendations, subject to a minor boundary modification to continue to follow the centre of the railway line at the northern end of the parish. In our view, the North West Conservatives' proposals did not achieve an acceptable degree of electoral equality.

103 At Stage Three, the Borough Council supported the draft recommendations for Farington. The North West Conservatives proposed modifying the Farington West ward to include part of the proposed Lostock Hall ward west of Watkin Lane. Under the Conservatives' proposals, Farington West ward would have an electoral variance of 10 per cent in 2004. However, it noted that "a boundary other than Watkin Lane, such as Watkin Lane to the railway station then the line of the railway, or either Croston Road or Coote Lane, could be adopted [in order to improve electoral equality]". The Lostock Hall Conservatives proposed a similar modification to Farington West ward as part of its wider modifications to the Lostock Hall area. One local resident considered that the area of the proposed Farington East ward around St David's Road should not form part of the ward, as it did not form part of Farington parish.

104 We have carefully considered the representations we received for Farington East and Farington West wards. We have not found, however, that the evidence underlying the other modifications is strong enough in terms of meeting the statutory criteria or providing significantly improved electoral equality for us to move away from our draft recommendations. Moreover, we are unable to adopt the modifications to Farington West ward as proposed by the North West Conservatives and the Lostock Hall Conservatives as we are not adopting its modification in the adjacent ward of Lostock Hall and, therefore, to do so here would adversely impact upon electoral equality in our proposed wards in the area. Additionally, we are of the view that in both Farington East and Farington West wards, our proposals utilise clear ward boundaries and, so far as achievable in meeting our aim of improvement to electoral equality, retaining the external parish boundaries as borough ward boundaries as far as possible. In the proposed Farington East ward, we remain of the view that the area around St David's Road should form part of Farington East ward, as in the draft recommendations, in order to secure a reasonable balance of electoral equality in this and surrounding wards. We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for Farington East and Farington West wards as final. Our final recommendations for Farington East and Farington West wards are illustrated on the large map at the rear of the report.

### **Little Hoole & Much Hoole ward**

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

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

107 We considered the Stage One proposals for Little Hoole & Much Hoole ward. Under a council size of 55 members, we noted that the Council's proposal for no change would retain

good levels of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. We therefore proposed no change to the ward as part of our draft recommendations. We also proposed retaining the existing ward name, Little Hoole & Much Hoole, as we considered this accurately reflects the composition of the ward.

108 At Stage Three, the Borough Council supported the draft recommendations in this area. We received no further comments and are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for Little Hoole & Much Hoole ward as final. Our final recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the rear of the report.

### **Hutton & New Longton and Longton Central & West wards**

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

110 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed a reconfiguration of wards in this area, to provide a three-member Hutton & Longton (A) ward and a two-member New Longton (D) ward. The Council proposed that the boundary between the two wards should follow the Liverpool Road south before turning west to the south of properties on Ratten Lane, following a line broadly west of Fensway and field edges, then turning south to the parish boundary, west of Moor Lane. The proposed boundary would then follow the existing parish boundary along Longton Beck before turning south to follow the Longton by-pass to the southern parish ward boundary of Longton parish. Under the Borough Council's proposals, Hutton & Longton ward and New Longton ward would have electoral variances of 3 and 17 per cent respectively (1 per cent and 9 per cent respectively in 2004). The Borough Council stated in its Stage One submission, however, that it would "prefer the boundary to be located along the centre line of the A59 [Longton By-Pass] ... as this would reflect the affiliation of the local communities more realistically". Under this alternative proposal, the electoral variances in Hutton & Longton and New Longton wards would be 15 per cent and 11 per cent in 2004.

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

112 We carefully examined all the Stage One submissions for the Hutton and Longton areas. We noted that the Borough Council's proposals would require the warding of Hutton parish, which is currently unwarded, and the re-warding of Longton parish. We do not ward a parish if a more suitable alternative can be found which achieves reasonable electoral equality and reflects

the statutory criteria. Equally, we considered that the North West Conservatives' proposals did not achieve an acceptable level of electoral equality. We therefore considered a range of alternatives in the Hutton and Longton areas, including the option that Hutton parish form a single-member ward and the parish of Longton form two, two-member wards. However, we judged that such a combination would only achieve acceptable levels of electoral equality at the expense of a worse reflection of the statutory criteria in Longton ward. We took the view that such a solution could not be justified in this instance. While we noted the concerns of Hutton Parish Council, our proposals must attempt to improve the electoral arrangements across the whole borough and we cannot look at one area in isolation. We concluded, therefore, that the Borough Council's proposals in the Hutton and Longton areas achieve good levels of electoral equality, have reasonable regard to the settlement pattern in the area and satisfactorily reflect the statutory criteria overall. Additionally, the alternative proposals for the area would not, we judge, achieve a comparable balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Accordingly, we adopted the Council's proposed Hutton & Longton and New Longton wards as part of our draft recommendations. However, we did not consider that the Council's alternative proposal to utilise the entire length of the A59 as a boundary would achieve an acceptable level of electoral equality.

113 At Stage Three, the Borough Council continued to support its alternative Stage One proposal for Hutton and New Longton wards, to use the A59 Longton Bypass as the boundary between the two wards. Hutton Parish Council stated "the Parish Council are wholly opposed to the warding of the parish proposed by the Commission". The Parish Council proposed an alternative ward pattern in the area which it considered better reflected community identities with a three-member Hutton & Longton West ward comprising the whole of Hutton parish and Longton West ward of Longton parish and a two member Longton Central & New Longton ward comprising the two Longton parish wards of the same name. Under these proposals, Hutton & Longton West and Longton Central & New Longton wards would have an electoral variances of 1 per cent and 12 per cent in 2004 respectively. The Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations which it considered "divides the parish through the village centre". However, it stated that, should the Commission not adopt its alternative proposal, its second preference would be to utilise the A59 Longton Bypass as a boundary, as proposed by the Borough Council. Additionally, the Parish Council added that the name Hutton should be reflected in both wards "whatever ward boundary may be adopted". Longton Parish Council supported the draft recommendations noting that "the recommendations would align well with the Parish Council's own proposals to divide the parish at some time in the future".

114 Hutton Residents' Association also opposed the draft recommendations, as it did not consider they provided a good reflection of community identities in the area. Its first preference was for the existing borough warding to remain unchanged. Its second preference was for the Borough Council's alternative proposal to utilise the A59 Longton bypass as a borough boundary. Its third preference was to support the Parish Council's alternative Stage Three warding pattern, although it noted that "no discussion have taken place [with Longton Parish Council]". Councillor Sumner, member for Howick ward, supported the draft recommendations in the Hutton and Longton area, noting "New Longton has a separate identity from Longton and the two areas have different needs".

115 We have carefully considered all the representations we received for the Hutton and Longton areas. We noted that there was little consensus in the area as to the appropriate warding pattern. In considering Hutton Parish Council's alternative proposals, we were concerned it would result in a reduced level of electoral equality in the area and would not reflect the settlement pattern in Longton parish. We remain of the view, as noted in our draft recommendations report, that the use of the A59 Longton Bypass as a boundary would not achieve a good balance between the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We do not consider we have been presented with significant new evidence at Stage Three to alter this view. Finally, given the significant level of electoral inequality which currently exists in the area then retention of the existing arrangements for both Hutton & New Longton and Longton Central & West wards is not an option which has been justified in terms of the statutory criteria. We also consider that the ward names accurately reflect the geographical spread of the wards in an understandable manner: we do not judge that both wards should adopt the name Hutton as we consider this would not accurately locate each ward. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for Hutton & Longton and New Longton wards as final. Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map A2 at the rear of the report.

### **Samlesbury & Cuerdale ward**

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

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

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

119 We carefully considered the Stage One representations we received. We noted that change in the warding pattern was inevitable in the Samlesbury area, given the significant electoral imbalances. As mentioned above, we adopted Ribble Valley Conservative Association's modification to the Borough Council's All Saints ward (which we proposed renaming Gregson Lane ward in order to better reflect the location of the ward), and therefore we also adopted Ribble Valley Conservative Association's modification as it applied to Samlesbury ward, again to reflect the settlement pattern and statutory criteria in the area.

120 At Stage Three, the Borough Council reiterated its support for its Stage One proposals for Samlesbury ward, which we did not adopt as draft recommendations. The Council proposed, however, that were we to confirm our draft recommendations, then Samlesbury ward should be renamed Samlesbury & Walton. Ribble Valley Conservative Association supported the draft recommendations for Samlesbury and Gregson Lane wards, although noting it would not oppose Samlesbury ward being renamed Samlesbury & Walton. One local resident proposed modifying the western edge of Samlesbury ward, transferring an area broadly west of Victoria Road/Chorley Road, into a modified Walton-le-Dale ward and renaming Samlesbury ward as Higher Walton & Samlesbury. We also received a representation from a resident of the existing All Saints ward who supported the draft recommendations. Another local resident proposed that the ward name Samlesbury should be changed to Walton-le-Dale North & Samlesbury ward.

121 We carefully considered all the representations we received for these wards. As noted above, we have not been persuaded that modifications should be made to our proposed Gregson Lane ward. Nor have we been persuaded to modify our Samlesbury ward, which we continue to consider, of all the alternatives available, best reflects the settlement pattern in the area while fitting our proposed warding pattern in adjacent areas. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations as final subject to one ward name change. We propose to rename our ward Samlesbury & Walton, as proposed by the Borough Council and supported by Ribble Valley Conservative Association, which we consider better reflects the location of the proposed ward and commands some local support. Our final recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the rear of the report and on map A3.

## **Electoral Cycle**

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

123 At Stage Three, the North West Regional Conservative Party, Lostock Hall Conservatives and Councillor Hughes supported the proposal to retain whole council elections. In the absence of any further comments, we confirm our draft recommendation as final.

## **Conclusions**

124 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:

- in the north of the borough, we propose adopting the alternative wards of Walton-le-Dale and Tardy Gate as proposed by the Borough Council during the additional consultation;
- elsewhere, we are recommending that Samlesbury ward should be renamed as Samlesbury & Walton ward and that Gregson Lane ward should be renamed Coupe Green & Gregson Lane ward.

125 We conclude that, in South Ribble:

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

126 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	54	55	54	55
Number of wards	22	27	22	27
Average number of electors per councillor	1,495	1,468	1,524	1,496
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	5	6	13	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	1	1	3	0

127 As shown in Figure 4, our draft recommendations for South Ribble would result in a slight increase in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from five to six. However, by 2004 no ward is forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough under our proposals, whereas 13 wards would vary by more than 10 per cent by 2004 should the present arrangements remain unchanged.

**Final Recommendation**

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

# Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

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

129 The parish of Farington is currently served by eight councillors representing two wards: North (four councillors) and South (four councillors). For borough warding purposes we adopted the Borough Council’s proposal in our draft recommendations, with a minor modification, that Farington parish should form two borough wards: Farington West and Farington East. These recommendations require consequential parish warding. Neither the Borough Council nor the Parish Council submitted proposals at Stage One for revised parishing arrangements and therefore we formulated our own draft recommendations.

130 We recommended in our draft report that the parish of Farington should comprise two parish wards: Farington East (which would be coterminous with the proposed borough ward of Farington East) and Farington West (which would be coterminous with the proposed borough ward of Farington West). Each ward would return four parish councillors.

131 During Stage Three, we did not receive any comments on the proposed parish arrangements for Farington. As we are confirming our draft proposals for borough wards in the area, we are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for parish warding arrangements as final.

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

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

133 We proposed in our draft recommendations report that Hutton parish should comprise two parish wards, East and West, which would be coterminous with the proposed borough wards, and return four and three councillors respectively. Although there is no statutory requirement for electoral equality at parish ward level, we noted that Hutton parish would form two parish wards

of broadly equal size under our proposals, and we particularly welcomed views on the appropriate number of councillors for the parish during Stage Three.

134 During Stage Three, the Borough Council, Hutton Parish Council and Hutton Residents' Association each proposed alternative borough warding in the area to our draft recommendations. In particular, Hutton Parish Council stated it was "wholly opposed to the warding for the parish" as in the draft recommendations. The Parish Council's alternative proposal would retain the whole of the parish within one borough ward and thereby not require the parish to be warded. The Parish Council did not comment on the proposed level of representation for the two wards in our draft recommendations or the proposed parish ward names. The Borough Council and the Residents' Association also made no comment on the proposed ward names or level of representation.

135 As noted above, we have confirmed as final our draft recommendations for Hutton & Longton ward. In the absence of any further comments on the proposed distribution of parish councillors between the proposed parish wards of East and West, or on the proposed parish ward names, we are confirming our draft recommendations for the parishing arrangements in Hutton Parish.

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

136 The parish of Longton is currently divided into three parish wards: East (returning four councillors), Central (two) and West (six). At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed modified borough warding in the area, which we adopted in our draft recommendations and consequential parish warding was required. However, neither the Borough Council nor the Parish Council submitted proposals for revised parishing arrangements, therefore we formulated our own.

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

138 At Stage Three, Longton Parish Council supported the proposed parish warding in the parish. We received no other comments and, as we are confirming our draft recommendations for borough warding in the Longton area, we are also confirming our draft recommendations for parishing arrangements in Longton as final.

**Final Recommendation**

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

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

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

141 At Stage Three, we received no comments on the proposed parishing arrangements for Penwortham and as we are confirming our draft recommendations for borough warding in the area as final, we are also confirming our parishing arrangements as final.

**Final Recommendation**

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

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

**Final Recommendation**

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

*Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for South Ribble*



## 6 NEXT STEPS

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

144 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.

145 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  
Eland House  
Local Government Sponsorship Division  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU



## APPENDIX A

### **Final Recommendations for South Ribble: Detailed Mapping**

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

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

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

**Map A3** illustrates the proposed boundary in Coupe Green & Gregson Lane and Samlesbury & Walton wards.

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

*Map A1: Final Recommendations for South Ribble: Key Map*

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

*Map A3: Proposed boundary between Coupe Green & Gregson Lane and Samlesbury & Walton wards.*

## APPENDIX B

### Draft Recommendations for South Ribble

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 Samlesbury ward as Samlesbury & Walton ward and Gregson Lane ward as Coupe Green & Gregson Lane.

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

Ward name	Constituent areas
Carrwood	Lostock Hall ward (part); Walton-le-Dale ward (part)
Walton-le Dale	Walton-le-Dale 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 %
Carrwood	2	2,326	1,163	-21	2,892	1,446	-3
Walton-le-Dale	2	3,098	1,519	6	2,948	1,474	-1

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

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

