

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Staffordshire Moorlands

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

October 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Staffordshire Moorlands.

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CONTENTS

	page
LETTER TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE	<i>v</i>
SUMMARY	<i>vii</i>
1 INTRODUCTION	<i>1</i>
2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS	<i>5</i>
3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>9</i>
4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION	<i>11</i>
5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>13</i>
6 NEXT STEPS	<i>37</i>
APPENDIX	
A Final Recommendations for Staffordshire Moorlands: Detailed Mapping	<i>39</i>

A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Biddulph, Brown Edge and Endon is inserted inside the back cover of the report.



Local Government Commission for England

10 October 2000

Dear Secretary of State

On 28 September 1999 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Staffordshire Moorlands under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in May 2000 and undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have confirmed our draft recommendations in their entirety. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Staffordshire Moorlands.

We recommend that Staffordshire Moorlands District Council should be served by 56 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 whole council elections every four years.

The Local Government Act 2000 contains provisions relating to changes to local authority electoral arrangements. However, until such time as Orders are made implementing those arrangements 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 District 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 Staffordshire Moorlands on 28 September 1999. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 9 May 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 Staffordshire Moorlands:

- **In 19 of the 28 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district, and six wards vary 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 17 wards and by more than 20 per cent in seven wards.**

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

- **Staffordshire Moorlands District Council should have 56 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 27 wards, instead of 28 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 24 of the existing wards should be modified and four wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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

- **In 25 of the proposed 27 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in 26 of the proposed 27 wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the district 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 Biddulph, Cheadle, Cheddleton, Endon & Stanley, Leek and Werrington.**

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 21 November 2000:

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

Figure 1: The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1 Alton	1	Alton ward (part – Alton and Farley parishes)	Map 2
2 Bagnall & Stanley	1	Endon & Stanley ward (part – Bagnall parish and Endon & Stanley parish (part))	Large map and Map 2
3 Biddulph East	3	Biddulph East ward (Biddulph East ward of Biddulph town); Biddulph South ward (part – Biddulph South ward (part) of Biddulph town); Biddulph West ward (part – Biddulph West ward (part) of Biddulph town)	Large map and Map 2
4 Biddulph Moor	1	Biddulph Moor ward (part – Biddulph Moor ward (part) of Biddulph town)	Large map and Map 2
5 Biddulph North	3	Biddulph North ward (part – Biddulph North ward (part) of Biddulph town); Biddulph Moor ward (part – Biddulph Moor ward (part) of Biddulph town)	Large map and Map 2
6 Biddulph South	1	Biddulph Moor ward (part – Biddulph Moor ward (part) of Biddulph town); Biddulph South ward (part – Biddulph South ward (part) of Biddulph town)	Large map and Map 2
7 Biddulph West	3	Biddulph North ward (part – Biddulph North ward (part) of Biddulph town); Biddulph South ward (part – Biddulph South ward (part) of Biddulph town); Biddulph West ward (part – Biddulph West ward (part) of Biddulph town)	Large map and Map 2
8 Brown Edge & Endon	3	Brown Edge ward (Brown Edge parish); Endon & Stanley ward (part – Endon & Stanley parish (part))	Large map and Map 2
9 Caverswall	1	Caverswall ward (Caverswall and Dilhorne parishes); Werrington ward (part – Werrington parish (part))	Maps 2, A3 and A4
10 Cellarhead	2	Cheddleton ward (part – Wetley Rocks ward (part) of Cheddleton parish); Werrington ward (part – Werrington parish (part))	Maps 2, A3 and A4
11 Cheadle North East	2	Cheadle North East ward (Cheadle North East ward of Cheadle parish); Cheadle South East ward (part – Cheadle South East ward (part) of Cheadle parish)	Maps 2 and A2
12 Cheadle South East	2	Cheadle South East ward (part – Cheadle South East ward (part) of Cheadle parish)	Maps 2 and A2
13 Cheadle West	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Cheadle West ward of Cheadle parish)	Map 2

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
14	Checkley	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Checkley and Draycott in the Moors parishes)	Map 2
15	Cheddleton	3	Cheddleton ward (part – Cheddleton ward of Cheddleton parish); Wetley Rocks ward (part – Consall parish and Wetley Rocks ward (part) of Cheddleton parish)	Maps 2 and A4
16	Churnet	2	Kingsley ward (Kingsley and Oakamoor parishes); Alton ward (part – Cotton parish)	Map 2
17	Dane	1	Leekfrith ward (part – Heaton, Leekfrith and Tittesworth parishes); Longnor ward (part – Heathlyee, Hollinsclough and Quarnford parishes)	Map 2
18	Forsbrook	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Forsbrook parish)	Map 2
19	Hamps Valley	1	Waterhouses ward (Blore with Swinscoe and Waterhouses parishes); Warslow ward (part – Alstonefield, Ilam and Wetton parishes)	Map 2
20	Horton	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Horton, Longsdon and Rushton parishes)	Map 2
21	Ipstones	1	Ipstones ward (Ipstones parish); Leekfrith ward (part – Bradnop parish)	Map 2
22	Leek East	3	Leek South East ward (part – Leek South East ward (part) of Leek town)	Maps 2 and A6
23	Leek North	3	Leek North East ward (Leek North East ward of Leek town); Leek North West ward (part – Leek North West ward (part) of Leek town)	Maps 2 and A5
24	Leek South	3	Leek South East ward (part – Leek South East ward (part) of Leek town); Leek South West ward (part – Leek South West ward (part) of Leek town)	Maps 2, A5 and A6
25	Leek West	3	Leek North West ward (part – Leek North West ward (part) of Leek town); Leek South West ward (part – Leek South West ward (part) of Leek town)	Maps 2 and A5
26	Manifold	1	Leekfrith ward (part – Onecote parish); Warslow ward (part – Butterton, Grindon and Warslow & Elkstones parishes)	Map 2
27	Werrington	2	Werrington ward (part – Washerwall ward of Werrington parish as proposed)	Maps 2, A3 and A4

Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Staffordshire Moorlands

	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	Alton	1	1,208	1,208	-11	1,208	1,208	-10
2	Bagnall & Stanley	1	1,465	1,465	8	1,390	1,390	4
3	Biddulph East	3	3,870	1,290	-5	4,098	1,366	2
4	Biddulph Moor	1	1,481	1,481	9	1,402	1,402	5
5	Biddulph North	3	4,409	1,470	8	4,248	1,416	6
6	Biddulph South	1	1,451	1,451	7	1,396	1,396	4
7	Biddulph West	3	4,245	1,415	4	4,083	1,361	2
8	Brown Edge & Endon	3	3,865	1,288	-5	3,715	1,238	-8
9	Caverswall	1	1,423	1,423	5	1,382	1,382	3
10	Cellarhead	2	2,824	1,412	4	2,656	1,328	-1
11	Cheadle North East	2	2,783	1,392	2	2,835	1,418	6
12	Cheadle South East	2	2,786	1,393	2	2,811	1,406	5
13	Cheadle West	3	3,820	1,273	-6	4,005	1,335	0
14	Checkley	3	4,246	1,415	4	4,314	1,438	7
15	Cheddleton	3	3,678	1,226	-10	3,870	1,290	-4
16	Churnet	2	2,674	1,337	-2	2,564	1,282	-4
17	Dane	1	1,253	1,253	-8	1,197	1,197	-11
18	Forsbrook	3	4,264	1,421	4	4,042	1,347	1
19	Hamps Valley	1	1,356	1,356	0	1,295	1,295	-3
20	Horton	1	1,477	1,477	9	1,401	1,401	5
21	Ipstones	1	1,469	1,469	8	1,453	1,453	8
22	Leek East	3	3,891	1,297	-5	4,136	1,379	3
23	Leek North	3	4,178	1,393	2	3,982	1,327	-1
24	Leek South	3	3,849	1,283	-6	3,736	1,245	-7
25	Leek West	3	3,883	1,294	-5	3,684	1,228	-8
26	Manifold	1	1,509	1,509	11	1,441	1,441	8

	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 %
27	Werrington	2	2,830	1,415	4	2,704	1,352	1
	Totals	56	76,187	-	-	75,048	-	-
	Averages	-	-	1,360	-	-	1,340	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on Staffordshire Moorlands District Council's submission.

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the District of Staffordshire Moorlands. We have now reviewed eight districts in Staffordshire and the City of Stoke-on-Trent 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 Staffordshire Moorlands. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in November 1975 (Report No. 114). The electoral arrangements of Staffordshire County Council were last reviewed in July 1980 (Report No. 386). We expect to review the County Council's electoral arrangements shortly after completion of the district reviews to enable orders to be made by the Secretary of State in time for the 2005 county elections.

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

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

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the District 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 district.

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. Having regard to the statutory criteria, our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable. We will require particular justification for

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

8 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the general assumption that the existing council size already secures effective and convenient local government in that 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.

10 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/00 PER programme, including the Staffordshire 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. The proposals have been taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, provides that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities' electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Orders under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in the two-tier district areas, and our current *Guidance*.

11 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 28 September 1999, when we wrote to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Staffordshire County Council, Staffordshire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district and the Members of the European Parliament for the West Midlands region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 10 January 2000. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

12 Stage Three began on 9 May 2000 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Staffordshire Moorlands*, and ended on 3 July 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 district of Staffordshire Moorlands covers the north-eastern part of the county of Staffordshire. The district is bounded by the boroughs of East Staffordshire and Stafford to the south, Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle under Lyme to the west, Derbyshire to the east and Cheshire to the north. The district contains an area of around 58,000 hectares and is largely rural, with one third of its area falling within the Peak District National Park. The population of the district is just under 98,000, nearly half of whom live in the three main towns of Biddulph, Cheadle and Leek.

14 The district is entirely parished and contains 42 parishes, including the three town councils of Biddulph, Cheadle and Leek. The parishes range in size from an electorate of 88 in Blore with Swinscoe to almost 16,000 in Leek town, although only 10 parishes have populations over 1,500.

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 district average in percentage terms. In the text which follows this calculation may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

16 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Staffordshire Moorlands district, with around 10 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Brown Edge and Cheadle West wards.

17 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,360 electors, which the District Council forecasts will decrease to 1,340 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 19 of the 28 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, in six wards by more than 20 per cent and in three wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Brown Edge ward where the councillor represents 48 per cent more electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Staffordshire Moorlands

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	Alton	1	1,474	1,474	8	1,463	1,463	9
2	Biddulph East	2	3,039	1,520	12	3,295	1,648	23
3	Biddulph Moor	1	1,667	1,667	23	1,578	1,578	18
4	Biddulph North	3	4,524	1,508	11	4,362	1,454	8
5	Biddulph South	3	3,571	1,190	-13	3,431	1,144	-15
6	Biddulph West	2	2,655	1,328	-2	2,568	1,284	-4
7	Brown Edge	1	2,009	2,009	48	1,963	1,963	46
8	Caverswall	1	1,217	1,217	-11	1,176	1,176	-12
9	Cheadle North East	2	2,407	1,204	-12	2,460	1,230	-8
10	Cheadle South East	3	3,162	1,054	-23	3,187	1,062	-21
11	Cheadle West	2	3,820	1,910	40	4,006	2,003	49
12	Checkley	3	4,246	1,415	4	4,316	1,439	7
13	Cheddleton	2	3,010	1,505	11	3,222	1,611	20
14	Endon & Stanley	3	3,321	1,107	-19	3,141	1,047	-22
15	Forsbrook	3	4,264	1,421	4	4,043	1,348	1
16	Horton	1	1,477	1,477	9	1,401	1,401	5
17	Ipstones	1	1,219	1,219	-10	1,216	1,216	-9
18	Kingsley	2	2,408	1,204	-12	2,300	1,150	-14
19	Leek North East	3	3,394	1,131	-17	3,242	1,081	-19
20	Leek North West	3	4,027	1,342	-1	3,802	1,267	-5
21	Leek South East	3	3,980	1,327	-2	4,225	1,408	5
22	Leek South West	3	4,400	1,467	8	4,269	1,423	6
23	Leekfrith	1	1,160	1,160	-15	1,095	1,095	-18
24	Longnor	1	1,210	1,210	-11	1,147	1,147	-14
25	Warslow	1	1,104	1,104	-19	1,040	1,040	-22
26	Waterhouses	1	893	893	-34	889	889	-34

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 %
27 Werrington	3	4,965	1,655	22	4,705	1,568	17
28 Wetley Rocks	1	1,564	1,564	15	1,506	1,506	12
Totals	56	76,187	–	–	75,048	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,360	–	–	1,340	–

Source: *Electorate figures are based on information provided by Staffordshire Moorlands District 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 district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1999, electors in Waterhouses ward were relatively over-represented by 34 per cent, while electors in Brown Edge ward were relatively under-represented by 48 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.*

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

18 We received 19 representations during Stage One, including three district-wide schemes from the District Council, Staffordshire Moorlands Labour Party and Staffordshire Moorlands Liberal Democrats, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the District Council and the Commission. 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 Staffordshire Moorlands*.

19 Our draft recommendations were based on the District Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality, maintained a council size of 56 members and provided a mix of single-, two- and three member wards throughout the district. However, we moved away from the District Council's scheme in a number of areas, affecting eight wards, using our own proposals in order to provide for more clearly identifiable boundaries:

- Staffordshire Moorlands District Council should have 56 councillors, as at present;
- the boundaries of 24 of the existing wards should be modified, and four wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Biddulph, Cheadle, Cheddleton, Endon & Stanley, Leek and Werrington.

Draft Recommendation

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council should comprise 56 councillors, serving 27 wards. The whole council should continue to be elected every four years.

20 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 25 of the 27 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with only Dane ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2004.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

21 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 51 submissions were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and the Commission.

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

22 The District Council's Policy and Resources Committee approved our draft recommendations for the district. It reaffirmed the Council's support for its original proposals for the Brown Edge/Endon/Bagnall and Stanley area, subject to the amendments proposed in our draft recommendations, and for the names of Manifold and Hamps Valley wards.

Liberal Democratic Group on the District Council

23 The Liberal Democratic Group on the District Council ('Liberal Democrats') stated that, although they continued to favour a council size of 52, as proposed in their initial submission, they would endorse our proposed ward names and warding arrangements for a council size of 56.

Parish Councils

24 We received seven submissions from parish councils. Brown Edge Parish Council expressed support for our draft proposals for its parish. Cheadle Town Council expressed support for our proposed Cheadle North East and Cheadle South East wards. Ilam Parish Council stated that it appreciated the need for boundary changes in its area and could see that the proposed warding arrangements are "the only viable solution" for Ilam parish. It also stated that the proposed name of Hamps ward would be preferable to the name Waterhouses ward. Onecote Parish Council proposed that Manifold ward should be renamed Longnor & Moorlands ward.

25 Cheddleton Parish Council proposed revised warding arrangements for Cheddleton parish. It proposed that our proposed Wetley Rocks ward should be renamed Soutlowe ward, that the existing Cheddleton parish ward should be retained, and that the remaining part of Cheddleton parish should comprise a revised Wetley Rocks parish ward. Endon with Stanley Parish Council expressed support for our draft recommendation to retain 15 councillors for Endon & Stanley parish and proposed that Stanley parish ward should be renamed Stanley & Stockton Brook parish ward.

26 Alstonefield Parish Council opposed our draft recommendations for a new Hamps Valley ward and proposed alternative warding arrangements for the area. It expressed support for Option Two of the District Council's proposal, which would retain Alstonefield and Warslow parishes in the same ward and would provide for better electoral equality than our draft recommendations. Alstonefield Parish Council's submission was accompanied by a petition of 200 signatures opposing our proposed Hamps Valley ward, arguing that Alstonefield and Waterhouses parishes share no community ties. They also objected to the proposed ward name of Hamps Valley.

Other Representations

27 A further 42 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations regarding Cheddleton parish. Councillor Ahmad (Wetley Rocks ward) and 36 local residents proposed alternative warding arrangements for Cheddleton parish in order to create three wards for the area, rather than two as proposed under our draft recommendations. They proposed that Cheddleton ward should be represented by 11 councillors, with six councillors representing the remaining two wards. They did not provide detailed warding proposals, but proposed that Wetley Rocks ward should cover the village of that name. Two local residents also favoured creating three wards for Cheddleton parish and proposed that our proposed Wetley Rocks parish ward should be renamed Withystakes ward or Southlowe ward. They expressed concern that the Wetley Rocks community should have its own representation on the parish council and that the name of Wetley Rocks should be used only for this area. A local resident also favoured retaining the Wetley Rocks ward name for the village of Wetley Rocks, while another local resident argued that our proposed Wetley Rocks parish ward would not actually include the village of Wetley Rocks and favoured renaming Cheddleton ward as Cheddleton & Wetley Rocks ward.

28 We received a further submission from Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association, which stated that the draft recommendations for the Staffordshire districts "seemed to have met with approval from the vast majority of local councils, as far as [they] were aware", but did not provide specific comments regarding the proposals for Staffordshire Moorlands district.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

29 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Staffordshire Moorlands 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”.

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

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

32 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. 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

33 At Stage One the District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting a marginal decrease in the electorate of 1 per cent from 76,187 to 75,048 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. However, growth is projected for some parts of the district. In particular, the Council expects some growth in Biddulph East, Cheadle West and Cheddleton wards. The Council has estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates.

34 We received no comments on the Council’s electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates presently available.

Council Size

35 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.

36 Staffordshire Moorlands District Council is at present served by 56 councillors. At Stage One the District Council proposed retaining the existing council size of 56, which it argued “was the optimum number necessary to deliver effective and convenient local government”. In formulating its scheme, it had given consideration to alternative council sizes and had concluded that any reduction in council size would have the effect of increasing to an unacceptable level the geographical size of rural wards in the north and east of the borough. The Council also argued that a reduction in council size “would run the risk of eroding democratic representation in this rural area beyond that which would be effective”. Finally, it argued that, in the rural areas, even the existing council size of 56 was at the very margins of acceptably reflecting community identities and interests.

37 The Labour Party proposed a significant reduction in council size, from 56 to 45. They argued that the downward trend in the electorate of the area and the decline in the number of services directly provided by the District Council justified a reduction in council size. They also stated that such a change “would allow for modest savings in expenses whilst ensuring a continuation of adequate representation of all local communities”. The Labour Party also referred to new styles of internal political management and argued that a reduction in the number of councillors “would facilitate more efficient decision making”.

38 The Liberal Democrats proposed a reduction in council size to 52, four fewer than at present. They argued that larger wards would reduce the chances of having uncontested elections and would reflect the district’s declining population. They also argued that “the role of the councillor has diminished since the last review” and that “cabinet-style government, if implemented, is likely to reduce the role of councillors even further.” Finally, they argued that the average number of electors per councillor in Staffordshire Moorlands is low compared with similar authorities. The Liberal Democrat Group on the Council, Biddulph Liberal Democrats, Endon Liberal Democrats and Leek Liberal Democrats expressed support for the Liberal Democrats’ proposed reduction in council size to 52.

39 A local resident favoured a general reduction in the number of district and parish councillors, but did not provide any further details.

40 In our draft recommendations report we considered the representations received and noted the lack of consensus regarding the most appropriate council size for Staffordshire Moorlands. Notwithstanding the reasonable levels of electoral equality achieved by the schemes submitted by the Labour Party and Liberal Democrats, we considered that there was insufficient evidence to warrant their proposed reductions in council size. In particular, it was difficult to ascertain from the submissions whether, as a result of a reduction to 52 members, or a more considerable reduction to 45, the effectiveness of the council would be adversely affected and community ties reflected less well than under the current council size.

41 Furthermore, we received no evidence to suggest that there is significant support for such a radical change in council size for the district. We considered that the District Council's proposals would achieve levels of electoral equality comparable to those of the Labour Party and Liberal Democrats and, moreover, would have the advantage of building on a principle of least change. We were satisfied that the Council had conducted an extensive consultation exercise, involving all the parish and town councils in the district and through the establishment of a cross-party working group. We noted that the Council had sought to canvass opinion on its proposals throughout the district and had built on a degree of local consensus. We received no evidence that either of the proposals submitted by the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats were consulted upon locally, or commanded any degree of support beyond their own parties.

42 Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 56 members.

43 At Stage Three the District Council expressed support for our draft recommendation to retain the existing council size of 56. The Liberal Democrats argued that, while they considered that a council size of 52 would be a viable alternative, as proposed in their initial submission, they would "in the case of a council of 56 members agree with the recommendations".

44 We note that our proposals have received a degree of local support, and remain content that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria in Staffordshire Moorlands would best be met by a council of 56 members. Accordingly, we propose confirming as final our draft recommendations for a council size of 56.

Electoral Arrangements

45 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including the district-wide schemes from the District Council, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats. From these representations, some considerations emerged which informed our draft recommendations.

46 As outlined above, our proposals for Staffordshire Moorlands were based on a council size of 56 which we considered to be the most appropriate council size for the district having regard to the evidence submitted and to the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area.

47 We noted that the District Council and the Liberal Democrats proposed retaining a mixed pattern of one-, two- and three-member wards, while the Labour Party proposed a pattern consisting entirely of three-member wards. We considered that maintaining a mixed pattern of one-, two- and three-member wards would best reflect the diverse nature of the district, electoral equality and the statutory criteria. In particular, we were not persuaded that community identities and effective and convenient local government in the rural north-eastern part of the district would be facilitated by a pattern of entirely three-member wards, as proposed by the Labour Party.

48 In view of our draft recommendations for a council size of 56 and our preference for a mixed pattern of wards, we concluded that we should base our recommendations on the District Council's scheme, which we considered would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or the other schemes submitted at Stage One. However, to provide for more clearly identifiable boundaries, we decided to move away from the District Council's proposals in several areas.

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

- (a) Alton, Checkley, Forsbrook and Kingsley wards;
- (b) Cheadle (three wards);
- (c) Caverswall, Cheddleton, Werrington and Wetley Rocks wards;
- (d) Brown Edge, Endon & Stanley and Horton wards;
- (e) Biddulph (five wards);
- (f) Leek (four wards);
- (g) Ipstones and Leekfrith wards;
- (h) Longnor, Warslow and Waterhouses wards.

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

Alton, Checkley, Forsbrook and Kingsley wards

51 The four wards of Alton, Checkley, Forsbrook and Kingsley are located in the south of the district, adjacent to Stafford and East Staffordshire districts. Alton ward contains the three parishes of Alton, Cotton and Farley. Checkley and Forsbrook wards each comprise the parish of the same name and Kingsley ward contains Kingsley and Oakamoor parishes. Under existing arrangements Alton is represented by one councillor and has 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (9 per cent more by 2004). Checkley and Forsbrook wards are both represented by three councillors and have 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (7 per cent and 1 per cent more respectively by 2004). Kingsley ward, which is represented by two councillors, has 12 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (14 per cent fewer by 2004).

52 At Stage One the District Council proposed retaining the existing Checkley and Forsbrook wards. It argued that Forsbrook ward would have "almost the ideal" electoral variance by 2004 and that the level of electoral equality in Checkley ward would deteriorate by changing its boundaries with the adjoining wards to the north and east. The Council proposed a revised Alton ward, containing Alton and Farley parishes, and proposed combining Cotton parish with the existing Kingsley ward to create a new two-member Churnet ward. It argued that, although better electoral equality could be achieved by combining Kingsley and Alton wards in a new three-member ward, "it would be difficult to establish community identity between the two settlements."

53 The Labour Party proposed creating a three-member Alton & Tean ward comprising the existing Checkley ward and Alton, Farley and Oakamoor parishes. It proposed combining Kingsley and Cotton parishes with Ipstones and Waterhouses wards, and Consall and Dilhorne parishes to create a three-member Moorlands Rural South ward. It also put forward a revised three-member Forsbrook ward containing the existing ward and Draycott in the Moors parish.

54 The Liberal Democrats proposed retaining the existing Alton, Checkley and Forsbrook wards. They proposed combining Kingsley ward with Ipstones ward and the majority of Wetley Rocks ward to create a new three-member Ipstones, Kingsley & Wetley Rocks ward.

55 In our draft recommendations report, we endorsed the District Council's proposals for this area. In the context of our proposed council size of 56, we considered that its proposals provided the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. In particular, we considered that the existing Checkley and Forsbrook wards represented community ties well and noted that the Liberal Democrats also supported retaining these wards.

56 At Stage Three, the District Council and the Liberal Democrats expressed support for our proposed warding arrangements. Having received no further views regarding this area, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations as final. Under our final recommendations, Alton, Checkley, Churnet and Forsbrook wards would have 11 per cent fewer, 4 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer and 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (10 per cent fewer, 7 per cent more, 4 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more than the average by 2004).

Cheadle (three wards)

57 The town of Cheadle is located in the south of the district and contains the three wards of Cheadle North East, Cheadle South East and Cheadle West. Cheadle North East and Cheadle West wards are each represented by two councillors and have 12 per cent fewer and 40 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (8 per cent fewer and 49 per cent more by 2004). Cheadle South East ward is represented by three councillors and has 23 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (21 per cent fewer by 2004).

58 At Stage One the District Council proposed broadly retaining the existing ward boundaries in Cheadle, with the exception of a minor boundary change between Cheadle North East and Cheadle South East wards. It proposed transferring the area to the north of Well Street from Cheadle South East ward to Cheadle North East ward. The Council proposed retaining the existing Cheadle West ward and increasing its representation from 2 to 3 councillors, arguing that the ward has clearly defined boundaries, with the A522 trunk road acting as a significant division between it and the other wards in Cheadle. Cheadle Branch of the Stone Constituency Conservative Association expressed support for the District Council's proposals for this area.

59 The Labour Party proposed creating two three-member wards for Cheadle town: Cheadle West and Cheadle East. Under their proposals, Cheadle West ward would comprise the existing Cheadle West ward together with an area containing 1,300 electors around the A522 (Tean Road), currently in Cheadle South East ward. Its proposed Cheadle East ward would contain the remaining part of Cheadle South East ward together with the whole of Cheadle North East ward.

60 The Liberal Democrats proposed that, based on a council size of 52, the Cheadle town area should be represented by seven councillors divided between three wards (two two-member wards and one three-member ward), but did not provide any detailed warding arrangements for this area.

61 In our draft recommendations report, we considered that, in the light of our proposed council size of 56, the existing arrangements for the Cheadle town council area largely reflected community ties well. We also noted that the District Council's proposals would largely retain the existing wards in this area and adopted its proposals for this area as our draft recommendations, subject to a minor amendment to the proposed boundary between Cheadle North East and Cheadle South East wards. We considered that the roads having sole access from Oakamoor Road (Goodwood Avenue, Mallory Way, Moor Lane, Oulton Road and Silverstone Avenue) would be isolated from the remainder of Cheadle South East ward under the District Council's proposal and proposed that they should form part of a revised Cheadle North East ward rather than the area to the north of Well Street. To improve electoral equality further, we proposed that the whole of Queen Street should be transferred to Cheadle North East ward, as was also proposed by the Council.

62 At Stage Three, the District Council and the Liberal Democrats expressed support for our draft recommendations. Cheadle Town Council expressed support for our proposed Cheadle North East and Cheadle South East wards.

63 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period and note that our proposals achieve a degree of local support. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations for this area as final. Under our final recommendations, Cheadle North East and Cheadle South East wards would both have 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (6 per cent and 5 per cent more respectively by 2004). Cheadle West ward would initially have 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average, improving to equal to the average by 2004. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and Map A2 in Appendix A.

Caverswall, Cheddleton, Werrington and Wetley Rocks wards

64 Caverswall, Cheddleton, Werrington and Wetley Rocks wards are located in the south-west of the district. Caverswall ward comprises the two parishes of Caverswall and Dilhorne, while Werrington ward contains the parish of the same name. Cheddleton parish is divided between two district wards, Cheddleton and Wetley Rocks. Under existing warding arrangements, Caverswall and Wetley Rocks wards are each represented by one councillor and have 11 per cent fewer and 15 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (12 per cent fewer, and 12 per cent more by 2004). Cheddleton ward, represented by two councillors, and Werrington ward, represented by three councillors, have 11 per cent and 22 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (20 per cent and 17 per cent more by 2004).

65 At Stage One the District Council proposed significant changes to warding arrangements in this area. It proposed a revised Caverswall ward containing Caverswall and Dilhorne parishes together with the southern part of Werrington ward. The north-eastern boundary of its proposed ward would run to the south of the roads leading from Ash Bank Road, Chatsworth Drive and

the eastern part of Cellarhead Road to the southern boundary of Cheddleton parish. The District Council argued that it was difficult to achieve clear ward boundaries in the Werrington area since it comprises one community with shared interests and proposed creating two two-member wards for the area. Its proposed Cellarhead ward would broadly comprise the part of Werrington ward to the east of Washerwall Lane and Hill Side Road, as well as the Withystakes area of Wetley Rocks ward. It argued that the creation of such a ward would formalise “the natural links that cross the lineal development of the A52 Ash Bank and [would provide] for an electoral balance close to the district average”. The Council proposed that the remaining area of Werrington ward should form a revised two-member Werrington ward.

66 Finally, the District Council proposed a revised three-member Cheddleton ward comprising the existing ward and the remaining part of Wetley Rocks ward, which it argued would provide for improved levels of electoral equality by 2004, as the electorate in the existing Cheddleton ward is projected to grow by 9 per cent over the next five years due to new housing developments. It also argued that Wetley Rocks village, Consall parish and Cheddleton share some communications links.

67 The Labour Party proposed creating two three-member wards for this area: Ash Bank and Cheddleton. Their proposed Ash Bank ward would contain Caverswall parish and the majority of Werrington parish. They proposed transferring the area to the east of Johnstone Avenue (currently in Werrington ward) to a revised three-member Cheddleton ward together with the whole of Cheddleton parish.

68 The Liberal Democrats proposed a revised three-member Werrington ward containing the majority of the existing ward and a revised single-member Caverswall ward comprising the existing ward and the Hulme area of Werrington parish. They also put forward a revised two-member Cheddleton ward containing the majority of the existing ward and proposed transferring an area containing 400 electors in the north of Cheddleton ward to a revised ward in Leek town. As previously discussed, the Liberal Democrats proposed combining the majority of Wetley Rocks ward with Ipstones and Kingsley wards in a new three-member Ipstones, Kingsley & Wetley Rocks ward.

69 In its Stage One submission, Cheddleton Parish Council accepted the District Council’s proposal for Cheddleton, albeit reluctantly.

70 In our draft recommendations report, we noted that, in view of the high levels of electoral inequality which exist in this area, it would not be practical to maintain the existing electoral arrangements. The schemes submitted by the District Council, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats all proposed significant changes to warding arrangements in this area and would achieve reasonable levels of electoral equality. However, our proposed council size of 56 limited the extent to which we were able to consider the Labour Party’s and the Liberal Democrats’ proposals, which were based on a council size of 45 and 52 respectively. Furthermore, we were not persuaded that the Liberal Democrats’ proposal to combine part of Cheddleton parish with part of the Leek town council area would adequately reflect communities’ identities and interests in this area. We noted that the Council’s proposals would provide separate representation for the settlement of Werrington and were accepted, albeit reluctantly, by Cheddleton Parish Council.

We considered that, on balance, they would provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, and put them forward as part of our draft recommendations.

71 At Stage Three, the District Council and the Liberal Democrats expressed support for our proposed warding arrangements. Having received no further views regarding this area, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations as final.

72 Under our final recommendations, Caverswall, Cellarhead and Werrington wards would have 5 per cent, 4 per cent and 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent more, 1 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more than the average by 2004). Cheddleton ward would initially have 10 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average, improving to 4 per cent fewer by 2004. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and Maps A3 and A4 in Appendix A.

Brown Edge, Endon & Stanley and Horton wards

73 These three wards are located in the west of the district, to the east and south of Biddulph town. Endon & Stanley is a three-member ward containing Endon & Stanley and Bagnall parishes and Horton is a single-member ward containing the three parishes of Horton, Longsdon and Rushton. Under existing arrangements, Endon & Stanley and Horton have 19 per cent fewer and 9 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (22 per cent fewer and 5 per cent more by 2004). Brown Edge ward, represented by one councillor, is coterminous with the parish of the same name and currently has 48 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (46 per cent more by 2004).

74 In formulating its Stage One proposals, the District Council identified two possible warding options for the Brown Edge and Endon areas. It considered creating two two-member wards, but found that it was unable to find suitable ward boundaries which would provide for reasonable levels of electoral equality without dividing the main centres of population. The Council therefore proposed creating a three-member Brown Edge & Endon ward, comprising Brown Edge ward and the Endon area of Endon & Stanley ward, and a single-member Bagnall & Stanley ward, comprising Bagnall parish and the Stanley village area of Endon & Stanley ward. It proposed that the boundary between these wards should run eastwards along the southern boundary of Brown Edge parish, to the rear of the properties on Basnett's Wood Road, Spencer Avenue and Springbank Avenue, along Leek Road and eastwards along the Caldon Canal to the parish boundary. With respect to Horton ward, the District Council proposed no change to the existing arrangements, arguing that the existing boundaries reflected the statutory criteria well.

75 The Labour Party proposed combining the existing wards of Endon & Stanley and Brown Edge to create a new three-member Brown Edge & Endon ward covering both these communities. They also proposed combining Horton ward with Leekfrith, Longnor and Warslow wards to create a new three-member Moorlands Rural North ward, as discussed later.

76 The Liberal Democrats proposed creating a new three-member Brown Edge & Endon with Stanley ward, comprising the Brown Edge and Endon & Stanley parishes. They proposed combining Bagnall parish with the Cellarhead area of Wetley Rocks ward to create a new single-

member Cellarhead & Bagnall ward. The Liberal Democrats proposed retaining the existing Horton ward.

77 We received several further representations regarding this area at Stage One. Longsdon Parish Council opposed any change to the existing boundaries of Horton ward. Endon with Stanley Parish Council opposed the District Council's proposals for their area, which they argued would divide the parish "into arbitrary sections merely to achieve numerical equality". They proposed creating a two-member Brown Edge & Bagnall ward, comprising Bagnall parish, Brown Edge parish and an area containing 100 electors in Endon & Stanley parish (Ball Lane, Edgefields Lane, part of Moss Hill and Stanley Road), and a two-member Endon ward comprising the majority of Endon & Stanley parish. The Parish Council argued that their proposal would retain "the identity and interest of all three parishes". A local resident expressed support for their proposals.

78 Endon Branch Liberal Democrats opposed the proposal submitted by Endon with Stanley Parish Council and expressed a preference for the Liberal Democrats' proposal to create a three-member Brown Edge & Endon with Stanley ward and a single-member Cellarhead & Bagnall ward. They also stated that the District Council's proposal was their next preferred option for this area. The Liberal Democrat Group on the District council also opposed Endon with Stanley Parish Council's proposal and expressed support for Endon Branch Liberal Democrats' proposals. Two local residents opposed transferring part of Endon parish to Brown Edge ward, arguing that they are distinct communities and should have separate representation.

79 In our draft recommendations report we noted that there was a lack of consensus with regard to the most appropriate warding arrangements for this area. While the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats proposed uniting the whole of Brown Edge and Endon & Stanley parishes in one ward, the District Council and Endon with Stanley Parish Council differed with respect to the part of Endon which should be joined with Brown Edge ward. In the light of this lack of consensus and having regard for our proposed council size of 56, we largely adopted the District Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations. We considered that its proposals would provide the most reasonable balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, taking into account the projected growth in this area over the next five years.

80 We were not persuaded to adopt Endon with Stanley Parish Council's proposal, as their proposed Endon ward would have a relatively high level of electoral inequality under a council size of 56 (12 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2004). Nor did we consider that two two-member wards would necessarily better represent community identities and interests in this area than alternative proposals based on a three-member ward and a single-member ward. Our proposed council size of 56 limited the extent to which we had been able to consider the Labour Party's and Liberal Democrats' proposals. However, we noted that there was some support among the submissions received for retaining the existing Horton ward.

81 Nevertheless, we proposed a minor change to the District Council's proposals to provide for a more clearly identifiable boundary between the proposed Bagnall & Stanley and Brown Edge & Endon wards. We proposed that the boundary should run eastwards along the southern boundary of Brown Edge parish, the south side of Basnett's Wood Road, along Leek Road, to the

north of Greenmeadow Green and northwards along the railway line to the parish boundary. Our proposed boundary would retain the community to the west of Leek Road within one ward, Brown Edge & Endon ward, rather than transferring Basnett's Wood Road, Spencer Avenue and Springbank Avenue to Bagnall & Stanley ward, as proposed by the District Council. We recognised that there were a number of views expressed locally on warding arrangements, and also that our proposals departed to some extent from those proposed locally. We therefore invited further views from local residents and interested parties at Stage Three.

82 At Stage Three, the District Council expressed support for our proposals for the Brown Edge, Endon, Bagnall and Stanley area. The Liberal Democrats broadly supported our draft recommendations for this area. Endon with Stanley Parish Council proposed amending the proposed boundary between Bagnall & Stanley and Brown Edge & Endon wards to follow the A53 Leek Road.

83 We have carefully considered the submissions received at Stage Three and note that our proposals received a degree of support locally. We have considered Endon with Stanley Parish Council's proposed boundary amendment and note that this proposal would result in a deterioration in electoral equality in both Brown Edge & Endon and Bagnall & Stanley wards. In addition we do not consider that the A53 Leek Road is the most suitable ward boundary, as the community in this area straddles both sides of the road and would therefore be divided between district wards under Endon with Stanley Parish Council's proposal. In the light of these considerations, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations for this area as final.

84 Under our final recommendations, Bagnall & Stanley, Brown Edge & Endon and Horton wards would have 8 per cent more, 5 per cent fewer and 9 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (4 per cent more, 8 per cent fewer and 5 per cent more by 2004). Our proposals for this area are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of this report.

Biddulph (five wards)

85 Biddulph is located in the west of the district and is the largest town in Staffordshire Moorlands. It contains five wards – Biddulph East, Biddulph Moor, Biddulph North, Biddulph South and Biddulph West. Under existing arrangements, Biddulph East and Biddulph West are each represented by two councillors and have 12 per cent more and 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively. Biddulph Moor is a single-member ward and has 23 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average. Biddulph North and Biddulph South, each represented by three councillors, have 11 per cent more and 13 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively. The level of electoral equality in the each ward is not expected to improve significantly over the next five years.

86 At Stage One the District Council proposed modifications to all of the existing wards in Biddulph town. It proposed a revised three-member Biddulph East ward, containing the existing ward and the part of Biddulph West ward to the east of John Street. The Council proposed combining the remaining part of Biddulph West ward with the western part of Biddulph South ward in a revised three-member Biddulph West ward, which would also contain the area to the

south of Mow Lane, currently in Biddulph North ward. It proposed a three-member Biddulph North ward which would also contain a rural area containing around 200 electors, currently in Biddulph Moor ward. It also proposed a revised single-member Biddulph Moor ward comprising part of the existing ward. Finally, the Council proposed a revised single-member Biddulph South ward comprising the part of the eastern part of the existing ward and the part of Biddulph Moor ward to the south of Crowborough Road.

87 The Labour Party proposed creating three three-member wards for the Biddulph town area: Biddulph North, Biddulph Central and Biddulph South. Their revised Biddulph North ward would comprise the existing ward, as well as an area containing around 1,000 electors to the north of Wharf Road, currently located in Biddulph West ward. They proposed combining the remaining part of Biddulph West ward with the existing Biddulph South ward in a revised Biddulph South ward. The Labour Party's proposed Biddulph Central ward would comprise the existing Biddulph East and Biddulph Moor wards, which they argued would maintain local community identities.

88 The Liberal Democrats proposed that Biddulph town should be represented by 10 councillors in four wards (two two-member wards and two three-member wards). However, they did not provide any detailed warding arrangements for the area. Biddulph Branch Liberal Democrats expressed support for the Liberal Democrats' proposals and proposed specific warding arrangements. They proposed a new three-member Biddulph South with Moor ward comprising parts of the existing Biddulph South and Biddulph Moor wards. They proposed transferring around 200 electors from the existing Biddulph Moor ward to a revised three-member Biddulph North ward, and transferring around 250 electors from the existing Biddulph South ward to a revised two-member Biddulph East ward. Their proposed two-member Biddulph West ward would comprise the existing ward and part of Biddulph East ward containing 500 electors.

89 Biddulph Town Council expressed support for the District Council's proposals in their area.

90 We adopted the District Council's proposals as part of our draft recommendations. We considered that, in the light of our draft recommendation for a council size of 56, its proposals for this area would provide the most reasonable balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We also noted that its proposals were supported by Biddulph Town Council and would largely retain the existing warding arrangements in the town. While the Labour Party's and Liberal Democrats' submissions would provide reasonable levels of electoral equality, our proposal for a council size of 56 limited the extent to which we were able to consider their proposals. However, we proposed a minor amendment to the boundary between Biddulph Moor and Biddulph North wards, affecting 18 electors, to retain the electors on Woodhouse Lane within one ward.

91 At Stage Three, the District Council and the Liberal Democrats expressed support for our proposed warding arrangements. Having received no further views regarding this area, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations as final.

92 Under our final recommendations, Biddulph Moor, Biddulph North, Biddulph South and Biddulph West wards would have 9 per cent, 8 per cent, 7 per cent and 4 per cent more electors

per councillor than the district average respectively, improving to 5 per cent, 6 per cent, 4 per cent and 2 per cent by 2004. Biddulph East ward would initially have 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average, improving to 2 per cent more in five years' time. Our proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Leek (four wards)

93 The town of Leek is the administrative centre for Staffordshire Moorlands district and is divided between four wards, each represented by three councillors. Under existing electoral arrangements, Leek North East, Leek North West and Leek South East wards have 17 per cent, 1 per cent and 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (19 per cent fewer, 5 per cent fewer and 2 per cent more by 2004). Leek South West ward currently has 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the average, improving to 6 per cent more than the average by 2004.

94 At Stage One the District Council proposed creating four new wards in Leek, each represented by three councillors: Leek North, Leek South, Leek East and Leek West. The Council's proposed Leek North ward would contain the existing Leek North East ward and the part of Leek North West ward to the north of the A523 (Macclesfield Road and Mill Street). Under its proposals, the remaining part of Leek North West ward would form a new Leek West ward, together with the area to the west of Wallbridge Drive and the properties on Beggars Lane and Spring Gardens, currently located in Leek South West ward. The Council's proposed Leek South ward would contain the existing Leek South West ward, less the area transferred to Leek West ward, as well as the Cheddleton Heath area to the south of the disused railway line, currently located in Leek South East ward. Finally, it proposed that the existing Leek South East ward, less the Cheddleton Heath area, should form a new Leek East ward.

95 The Labour Party proposed three new three-member wards for the Leek town area: Leek North, Leek East and Leek West. They proposed combining the existing Leek North East ward with the parts of Leek North West and Leek South East wards to the north of the A523 (Macclesfield Road, Mill Street, Ashbourne Road) and the A53 (Brook Street and Haywood Street) to create a new Leek North ward. Their proposed Leek East ward would contain the remaining part of Leek South East ward and the area broadly to the east of the A53 (Newcastle Road), currently in Leek South West ward. Under their proposals, the remaining parts of Leek South West and Leek North West wards would comprise a new Leek West ward.

96 The Liberal Democrats proposed that the Leek town council area should be represented by 11 councillors in four district wards (one two-member ward and three three-member wards). They proposed including part of Cheddleton ward, containing 400 electors, in one of the Leek wards, but they did not provide any detailed warding arrangements for this area. Leek Branch Liberal Democrats expressed support for the Liberal Democrats' submission and proposed specific warding arrangements for this area. They proposed a revised three-member Leek South West ward comprising the existing ward and the eastern part of Leek North West ward. They proposed combining the western part of Leek North West ward with the part of Leek North East ward to the west of Prince Street in a revised three-member Leek North West ward. Their proposed Leek

North East ward would comprise the remainder of the existing ward and Leek South East ward would contain the existing ward and 400 electors currently located in Cheddleton ward.

97 We carefully considered the submissions received at Stage One for this area. As stated previously, our proposed council size of 56 limited the extent to which we were able to consider the proposed warding arrangements submitted by the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats. In particular, we were not persuaded to merge part of Cheddleton with Leek, as proposed by Leek Branch Liberal Democrats, as we did not consider such a proposal would best reflect community ties.

98 Nevertheless, we noted that there were some similarities among the submissions received. Both the District Council and Leek Branch Liberal Democrats proposed amending the boundary between Leek South West and Leek South East wards to follow the centre of Spring Gardens and Beggars Lane. Furthermore, the District Council and the Labour Party concurred with respect to utilising the A523 (Macclesfield Road and Mill Street) as a ward boundary.

99 We therefore adopted as our draft recommendations the District Council's proposals for the Leek town area, albeit with some boundary changes to provide for improved levels of electoral equality. However, we proposed one minor amendment to the proposed boundary between Leek East and Leek South wards, which would affect no electors. We considered that the disused railway line, as proposed by the District Council, was not the most suitably permanent ground feature in this area, and proposed that the boundary should follow eastwards along the rear of the Basford Lane Industrial Estate to the town council boundary.

100 At Stage Three, the District Council and the Liberal Democrats expressed broad support for our draft recommendations. Having received no further views regarding this area, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations for the Leek town area as final. We remain persuaded that our proposals would provide for the most reasonable balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

101 Under our final recommendations, Leek East, Leek North, Leek South and Leek West wards would have 5 per cent fewer, 2 per cent more, 6 per cent fewer and 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent more, 1 per cent fewer, 7 per cent fewer and 8 per cent fewer by 2004). Our proposals are illustrated on Maps A5 and A6 in Appendix A.

Ipstones and Leekfrith wards

102 Leekfrith ward is situated largely within the boundaries of the Peak District National Park. It is represented by one councillor and comprises the parishes of Bradnop, Heaton, Leekfrith, Onecote and Tittesworth. Ipstones is a single-member ward located to the south-east of Leek town, in the central part of the district, and comprises the parish of the same name. Under existing arrangements, Ipstones and Leekfrith wards are over-represented, with 10 per cent and 15 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (9 per cent and 18 per cent fewer by 2004).

103 At Stage One the District Council proposed a revised single-member Ipstones comprising the parishes of Ipstones and Bradnop, which it argued would unite two geographically similar areas sharing a lengthy common boundary adjacent to the A523. The Council's also proposed a new single-member Dane ward containing Heaton, Leekfrith and Tittesworth parishes (currently in Leekfrith ward) and Heathylee, Hollinsclough and Quarnford parishes (currently in Longnor ward). The Council argued that the particular geography of this area made it difficult to propose warding arrangements which would achieve reasonable levels of electoral equality and represent community ties well. However, it argued that its proposed Dane ward would retain Tittesworth and Leekfrith parishes, which share strong community links, in the same ward.

104 The Labour Party proposed including Ipstones ward within a new Moorlands Rural South ward, together with the parishes of Blore with Swinscoe, Consall, Cotton, Dilhorne, Kingsley and Waterhouses, as previously discussed. They proposed combining the four existing wards of Horton, Leekfrith, Longnor and Warslow to create a new three-member Moorlands Rural North ward.

105 The Liberal Democrats proposed a revised single-member Leekfrith ward containing the parishes of Bradnop, Heaton, Leekfrith and Tittesworth (currently in Leekfrith ward) and Heathylee, Hollinsclough and Quarnford (currently in Longnor parish). As discussed previously, they proposed transferring Ipstones ward to a new three-member Ipstones, Kingsley & Wetley Rocks ward.

106 Bradnop Parish Council stated that it wished to remain part of Leekfrith ward and argued that linking their community with Ipstones ward would be far from ideal. They argued that Ipstones is becoming an urbanised parish, while Bradnop consists of a largely rural community, and feared that they would lose their identity if joined in the same ward as the larger village of Ipstones.

107 We gave careful consideration to the representations received at Stage One. In the light of our proposed council size of 56, we adopted as part of our draft recommendations the District Council's proposals for this area, which we considered would provide for reasonable levels of electoral equality and would represent community ties well in this sparsely populated, rural area of the district. We noted the comments made by Bradnop Parish Council, but were not persuaded that the villages of Bradnop and Ipstones are so distinct as to preclude joining them in one ward for electoral purposes.

108 At Stage Three, the District Council and the Liberal Democrats expressed broad support for our draft recommendations. Having received no further views regarding this area, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations as final. Our proposed Dane and Ipstones wards would have 8 per cent fewer and 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (11 per cent fewer and 8 per cent more by 2004).

Longnor, Warslow and Waterhouses wards

109 The three wards of Longnor, Warslow and Waterhouses are located in the rural north-eastern part of the district and are each represented by one councillor. Longnor comprises the

parishes of Fawfieldhead, Heathylee, Hollinsclough, Longnor, Quarnford and Sheen; Warslow ward contains the six parishes of Alstonefield, Butterton, Grindon, Ilam, Warslow & Elkstones and Wetton; while Waterhouses ward comprises the two parishes of Blore with Swinscoe and Waterhouses. Under existing arrangements, Longnor, Warslow and Waterhouses wards are all over-represented, with 11 per cent, 19 per cent and 34 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (14 per cent, 22 per cent and 34 per cent fewer by 2004).

110 The District Council proposed creating two new single-member wards in this area, Manifold and Hamps Valley. Under its proposals, Manifold ward would contain Fawfieldhead, Longnor and Sheen parishes (currently in Longnor ward), Onecote parish (currently in Leekfrith ward) and Butterton, Grindon and Warslow & Elkstones parishes (currently in Warslow ward). Hamps Valley would contain the existing Waterhouses ward and the three parishes of Alstonefield, Wetton and Ilam (currently in Warslow ward). The Council argued that its proposal recognised the existing community links between Longnor and Sheen parishes and retained these within the same ward. The Council recognised that the proposed Manifold ward would initially have 11 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average, but it argued that it had considered all available options in this area and had concluded that such a warding arrangement would achieve the best balance between electoral equality and community ties.

111 As previously discussed, the Labour Party proposed combining Longnor and Warslow wards with Horton and Leekfrith wards to create a new three-member Moorlands Rural North ward.

112 The Liberal Democrats proposed a new single-member Longnor & Warslow ward comprising the seven parishes of Onecote, Fawfieldhead, Longnor, Sheen, Butterton, Grindon and Warslow & Elkstones. They also proposed combining the existing Waterhouses ward with the parishes of Alstonefield, Ilam and Wetton to create a revised single-member Waterhouses ward.

113 Longnor Parish Council expressed support for the District Council's proposals for this area, arguing that Longnor parish has a much stronger affinity with the parishes in the Council's proposed Manifold ward than those in its proposed Dane ward. Alstonefield Parish Council opposed the District Council's proposed Hamps Valley ward, arguing that it would be "totally inappropriate to the needs, aspirations and wishes of the community". They stated that Alstonefield has longstanding historical connections with Ilam and Wetton parishes, but very little in common with Waterhouses parish. They also opposed the District Council's proposed new ward name, arguing that Alstonefield is not located in the Hamps Valley.

114 In our draft recommendations report we noted that the District Council and the Liberal Democrats were in agreement as to the most appropriate warding arrangements for this area. We also noted that, during the District Council's consultation exercise, Fawfieldhead, Onecote, Heaton and Tittesworth parish councils had favoured the District Council's proposals for the rural north-east of the district. We recognised that in a sparse rural area it is particularly difficult to reconcile the achievement of electoral equality with the reflection of community interests and identities. However, we considered that, on balance, the Council's proposals would provide the best balance between these criteria and therefore put them forward as part of our draft recommendations.

115 We recognised that there was some disagreement as to the most appropriate ward names for this area. In the absence of such agreement, we put forward the District Council’s proposed ward names of Manifold and Hamps Valley. However, we stated that we would particularly welcome the views of local residents and interested parties on this issue at Stage Three.

116 At Stage Three, the District Council and the Liberal Democrats expressed broad support for our draft recommendations. The District Council also reaffirmed its support for the proposed ward names of Manifold and Hamps Valley wards. Onecote Parish Council opposed the proposed name of Manifold ward, arguing that the River Hamps rises in Onecote and that the name would therefore be confusing to local residents. It proposed that the name Longnor & Moorlands ward would be more acceptable.

117 Ilam Parish Council argued that, although it regretted “the breaking of some old community ties”, it could see “that the suggested reorganisation is really the only viable solution for our own parish.” It also stated that the proposed warding arrangements would enable it to renew the association with Bore with Swinscoe parish which had existed on an ecclesiastical level for many years. The Parish Council expressed concern, however, that the inclusion of the much larger parish of Waterhouses could “lead to some complications” in the new Hamps Valley ward. Finally, Ilam Parish Council stated that the name of Hamps Valley ward would be preferable to Waterhouses ward.

118 Alstonefield Parish Council strongly objected to our draft recommendations in this area, arguing that they failed to take into account the identity of Alstonefield and its geographical and community ties with the parishes to its north. In particular, it stated that the parish has “absolutely nothing in common with Waterhouses, nor for that matter, Blore with Swinscoe”. Alstonefield Parish Council expressed support for Option Two of the District Council’s consultation exercise, which would combine Alstonefield parish with Fawfieldhead, Longnor, Sheen and Warslow & Elkstones parishes. It felt that this option would be most likely to preserve its community ties and communication links with Warslow. Alstonefield Parish Council’s submission also contained a petition with 200 signatures from local residents which opposed the proposal to combine Alstonefield parish in the same ward as Waterhouses parish, arguing they have “never had any contact either physically, spiritually or geographically”. The petition also opposed the proposed name of Hamps Valley ward.

119 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three regarding this area. We have noted the views expressed by Alstonefield Parish Council and the petition from local residents, and several considerations have emerged. In conducting periodic electoral reviews, we aim to achieve the most reasonable balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, having regard to the district as a whole. While we recognise the preference of Alstonefield Parish Council for Option Two of the District Council’s consultation exercise, our proposals, which were based on proposals received from the District Council (Option Three of its consultation exercise) and the Liberal Democrats, limit the extent to which we are able to consider this option. Alstonefield Parish Council’s proposals would result in what we would regard as unacceptably high electoral variances in the adjoining district wards. Furthermore, they would necessitate considerable changes to our draft recommendations in a large number of areas which enjoyed significant support at Stage Three. We note that, while Alstonefield Parish

Council's submission opposed our proposals, Fawfieldhead, Onecote, Heaton and Tittesworth parish councils expressed support for the District Council's proposals during its initial consultation, as described above.

120 We also note that, at Stage Three, there was a lack of consensus regarding the most appropriate ward names for this area. We note that the District Council, the Liberal Democrats and Ilam Parish Council expressed support for our proposals, while Onecote and Alstonefield parish councils opposed our proposed ward names. In the light of this lack of consensus and in the absence of any evidence of significant local support for alternative ward names, we have not been persuaded to amend our draft recommendations in this regard.

121 We remain of the view that our proposals for Hamps Valley and Manifold wards would better address the high levels of electoral inequality which currently exist, as well as largely reflecting community identities and interests in this area. We are therefore content to confirm our draft recommendations as final. Under our final recommendations, Hamps Valley ward would have equal to the district average number of electors per councillor (3 per cent fewer by 2004), while Manifold ward would have 11 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average, improving to 8 per cent above the average by 2004.

Electoral Cycle

122 At Stage One we received no proposals in relation to the electoral cycle of the district. Accordingly, we make no recommendation for change to the present system of whole council elections every four years.

123 At Stage Three no further comments were received to the contrary, and 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 to endorse our draft recommendations in their entirety.

125 We conclude that, in Staffordshire Moorlands:

- a council of 56 members should be retained;
- there should be 27 wards, one fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 24 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of one ward;
- the Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

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	56	56	56	56
Number of wards	28	27	28	27
Average number of electors per councillor	1,360	1,360	1,340	1,340
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	19	2	17	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	6	0	7	0

127 As Figure 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 19 to two, with no wards varying by more than 20 per cent from the district average. This improved level of electoral equality would improve further in 2004, with only Dane ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average, at 11 per cent. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation
 Staffordshire Moorlands District Council should comprise 56 councillors serving 27 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large map in the back of this report. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

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 should also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, in our draft recommendations report we proposed consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Biddulph, Endon & Stanley, Cheadle, Cheddleton, Leek and Werrington to reflect the proposed district wards.

129 The town of Cheadle is currently served by 21 town councillors, representing three wards: Cheadle North East (represented by six councillors), Cheadle South East (eight councillors) and

Cheadle West (seven councillors). At Stage One, in order to reflect its proposed district warding arrangements, the District Council proposed revised parish warding arrangements and a redistribution of councillors representing Cheadle town. It proposed that the revised Cheadle North East and Cheadle South East wards should each be represented by six town councillors. It also proposed that Cheadle West ward should remain unchanged, but that the number of councillors representing it should be increased from seven to nine.

130 In our draft recommendations report we proposed modifications to Cheadle North East and Cheadle South East wards and retaining the existing Cheadle West ward, as broadly proposed by the District Council. As a consequence, we put forward for consultation the District Council's proposed redistribution of town councillors and warding arrangements for Cheadle town, subject to the boundary modification outlined above.

131 In response to our consultation report, the District Council, the Liberal Democrats and Cheadle Town Council expressed support for our proposed district warding arrangements in Cheadle. Having received no further views at Stage Three and in the light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for warding Cheadle town as final.

<p>Final Recommendation Cheadle Town Council should comprise 21 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Cheadle North East and Cheadle South East (each returning six councillors) and Cheadle West ward (returning nine councillors). The boundary between the revised Cheadle North East and Cheadle South East parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated on Map A2 in Appendix A.</p>

132 The parish of Werrington is currently represented by 14 councillors and is not warded. At Stage One the District Council proposed that the parish should be divided between three district wards. As a consequence, it proposed that Werrington parish also be divided into three parish wards: Saltway (returning one councillor), Washerwall (returning eight councillors) and Windmill (returning five councillors).

133 In our draft recommendations we put forward the District Council's proposals for this area, which would result in the creation of a new Cellarhead ward and revised Caverswall and Werrington wards. As a consequence of our draft recommendations, we were content to put forward the District Council's proposed changes to parish electoral arrangements for consultation.

134 At Stage three, the District Council and the Liberal Democrats expressed support for our draft recommendations in this area. Having received no further comments in response to our consultation report and in the light of the confirmation of our proposed district warding arrangements in the area, we are content to confirm our draft recommendation for parish warding in Werrington parish as final.

Draft Recommendation

Werrington Parish Council should comprise 14 parish councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Saltway (returning one councillor), Washerwall (eight) and Windmill (five). The Werrington parish council ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated on Maps A3 and A4 in Appendix A.

135 The parish of Cheddleton is currently divided between two parish wards, Cheddleton parish ward (returning 11 councillors) and Wetley Rocks parish ward (returning six councillors). At Stage One, the District Council proposed that Cheddleton ward be expanded to include Consall parish and a larger part of Cheddleton parish, and that a Cellarhead ward be formed combining parts of Werrington and Cheddleton parishes. As a result, it also proposed modifying parish ward boundaries in this area. It proposed retaining two parish wards of Cheddleton and Wetley Rocks but modifying the boundary between them to reflect the new district ward boundary. As a result it also proposed that the parish councillors be redistributed so that Cheddleton and Wetley Rocks parish wards would be represented by 14 and three parish councillors respectively.

136 Cheddleton Parish Council accepted the District Council's proposals but argued that no changes should be made to the Parish Council's electoral arrangements as the current parish wards form "a natural balance with the natural communities that exist".

137 In our draft recommendations we proposed a revised Cheddleton district ward and a new Cellarhead district ward, as proposed by the District Council. As a consequence of our proposals, under the provisions set out in Schedule 11 of the 1972 Act we are required to ensure that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. We were therefore unable to agree to Cheddleton Parish Council's request for no change to parish wards, and proposed putting forward the District Council's proposal for consultation. We noted that an alternative approach would be to divide the parish into three parish wards instead of two. In the absence of any evidence of local support for such an option, however, we did not propose to putting forward this option as part of our draft recommendations. Nevertheless, we particularly welcomed further views of local residents and interested parties at Stage Three.

138 At Stage Three, the District Council and the Liberal Democrats expressed support for our draft recommendations in this area. We received a further 42 submissions specifically regarding Cheddleton parish. Cheddleton Parish Council proposed revised warding arrangements for Cheddleton parish. It proposed that our proposed Wetley Rocks parish ward should be renamed Soutlowe parish ward, that the existing Cheddleton parish ward should be retained and that the remaining part of Cheddleton parish should comprise a revised Wetley Rocks parish ward.

139 Councillor Ahmad (Wetley Rocks ward) and 36 local residents proposed alternative warding arrangements for Cheddleton parish in order to create three wards for the area, rather than two, as proposed under our draft recommendations. They proposed that Cheddleton ward should be represented by 11 councillors, with six councillors representing the remaining two wards. They did not provide detailed warding proposals, but proposed that Wetley Rocks ward

should cover the village by that name. Two local residents also favoured creating three wards for Cheddleton parish and proposed that our proposed Wetley Rocks parish ward should be renamed Withystakes or Southlowe parish ward. They expressed concern that the Wetley Rocks community should have its own representation on the parish council and that the name of Wetley Rocks should be used only for this area. A local resident favoured retaining the Wetley Rocks ward name for the village of Wetley Rocks, while another local resident argued that our proposed Wetley Rocks parish ward would not actually include the village of Wetley Rocks and favoured renaming Cheddleton parish ward as Cheddleton & Wetley Rocks parish ward.

140 Having considered all the evidence received, we have proposed confirming our draft recommendations for district warding arrangements in Cheddleton. However, we consider that the revised parish warding arrangements proposed by Cheddleton Parish Council, and broadly supported by Councillor Ahmad and local residents, have merit. We have therefore decided to adopt them as part of our final recommendations. We propose a new Southlowe parish ward, comprising the part of Cheddleton parish which forms part of our proposed Cellarhead district ward. We propose retaining the existing Cheddleton parish ward and a revised Wetley Rocks parish ward, comprising the remaining part of Cheddleton parish.

Draft Recommendation
Cheddleton Parish Council should comprise 17 parish councillors, as at present, representing three parish wards: Cheddleton (returning 11 councillors), Southlowe (returning three councillors) and Wetley Rocks (returning three councillors). The ward boundaries of Cheddleton parish should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated on Maps A4 and A7 in Appendix A.

141 The parish of Endon & Stanley is currently represented by 15 parish councillors and is not warded. At Stage One, the District Council proposed dividing the parish between two district wards. In relation to the parish council, it proposed retaining the existing number of parish councillors and creating two wards: Endon parish ward (represented by 10 councillors) and Stanley parish ward (represented by five councillors). Endon Branch Liberal Democrats argued that Endon & Stanley parish should be warded, as proposed by the District Council. They also favoured a reduction in the number of councillors representing the parish from 15 to 13 (nine for Endon parish ward and four for Stanley parish ward), arguing that the community is rarely able to generate the necessary number of electoral candidates.

142 In our draft recommendations we proposed creating two new wards for this area, Brown Edge & Endon ward and Bagnall & Stanley ward, as broadly put forward by the District Council. As a consequence of our proposed warding arrangements, we proposed retaining 15 councillors for Endon & Stanley parish council and creating two parish wards, Endon ward (returning 10 councillors) and Stanley ward (returning five councillors). However, we noted Endon Branch Liberal Democrats' preference for a reduction in council size and welcomed further views regarding the most appropriate council size for Endon & Stanley parish at Stage Three.

143 At Stage Three, the District Council and the Liberal Democrats expressed support for our draft recommendations in this area. Endon with Stanley Parish Council proposed that the boundary between our proposed Bagnall & Stanley and Brown Edge & Endon wards should follow the centre of the A53 Leek Road, as discussed previously. It also proposed that Stanley parish ward should be renamed Stanley & Stockton Brook ward. We received no further comments in response to our consultation report.

144 In light of the confirmation of our proposed district warding arrangements in the area, we have decided to confirm as final our draft recommendation for parish warding in Endon & Stanley parish, subject to a minor modification to rename Stanley parish ward as Stanley & Stockton Brook ward, as proposed by Endon with Stanley Parish Council.

Draft Recommendation

Endon & Stanley Parish Council should comprise 15 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Endon parish ward (returning 10 parish councillors) and Stanley & Stockton Brook ward (returning five councillors). The Endon & Stanley parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

145 The town of Biddulph is currently served by 22 councillors representing five wards. Biddulph East, Biddulph North, Biddulph South and Biddulph West wards are each represented by five town councillors, while Biddulph Moor ward is represented by two town councillors.

146 At Stage One, the District Council proposed a number of modifications to district ward boundaries in this area. As a result, it proposed re-warding the town council area and a redistribution of the number town councillors representing each ward. It proposed that the new parish wards should reflect the amended district wards. The proposed Biddulph East, Biddulph North and Biddulph West town council wards would return six councillors each, while Biddulph Moor and Biddulph South would each return two town councillors. Biddulph Town Council supported the District Council’s parish warding proposals for the town council area.

147 In our draft recommendations report, we put forward the District Council’s proposals for district warding arrangements in this area, resulting in revised Biddulph East, Biddulph Moor, Biddulph South, Biddulph West and Biddulph North wards. As a consequence of our proposals, we also put forward the District Council’s proposed warding arrangements for Biddulph Town Council.

148 At Stage Three, the District Council and the Liberal Democrats expressed support for our draft recommendations in this area. We received no further comments in response to our consultation report. In light of the confirmation of our proposed district warding arrangements in the area, we are content therefore to confirm our draft recommendation for parish warding in Biddulph town.

Draft Recommendation

Biddulph Town Council should comprise 22 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Biddulph East (returning six councillors), Biddulph Moor (returning two councillors), Biddulph North (returning six councillors), Biddulph South (returning two councillors) and Biddulph West (returning six councillors). The Biddulph town council ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

149 The town of Leek is currently represented by 12 councillors and is divided into four town council wards, Leek North East, Leek North West, Leek South East and Leek South West, each returning three town councillors. The District Council proposed four new district wards for this area, largely based on the existing wards but modified to improve electoral equality. As a result, it also proposed creating the new wards of Leek North, Leek South, Leek East and Leek West, each represented by three councillors.

150 In our draft recommendations we proposed revised warding arrangements in Leek town, as broadly proposed by the District Council. As a consequence of our proposals, we were content to put forward for the purpose of consultation the District Council’s proposals for this area.

151 At Stage Three, the District Council and the Liberal Democrats expressed support for our draft recommendations in this area. We received no further comments in response to our consultation report. In light of the confirmation of our proposed district warding arrangements in the area, we are content therefore to confirm our draft recommendation for parish warding in Leek town as final.

Draft Recommendation

Leek Town Council should comprise 12 parish councillors, as at present, and four wards, Leek North, Leek South, Leek East and Leek West, each returning three parish councillors. The Leek town council ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated on Maps A5 and A6 in Appendix A.

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

Final Recommendation

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

Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Staffordshire Moorlands

6 NEXT STEPS

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

154 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 21 November 2000

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

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

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for Staffordshire Moorlands: Detailed Mapping

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

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the district and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail in Maps A2 to A7 and the large map at the back of the report.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed boundary between Cheadle North East and Cheadle South East wards.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed boundary between Werrington and Caverswall wards.

Map A4 illustrates the proposed boundary between Cellarhead ward and Cheddleton and Werrington wards.

Map A5 illustrates the proposed warding in the northern part of Leek town.

Map A6 illustrates the proposed warding in the southern part of Leek town.

Map A7 illustrates the proposed ward boundary between Wetley Rocks and Cheddleton parish wards.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Biddulph town, Brown Edge and Endon.

Map A1: Final Recommendations for Staffordshire Moorlands: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Boundary between Cheadle North East and Cheadle South East Wards

Map A3: Proposed Boundary between Werrington and Caverswall Wards

Map A4: Proposed Boundary between Cellarhead Ward and Cheddleton and Werrington Wards

Map A5: Proposed Warding Arrangements in the Northern Part of Leek Town

Map A6: Proposed Warding Arrangements in the Southern Part of Leek Town

Map A7: Proposed Boundary between Wetley Rocks and Cheddleton Parish Wards