

LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND

FINAL
RECOMMENDATIONS
ON THE FUTURE
ELECTORAL
ARRANGEMENTS FOR
EASINGTON IN
COUNTY DURHAM

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

October 1998

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for Easington in County Durham.

Members of the Commission are:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)

Helena Shovelton (Deputy Chairman)

Peter Brokenshire

Professor Michael Clarke

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Local Government Commission for England

20 October 1998

Dear Secretary of State

On 14 October 1997 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of the district of Easington under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in April 1998 and undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although some modifications have been made in the light of further evidence (see paragraph 73). This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Easington.

We recommend that Easington District Council should be served by 51 councillors, the same as at present, representing 20 wards, rather than the present 26, 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 be elected together every four years.

We note that you have now set out in the White Paper *Modern Local Government - In Touch with the People* (Cm 4014, HMSO), legislative proposals for a number of changes to local authority electoral arrangements. However, until such time as that new legislation is in place we are obliged to conduct our work in accordance with current legislation, and to continue our current approach to periodic electoral reviews.

I would like to thank members and officers of the 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

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Easington on 14 October 1997. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 28 April 1998, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

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

We found that the existing electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Easington because:

- **in 14 of the 26 wards, the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district, and eight wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2002, 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 16 wards and by more than 20 per cent in eight wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figure 1 and paragraphs 73 - 74) are that:

- **Easington District Council should be served by 51 councillors, the same as at present;**
- **there should be 20 wards, six fewer than at present;**
- **the boundaries of 24 of the existing wards should be modified, while two 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 councillor is as nearly as possible the same, having regard to local circumstances.

- **In 19 of the 20 wards, the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average, with no ward varying by more than 20 per cent from the average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with no ward expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average by 2002.**

Recommendations are also made for changes to parish and town council electoral arrangements. They provide for:

- **revised town council electoral arrangements for the towns of Seaham and Peterlee;**
- **modified warding arrangements for the parishes of Horden and Murton;**
- **new warding arrangements for the parish of Dalton-le-Dale;**
- **an increase in the number of parish councillors representing Haswell parish;**
- **a decrease in the number of parish councillors representing Thornley parish.**

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 1 December 1998:

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

*Figure 1:
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary*

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1 Acre Rigg (Peterlee)	2	Acre Rigg ward; Edenhill ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
2 Blackhalls	3	Blackhalls ward (part – the Blackhalls Colliery parish ward and Blackhalls Rocks parish ward of Monk Hesleden parish)	Map 2
3 Dawdon (Seaham)	3	Dawdon ward; Deneside ward (part); South ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
4 Dene House (Peterlee)	2	Dene House ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
5 Deneside (Seaham)	3	Deneside ward (part); Murton East ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
6 Easington Colliery	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parish of Easington Colliery)	Map 2
7 Easington Village & South Hetton	3	Easington Village ward; South Hetton ward	Map 2
8 Edenhill (Peterlee)	2	Dene House ward (part); Edenhill ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
9 Haswell & Shotton	3	Haswell ward; Shotton ward	Map 2
10 Horden North	3	Horden North ward; Horden South ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
11 Horden South	2	Horden South ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
12 Howletch (Peterlee)	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Howletch ward)	Map 2 and large map
13 Hutton Henry	1	Hutton Henry ward (part – the parishes of Nesbitt and Sheraton with Hulam and the Hutton Henry parish ward of Hutton Henry parish); Blackhalls ward (part – the Hesleden parish ward of Monk Hesleden parish); Wingate ward (part – the parish of Castle Eden)	Map 2
14 Murton East	2	Murton East ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
15 Murton West	2	Murton West ward; Murton East ward (part)	Map 2 and large map

*Figure 1 (continued):
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary*

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
16	Passfield (Peterlee)	3	Passfield ward; Edenhill ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
17	Seaham Harbour	3	Seaham ward (part); South ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
18	Seaham North	3	Deneside ward (part); High Colliery ward; Murton East ward (part – the parish of Seaton with Slingley); Park ward; Seaham ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
19	Thornley & Wheatley Hill	3	Thornley ward; Wheatley Hill ward	Map 2
20	Wingate	3	Deaf Hill ward; Hutton Henry ward (part – the Station Town parish ward of Hutton Henry parish); Wingate ward (part – the parish of Wingate)	Map 2

1. INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Easington in County Durham. We have now reviewed all the districts in County Durham as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews of all principal local authority areas in England.

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

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992;
- the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements* contained in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

3 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (published in March 1996, supplemented in September 1996 and updated in March 1998), which sets out our approach to the reviews.

4 The review was in four stages. Stage One began on 14 October 1997, when we wrote to Easington District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Durham County Council, the Durham Police Authority, the local authority associations, the Durham Association of Parish and Town Councils, parish and town councils in the district, Members of Parliament and the Member of the European Parliament with constituency interests in the district, and the headquarters of the main political parties. At the start of the review and following publication of our draft recommendations, we published notices in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the review more widely. The closing date for receipt of representations was 19 January 1998. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

5 Stage Three began on 28 April 1998 with the publication of our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Easington in County Durham*, and ended on 22 June 1998. 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

6 The district of Easington contains the whole of the County Durham coastline which forms its eastern boundary. The district is bisected by the A19 trunk road, connecting it to Wearside to the north and to the Teeside conurbation in the south. Although Easington has the second largest population of the Durham districts (approaching 100,000) it is the second smallest in terms of area. It contains a mixture of urban and rural areas, the two main towns being Seaham and Peterlee which both have populations in excess of 20,000. There are also a number of former colliery settlements and rural villages. There are 18 parish and two town councils in the district.

7 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'.

8 The electorate of the district (February 1997) is 73,159. The Council presently has 51 councillors who are elected from 26 wards (Map 1 and Figure 2). Seven of the wards are each represented by three councillors, eleven wards elect two councillors each, while the remaining eight are single-member wards. The Council is elected together every four years. At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,434 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,442 by the year 2002 if the present number of councillors is maintained.

9 Since the last periodic electoral review of Easington was completed in October 1978 by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), changes in population and electorate have been unevenly spread across the district. As a result, the number of electors per

councillor in 14 of the 26 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average and in eight wards by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in South Hetton ward in which the number of electors per councillor is 43 per cent above the district average.

Figure 2:
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1997)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Acre Rigg	2	2,824	1,412	-2	2,835	1,418	-2
2 Blackhalls	3	4,839	1,613	12	4,887	1,629	13
3 Dawdon	3	3,924	1,308	-9	3,847	1,282	-11
4 Deaf Hill	1	1,059	1,059	-26	1,030	1,030	-29
5 Dene House	2	3,299	1,650	15	3,325	1,663	15
6 Deneside	3	3,220	1,073	-25	3,300	1,100	-24
7 Easington Colliery	3	4,103	1,368	-5	4,094	1,365	-5
8 Easington Village	1	2,017	2,017	41	2,132	2,132	48
9 Edenhill	3	3,726	1,242	-13	3,733	1,244	-14
10 Haswell	1	1,330	1,330	-7	1,338	1,338	-7
11 High Colliery	1	1,287	1,287	-10	1,287	1,287	-11
12 Horden North	3	3,824	1,275	-11	3,829	1,276	-12
13 Horden South	2	2,689	1,345	-6	2,694	1,347	-7
14 Howletch	2	2,870	1,435	0	2,870	1,435	-1
15 Hutton Henry	1	1,406	1,406	-2	1,418	1,418	-2
16 Murton East	3	5,444	1,815	27	5,391	1,797	25
17 Murton West	2	2,600	1,300	-9	2,600	1,300	-10
18 Park	1	1,558	1,558	9	1,558	1,558	8
19 Passfield	2	3,578	1,789	25	3,661	1,831	27
20 Seaham	2	3,517	1,759	23	3,687	1,844	28
21 Shotton	2	3,228	1,614	13	3,274	1,637	14
22 South	1	1,142	1,142	-20	1,156	1,156	-20
23 South Hetton	1	2,050	2,050	43	2,073	2,073	44
24 Thornley	2	2,150	1,075	-25	1,953	977	-32

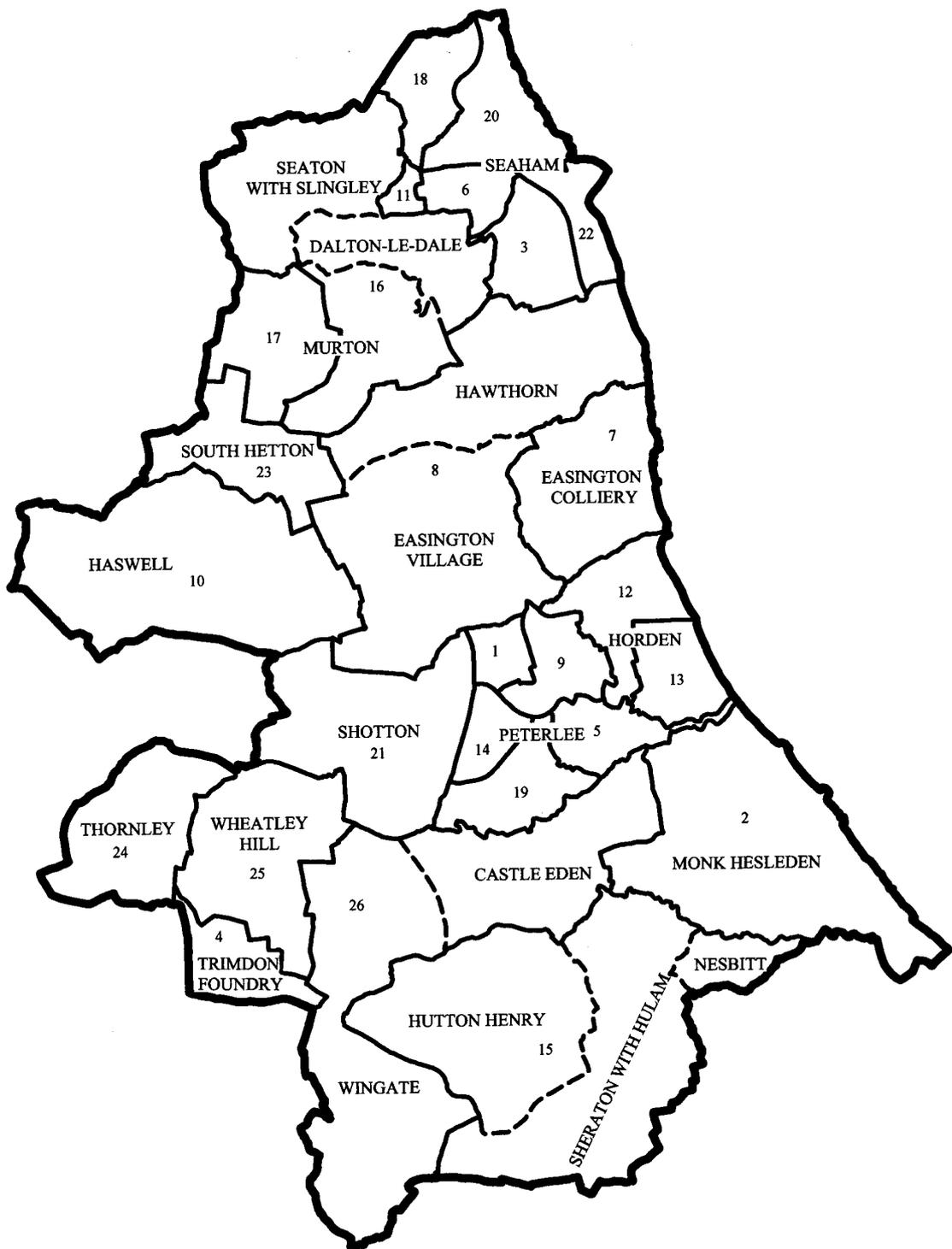
Figure 2 (continued):
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1997)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
25 Wheatley Hill	2	2,685	1,343	-6	2,710	1,355	-6
26 Wingate	2	2,790	1,395	-3	2,873	1,437	0
Totals	51	73,159	—	—	73,555	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,434	—	—	1,442	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Easington 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. For example, in 1997, electors in Deaf Hill ward were relatively over-represented by 26 per cent, while electors in South Hetton ward were relatively under-represented by 43 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Map 1:
Existing Wards in Easington



KEY	
EXISTING WARD BOUNDARY	—————
EXISTING PARISH BOUNDARY	- - - - -

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Key to Wards

1 Acre Rigg	6 Deneside	11 High Colliery	16 Murton East	21 Shotton
2 Blackhalls	7 Easington Colliery	12 Horden North	17 Murton West	22 South
3 Dawdon	8 Easington Village	13 Horden South	18 Park	23 South Hetton
4 Deaf Hill	9 Eden Hill	14 Howletch	19 Passfield	24 Thornley
5 Dene House	10 Haswell	15 Hutton Henry	20 Seaham	25 Wheatley Hill
				26 Wingate

3. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

10 During Stage One we received a submission from Easington District Council on electoral arrangements for the whole district, as well as representations from thirteen parish councils and two town councils either directly or as part of the District Council's submission. We also heard directly from the Member of Parliament for the Easington constituency and from one district councillor. In the light of these representations and the evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions, which were set out in our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Easington in County Durham*. We proposed that:

- (a) Easington District Council should be served by 51 councillors, the same as at present;
- (b) there should be 20 wards, six fewer than at present;
- (c) the boundaries of 24 of the 26 existing wards should be modified;
- (d) elections should continue to be held on a whole-council basis.

Draft Recommendation

Easington District Council should comprise 51 councillors serving 20 wards. The whole Council should continue to be elected together every four years.

11 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the district average from 14 to one. This level of electoral equality was expected to improve during the period to 2002, with no ward expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average by that time.

12 Our draft recommendations are summarised at Appendix B.

4. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

13 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, eight representations were received. A list of the respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Easington District Council and the Commission.

Easington District Council

14 The District Council supported all our draft recommendations, which were based entirely on its own Stage One submission, and made no further comments.

Parish and Town Councils

15 Seaham Town Council supported our draft recommendations insofar as they affected the town of Seaham.

16 Peterlee Town Council referred to its Stage One representation and reiterated its concerns over our proposal to transfer electors from the current Edenhill ward to Passfield ward. The Town Council argued that this recommendation “may hinder the democratic process, and actually deter some of the electorate from exercising their right to vote at local elections”.

17 Dalton-le-Dale Parish Council opposed our recommendation that the parish be warded and “split between the [proposed] Deneside and Dawdon wards”, as it believed that Dalton-le-Dale’s community identity would be lost. Dalton-le-Dale Parish Council also sympathised with Murton Parish Council’s assertion that links between the two parishes would be jeopardised by the division of Dalton-le-Dale parish, arguing that the proposals were “put forward to improve electoral equality and the representation of Seaham on the District Council, without any regard to community identity”. The parish council also agreed with the statement made by John Cummings (Member of Parliament for Easington) during Stage One that “Dalton-le-Dale [is] distinct and separate from the town of Seaham”. It did not agree with our assertion that the parish boundary had been breached by recent housing development on the outskirts of Seaham, arguing that the B1287 link road formed an “artificial and perceived

boundary between what you propose to call the ‘urban’ and ‘village’ parts of the parish”.

18 Dalton-le-Dale Parish Council suggested that the parish as a whole should be represented by a single-member ward, and that with the removal of the ‘urban’ part of Dalton-le-Dale, the proposed Deneside ward could be represented by two members. However, it additionally stated that “the retention of Dalton-le-Dale village in Murton East ward would better reflect local community identities and interests, [and] is preferable to its inclusion in Dawdon ward” (our draft recommendation). The Parish Council also submitted some 350 responses to a public consultation exercise that it had carried out, all of which supported a single-member ward for Dalton-le-Dale parish and opposed ‘splitting’ the parish.

19 Murton Parish Council was “disappointed” with our draft recommendations, stating that the majority of local parish councils opposed the District Council’s scheme. It asserted that parish councils are “closer to the communities” than the District Council, and are therefore more aware of “the identities and interests of local communities”. Murton Parish Council also submitted an alternative to the proposed boundary between Murton East and Murton West wards which it believed to be “more logical and sensible”. This modified boundary would transfer electors from the north of Murton village into Murton West ward rather than transfer those from the south-east of the village. The parish council stated that those electors living in the south-east of the village “are isolated from the vast majority of the [Murton] West ward and certainly have no community links, ties or affinity to the area into which they are [proposed to be] placed”. Murton Parish Council concluded by reiterating its preference for maintaining the ‘status quo’, i.e. by making no change at either parish or district council level to Murton East and West wards, as put forward in its Stage One representation.

20 South Hetton Parish Council reiterated its opposition to the proposal to place the parish in a three-member district ward with the parish of Easington Village. It argued that “in the case of South Hetton and the remaining settlements with

which it has been grouped there are very distinct differences in the social groupings and problems of deprivation which do not appear to have been taken into account". It expressed a preference for South Hetton to be retained as a single-member ward.

21 Haswell Parish Council opposed the proposal to place the parishes of Haswell and Shotton together to create a three-member ward. It argued that "the proposed merger will create a three-member ward with the same resulting variance" (i.e. the same electoral variance as under the current arrangements). The parish council believed that if the draft proposal was enacted, the residents from each village would vote for their own respective candidate and that "one councillor would be from Haswell and two from Shotton as is the current situation". It expressed its preference for Haswell to remain as a single-member ward as "the people of Haswell wish to retain their individual sense of identity and their direct voice to the District Council". The parish council also submitted a copy of a petition opposing the draft recommendation and supporting the retention of Haswell as a single-member ward. The petition was supported by almost 300 local residents.

Other Representations

22 We received one further representation from a local resident who felt that we had "not taken into consideration the close relations between villages". He suggested alternative warding arrangements by the "amalgamation" of parishes, comprising Murton and Dalton-le-Dale, South Hetton and Haswell, and Easington Village and Easington Colliery. He argued that these combinations may be more acceptable to local people.

5. ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

23 As indicated previously, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Easington is to achieve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria set out in the Local Government Act 1992 and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the ratio of electors to councillors being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

24 However, our function is not merely arithmetical. First, 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. Second, we must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries, and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken. Third, we must consider the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the interests and identities of local communities.

25 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 is that such flexibility must be kept to a minimum, consistent with the statutory criteria.

26 Our *Guidance* states that, while we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable, 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. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates. We will require particular justification for schemes which result in, or retain, an imbalance of over 10 per cent in any

ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent and over should arise only in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

Electorate Forecasts

27 At Stage One Easington District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2002, projecting an increase in the electorate of 396 (less than 1 per cent) from 73,159 to 73,555 over the five-year period from 1997 to 2002. Changes in the electorate would be spread throughout the district with the electorate increasing in some wards but decreasing in others, with the net result being a slight increase in total electorate.

28 The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, and the expected rate of building and demolition over the five-year period. Advice from the Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries was obtained. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates which were based on advice from the County Council, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

29 We received no comments on the Council's electorate forecasts during Stage Three and remain satisfied that they provide the best estimates presently available.

Council Size

30 Our *Guidance* indicated that we would normally expect the number of councillors serving a district council to be in the range of 30 to 60.

31 Easington District Council is at present served by 51 councillors. At Stage One, the District Council did not propose any change to council size. In our draft recommendations report we considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics

of the area, together with the representations received. We concluded that the statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would best be met by a council of 51 members.

32 At Stage Three the District Council agreed our draft recommendations with regard to council size. No other representations relating to council size were received. Having reconsidered our draft recommendations we are still of the view that 51 would be an appropriate council size for the District Council.

Electoral Arrangements

33 During Stage Three Easington District Council supported all our draft recommendations, which were based entirely on its own Stage One submission. However, we have reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of further evidence and other representations received during Stage Three. The following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Seaham (six wards), Murton East and Murton West wards;
- (b) Easington Colliery, Easington Village, Haswell, Shotton and South Hetton wards;
- (c) Peterlee (five wards), and Horden North and Horden South wards;
- (d) Blackhalls, Hutton Henry and Wingate wards;
- (e) Deaf Hill, Thornley and Wheatley Hill wards.

Seaham (six wards), Murton East and Murton West wards

34 The town of Seaham is presently represented by 11 members who are elected from six wards. The number of electors per councillor in the three-member Dawdon ward and single-member wards of High Colliery and Park presently vary from the district average by 9 per cent, 10 per cent and 9 per cent respectively (11 per cent, 11 per cent and 8 per cent by 2002). The three-member Deneside ward and the single-member South ward are considerably over-represented, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the district average by 25 per cent and 20 per cent (24 per cent and 20 per cent in 2002 respectively). The two-member Seaham ward, on the other hand, is considerably under-represented, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the district average by 23 per cent (28 per cent in 2002).

35 The three-member ward of Murton East, comprising part of the parish of Murton as well as the parishes of Seaton with Slingley and Dalton-le-Dale, is presently under-represented, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the district average by 27 per cent (25 per cent in 2002). The two-member Murton West ward, comprising the remainder of the parish of that name, is reasonably well represented, with an electoral variance of 9 per cent (10 per cent in 2002).

36 Within Seaham, our draft recommendations proposed that the three-member Dawdon ward be expanded to include the 'village' area of Dalton-le-Dale. This would result in the number of electors per councillor in the revised ward varying by 3 per cent from the district average (6 per cent in 2002). Most of the present Deneside ward and the 'urban' area of Dalton-le-Dale would form another three-member ward, which would vary by 1 per cent from the district average (equal to it in 2002). The present South ward and much of the present Seaham ward would form a new three-member Seaham Harbour ward, which would vary by 7 per cent from the average both initially and in 2002. The remaining area of Seaham (broadly the Park and High Colliery wards) plus the parish of Seaton-with-Slingley would form another three-member ward in this area, Seaham North, and would vary by 8 per cent from the average initially (4 per cent in 2002).

37 With the parishes of Dalton-le-Dale and Seaton with Slingley forming part of Seaham wards under our draft recommendations, we proposed that the parish of Murton should be split into two two-member wards. We also proposed that the boundary between the two wards should be slightly modified from its present position to provide for better levels of electoral equality. The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Murton East ward would be equal to the average initially (3 per cent below in 2002), and the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Murton West ward would be 1 per cent below the average initially (2 per cent below in 2002).

38 During Stage Three Easington District Council expressed its support for all of our draft recommendations, and Seaham Town Council supported our draft recommendations for the Seaham Town Council area. However, Dalton-le-Dale Parish Council opposed our proposal to divide Dalton-le-Dale parish between the two

wards of Dawdon and Deneside, arguing that the parish's community identity would be lost. It did not agree with our assertion that the parish boundary had been breached by recent housing development on the outskirts of Seaham, claiming that the B1287 link road had "formed an artificial and perceived boundary between what you propose to call the 'urban' and 'village' parts of the parish".

39 The parish council agreed with the view put forward during Stage One by John Cummings, Member of Parliament for Easington, that Dalton-le-Dale was "distinct and separate from the town of Seaham". It suggested that Dalton-le-Dale parish as a whole should form a single-member ward and that consequently, with the removal of the 'urban' part of the parish, Deneside ward should be represented by two councillors. The parish council submitted some 350 responses to a public consultation exercise it undertook, all of which supported a single-member ward for Dalton-le-Dale and opposed the 'splitting' of the parish. However, it also stated that the retention of Dalton-le-Dale village in Murton East ward was preferable to its inclusion in Dawdon ward, as this would better reflect local community identities and interests.

40 Murton Parish Council opposed the proposed boundary between Murton East and Murton West wards, and submitted an alternative proposal which it believed would be "more logical and sensible". This modification would transfer 349 electors from the north of the village into Murton West ward, instead of 196 electors from the south-east of the village. It stated that "people living in this area [the south-east] are isolated from the vast majority of the West ward and certainly have no community links, ties or affinity to the area into which they are being placed". Notwithstanding this modification the parish council also expressed its preference for no change to the Murton East and West wards at both parish and district levels. One local resident also expressed his support for (part of) Murton and Dalton-le-Dale parishes to be placed together in the same ward as he felt it would be more acceptable to local people.

41 In the light of these representations we have reviewed our draft recommendations affecting the parishes of Murton and Dalton-le-Dale. We reconsidered whether the 'urban' area in the north of Dalton-le-Dale parish is to all intents and purposes part of southern Seaham, but remain of the view that it is. We do not agree with Dalton-le-Dale parish council's view that the B1287 link road (The Graham Way) is an "artificial" boundary and,

having visited the area, we remain of the view that the housing development to the north of this road holds closer links with the town of Seaham. The warding of the parish of Dalton-le-Dale into two new parish wards, using the B1287 link road as part of the boundary, provides for effective and convenient local government in this area, and the improvements in overall electoral equality in our view outweigh any adverse effect on local community identity. We therefore wish to confirm our draft recommendation for the proposed ward of Deneside, including the 'urban' part of the parish of Dalton-le-Dale, as final.

42 In light of the representations received from Dalton-le-Dale parish council which stated that the retention of Dalton-le-Dale village in Murton East ward would be preferable to its inclusion in Dawdon ward, and in the light of the boundary modification proposed (to the wards of Murton East and Murton West) by Murton Parish Council, we propose to modify our draft recommendation affecting the 'village' area of Dalton-le-Dale parish. This is because both these alterations, we believe, would provide a better reflection of the identities and interests of local communities within the two villages.

43 The modification to the boundary between Murton East and Murton West wards, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report, would result overall in a transfer of 349 electors from the present Murton East ward. Consequently, the number of electors per councillor in Murton West ward would be 4 per cent above the district average initially (4 per cent in 2002). While the electoral variance for this revised ward would worsen slightly in comparison to our draft recommendations, the modification would improve the boundary between Murton East and Murton West wards and it would also allow for the 232 electors in the 'village' area of Dalton-le-Dale parish to be included in a revised Murton East ward. The transfer of 349 electors to Murton West ward coupled with the inclusion of the 'village' of Dalton-le-Dale would result in the number of electors per councillor in the revised Murton East ward being 3 per cent above the district average (almost equal to the average in 2002). Given this reasonable level of electoral equality and the submissions of Murton and Dalton-le-Dale parish councils, we wish to confirm these modified boundaries for Murton East and Murton West wards as our final recommendations. (See the large map inserted at the back of this report).

44 With the removal of Dalton-le-Dale village's 232 electors from the proposed Dawdon ward, the resultant number of electors per councillor in that ward would be 9 per cent below the district average initially, deteriorating to 11 per cent below by 2002 if no other changes were made. We acknowledge that both Easington District Council and Seaham Town Council agreed with the proposed Dawdon ward; however, as a result of the changes proposed to Dalton-le-Dale and Murton parishes we are proposing a consequential change in Seaham. To accommodate the effect of including the village area of Dalton-le-Dale parish in a revised Murton East ward and in order to obtain better levels of electoral equality, we propose to modify the boundary between the proposed Dawdon and Seaham Harbour wards, as shown in the map at the back of this report. This modification would affect 372 electors currently in South ward and would involve all properties in Ropery Way and the area of land to the south-east of it, including all roads leading off Bottleworks Road and Gas Works Road, being transferred into the proposed Dawdon ward. Although Seaham Town Council supported our draft recommendation and while the railway line currently provides for an effective boundary, we believe that our revised proposal would not impact significantly on local community identities and would achieve better levels of electoral equality. Indeed both areas either side of the railway line are linked by Cottages Road and Ropery Walk and are presently united in the Dawdon division for county council electoral arrangements.

45 The number of electors per councillor in the revised Dawdon ward would improve on our draft recommendations and almost equal the district average initially (2 per cent below in 2002). The electoral variance in the revised Seaham Harbour ward would also improve on our draft recommendations, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the district average by 2 per cent both initially and in 2002. We therefore wish to confirm the modified wards of Dawdon and Seaham Harbour as our final recommendations. In the absence of any representations relating specifically to the remaining ward within Seaham, we also wish to confirm our draft recommendation for the proposed ward of Seaham North as final. Details of our final recommendations for the Seaham area are shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Easington Colliery, Easington Village, Haswell, Shotton and South Hetton wards

46 The three-member Easington Colliery ward comprises solely the parish of that name and presently has a good level of electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor being 5 per cent below the district average both initially and in 2002. However, the neighbouring single-member ward of Easington Village, comprising the parish of that name and the parish of Hawthorn, is substantially under-represented, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the district average by 41 per cent. By 2002 this ward is projected to be the most under-represented in the district with an electoral variance of 48 per cent.

47 The single-member ward of Haswell, which comprises solely the parish of that name, presently has a reasonable level of electoral equality. The number of electors per councillor varies from the district average by 7 per cent, both initially and in 2002. The adjoining single-member South Hetton ward, which comprises the parish of that name, is substantially under-represented. It currently has the worst degree of electoral imbalance in the district at 43 per cent (44 per cent in 2002). The two-member Shotton ward, which comprises solely that parish, is also under-represented, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the district average by 13 per cent (14 per cent in 2002).

48 Our draft recommendations proposed no change to the existing Easington Colliery ward, with the electoral variance remaining at 5 per cent. However, we proposed to merge the single-member Easington Village ward with the single-member South Hetton ward to form a new three-member ward with an electoral variance of 5 per cent (3 per cent in 2002). Our draft recommendations also proposed to merge the single-member Haswell ward with the two-member Shotton ward. The number of electors per councillor in the new three-member Haswell & Shotton ward would vary from the district average by 6 per cent (7 per cent in 2002).

49 At Stage Three we received a representation from South Hetton Parish Council which reiterated its opposition to the proposed merger with Easington Village ward. It was of the view that our draft recommendations did not "reflect the identities and interests of local communities" and

that they had not taken into account “very distinct differences in the social groupings”. It also expressed its preference for South Hetton to be retained as a single-member ward. A local resident suggested that South Hetton ward should be “amalgamated” with Haswell ward, and that Easington Colliery ward should be placed with Easington Village ward.

50 As we acknowledged in our *Draft Recommendations* report, although the parishes of Easington Village and South Hetton may individually possess strong senses of community, the levels of electoral imbalance that exist in them at present are unacceptable. Both wards are currently substantially under-represented, and between them they are entitled to an additional (third) district councillor. The distribution of electors between the two settlements makes simply adding one councillor to either of the wards an impractical option, so combining them together into a new three-member ward appears to us to be a logical proposal.

51 We considered alternative combinations for the parishes, but did not find any which we considered appropriate. If Easington Village and Easington Colliery wards were merged together, South Hetton ward would remain unchanged with an unacceptable electoral variance of 43 per cent. Similarly, if we were to retain Easington Village ward unchanged and merge South Hetton ward with Haswell ward the resultant levels of electoral inequality would still be unacceptable: 41 per cent in Easington Village and 18 per cent in the suggested ward comprising South Hetton and Haswell.

52 Given the reasonable level of electoral equality that currently exists in the three-member Easington Colliery ward, we wish to confirm our draft recommendation for no change to that ward as final. We also consider that the improvements in electoral equality achieved by merging the wards of Easington Village and South Hetton together into a three-member ward, notwithstanding the concerns raised by South Hetton Parish Council, appear to outweigh any adverse effect on the identities and interests of local communities. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendation for this ward as final.

53 During Stage Three, Haswell Parish Council reiterated its opposition to the proposed merger of Haswell and Shotton parishes. It stated that Haswell ward already has a good level of electoral equality at 7 per cent, and argued that if the two parishes were merged into one district ward the

resultant electoral variance would be the same (7 per cent by 2002). The parish council expressed its preference for remaining as a single-member ward, stating that “the people of Haswell wish to retain their individual sense of identity and their direct voice to the District Council”. It also submitted a copy of a petition, supported by almost 300 local residents, which opposed the merger of the two parishes and supported the retention of Haswell as a single-member ward. Additionally, and as discussed above, one local resident suggested an alternative proposal which would merge Haswell parish with the neighbouring parish of South Hetton, which he felt would be “more acceptable” to local people. However, as stated earlier, this combination would result in an unacceptable level of electoral inequality (18 per cent).

54 We have reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the representations received and acknowledge the concerns raised by Haswell Parish Council. However, we remain of the view that the merger of Haswell and Shotton parishes to form a three-member ward is the most favourable option, as it would produce a better level of electoral equality than any alternative. If the two wards were left unaltered, the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent below the average in Haswell ward both initially and in 2002, but 13 per cent above the average in Shotton ward (14 per cent above in 2002).

55 While we acknowledge that this would be a reasonable level of electoral equality for Haswell ward and notwithstanding the strength of support from local residents for no change to the current arrangements, the resultant level of electoral equality in Shotton ward would be unacceptable when a better alternative is available. Given that our draft recommendation would provide for an electoral variance of 6 per cent (7 per cent in 2002), and in the absence of any further evidence, we believe that the improvement achieved in electoral equality by merging the two wards together appears to outweigh any adverse effect on the identities and interests of local communities. We therefore wish to confirm, as final, our draft recommendation for a new three-member ward of Haswell & Shotton.

Peterlee (five wards), and Horden North and Horden South wards

56 The town of Peterlee is presently represented by 11 members elected from five wards. The two-member Acre Rigg and Howletch wards currently possess good levels of electoral equality, with the

number of electors per councillor varying from the district average by 2 per cent and equalling the average respectively (2 per cent and 1 per cent by 2002). However, the two-member wards of Dene House and Passfield are under-represented, the number of electors per councillor varying from the district average by 15 per cent and 25 per cent respectively (15 per cent and 27 per cent in 2002). The three-member Edenhill ward is over-represented, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the district average by 13 per cent (14 per cent in 2002).

57 The neighbouring and closely linked parish of Horden is divided into two wards, with the three-member Horden North ward being over-represented, varying from the average number of electors per councillor by 11 per cent (12 per cent in 2002). The two-member Horden South ward, which is also marginally over-represented, presently varies from the average by 6 per cent (7 per cent in 2002).

58 Our draft recommendations proposed retaining unchanged the two-member Howletch ward, given its good present level of electoral equality. We also proposed a small modification to the two-member Acre Rigg ward, involving the transfer of 74 electors from Edenhill ward. The number of electors per councillor in the modified Acre Rigg ward would vary from the average by 1 per cent both initially and in 2002. In addition to the loss of 74 electors, the three-member Edenhill ward would also lose (to a modified Passfield ward) the remainder of its electorate west of Essington Way (some 776), although it would also gain 188 electors from Dene House ward as described below. As a result, Edenhill would become a two-member ward and would vary from the average number of electors per councillor by 8 per cent, both initially and in 2002.

59 Passfield ward would, with the addition of 776 electors as described above, become a three-member ward and would equal the average number of electors per councillor initially (projected to vary by 2 per cent in 2002). Finally, our draft recommendations proposed a transfer of 188 electors from the present Dene House ward to Edenhill ward, resulting in the modified two-member Dene House ward varying from the average number of electors per councillor by 8 per cent (9 per cent in 2002).

60 In order to improve the level of electoral equality between the two Horden wards, our draft recommendations proposed transferring 73

electors from Horden South to Horden North ward. The number of electors per councillor in both modified wards would initially vary from the average by 9 per cent, retaining that level of electoral equality by 2002. We did not receive any objections to our draft recommendations for these wards and remain of the view that our proposals provide for the most appropriate arrangements for the wards of Horden North and Horden South.

61 Notwithstanding the District Council's support for all our draft recommendations, we received one representation concerning the Peterlee area during Stage Three. Peterlee Town Council reiterated its concerns over the proposed transfer of electors from Edenhill to Passfield ward. During Stage One it had stated that such a change was "not acceptable to those residents currently in Edenhill, as they do not identify with the Passfield ward", and that the revised Passfield ward would be divided by a major arterial road (Burnhope Way).

62 We have reconsidered our draft recommendations for Peterlee in the light of this representation, but remain of the view that our proposals are appropriate. If we were to leave the present ward boundary (along Burnhope Way) in place, thus increasing the number of electors in Edenhill ward by 776, the level of electoral inequality would be unacceptable. Assuming no change to the number of councillors in each ward, the number of electors per councillor in the Edenhill ward would be 35 per cent above the average initially (34 per cent in 2002), while in the Passfield ward the number of electors per councillor would be 18 per cent below the average initially (16 per cent in 2002). Similarly, if we were to transfer the 776 electors into Acre Rigg ward, the number of electors per councillor in that ward would vary from the average by 28 per cent, both initially and in 2002.

63 As stated in our draft recommendations report, we accept that it is not ideal for the proposed Passfield ward to have a relatively major road running through it. However, we do not consider this to be a sufficient reason to depart from a scheme which produces good levels of electoral equality within the town of Peterlee and which no respondent has improved upon. We believe that the improvements in electoral equality that result from our proposals outweigh any adverse effect on the statutory criteria. We therefore wish to confirm our draft recommendations for the five wards in Peterlee as final, as shown in the map at the back of this report.

Blackhalls, Hutton Henry and Wingate wards

64 The three-member ward of Blackhalls which comprises the parish of Monk Hesleden is presently under-represented, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the district average by 12 per cent (13 per cent in 2002). However, the neighbouring single-member ward of Hutton Henry (comprising the parish of that name and the parishes of Sheraton with Hulam and Nesbitt) and the two-member ward of Wingate (comprising the parishes of Castle Eden and Wingate) both have good levels of electoral equality. The number of electors per councillor in these wards varies from the district average by 2 per cent and 3 per cent respectively (2 per cent and equalling the average in 2002).

65 Our draft recommendations scheme would improve electoral equality overall in this area. We proposed transferring the 582 electors from the Hesleden parish ward of Monk Hesleden parish (currently in the Blackhalls district ward) into a modified Hutton Henry district ward. The number of electors per councillor in the modified three-member Blackhalls ward would vary from the average by just 1 per cent, both initially and in 2002.

66 The single-member Hutton Henry ward, despite its good present level of electoral equality, would be reconfigured in order to achieve better levels of electoral equality in neighbouring wards. Under our draft recommendations it would remain a single-member ward, and in addition to the Hesleden parish ward (see above) it would also gain the parish of Castle Eden (containing 301 electors) currently in Wingate ward. However, in order to improve electoral equality in Wingate ward, the 931 electors from the Station Town parish ward of Hutton Henry parish would form part of a revised three-member Wingate district ward.

67 We proposed that a revised three-member Wingate ward should comprise the Station Town parish ward, the parish of Trimdon Foundry (the present Deaf Hill ward) and the parish of Wingate. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the revised Hutton Henry and Wingate wards would vary from the district average respectively by 5 per cent and 4 per cent (5 per cent and 5 per cent in 2002).

68 During Stage Three we did not receive any submissions relating specifically to these wards, although Easington District Council expressed its support for all our draft recommendations. In view of the good levels of electoral equality that would result for this area we wish to confirm our draft recommendations for these wards as final.

Deaf Hill, Thornley and Wheatley Hill wards

69 This area of the district is presently substantially over-represented on the District Council. With a council size of 51 members, the area as a whole warrants four councillors but is currently represented by five. The single-member Deaf Hill ward, which comprises the parish of Trimdon Foundry, varies from the district average number of electors per councillor by 26 per cent (29 per cent in 2002). The two-member Thornley ward, which comprises the parish of that name, is also over-represented, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the district average by 25 per cent (32 per cent in 2002). However, the two-member ward of Wheatley Hill, which comprises the parish of the same name, is relatively well represented. The number of electors per councillor in that ward varies from the district average by 6 per cent, both initially and in 2002.

70 In order to improve representation in this area our draft recommendations proposed a reconfiguration of wards. We proposed placing the single-member Deaf Hill ward (the parish of Trimdon Foundry) into a modified three-member Wingate ward (as described in the section above). We also proposed to merge the two-member wards of Thornley and Wheatley Hill together to form a new three-member Thornley & Wheatley Hill ward, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the district average by 12 per cent. This would be the only ward under our draft recommendations which would vary by more than 10 per cent from the district average. However, the District Council forecasts a decrease of 172 in the electorate of this area by 2002, which would improve the variance to 8 per cent by that time.

71 The District Council expressed its support for all of our draft recommendations, and we did not receive any other submissions relating specifically to this area during Stage Three. Given the improved levels of electoral equality that would result, and in the absence of any other evidence, we wish to confirm our draft recommendations in this area as final.

Electoral Cycle

72 In our draft recommendations report we proposed that the present system of whole-council elections should continue. During Stage Three we did not receive any representations on this issue. Therefore, we wish to confirm our draft recommendation in favour of the continuation of whole-council elections as final.

Conclusions

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

- (a) The boundary between the proposed Murton East and Murton West wards should be modified to include some electors from the north of the village in Murton West ward as opposed to some electors from the south-east of the village.
- (b) The boundary between the proposed Dawdon and Murton East wards should be modified to include the 'village' area of Dalton-le-Dale parish in Murton East ward.
- (c) The boundary between the proposed Dawdon and Seaham Harbour wards should be modified

to include properties to the south-east of Ropery Way in Dawdon ward.

74 We conclude that in Easington:

- (a) there should be a council size of 51, the same as at present;
- (b) there should be 20 wards, six fewer than at present;
- (c) the boundaries of 24 of the 26 existing wards should be modified;
- (d) whole-council elections should continue to be held every four years.

75 Figure 3 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, as based on 1997 and 2002 electorate figures.

76 As shown in Figure 3, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from the district average from 14 to one. This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue over the five-year period to 2002, by which time no ward is projected to vary from the district average by more than 10 per cent. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

*Figure 3:
Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements*

	1997 electorate		2002 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	51	51	51	51
Number of wards	26	20	26	20
Average number of electors per councillor	1,434	1,434	1,442	1,442
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	14	1	16	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	8	0	8	0

Final Recommendation

Easington District Council should comprise 51 councillors serving 20 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 4, and illustrated in Map 2 and on the large map inserted at the back of this report. The Council should continue to be elected together every four years.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

77 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 is to 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 changes to the warding arrangements for the towns of Seaham and Peterlee, and to ward for the first time the parish of Dalton-le-Dale, to reflect the proposed district wards.

78 At Stage One we proposed that in the parish of Dalton-le-Dale two new parish wards should be created, one of which would form part of the proposed Deneside district council ward and the other which would form part of the proposed Dawdon district council ward. However, in the light of representations received during Stage Three we have modified our draft recommendations for district council electoral arrangements for Dalton-le-Dale, to include the 'village' area of Dalton-le-Dale parish in the proposed district ward of Murton East instead of in the proposed Dawdon ward. This modification, however, would not significantly affect our draft proposals for parish council electoral arrangements for Dalton-le-Dale parish as detailed in our draft recommendations: the parish would still be warded in the same place and the number of parish councillors to be elected from each parish ward would remain the same.

Final Recommendation

Dalton-le-Dale should be divided into two new parish wards. Dalton Urban parish ward would form part of the revised Deneside district ward, and Dalton Village parish ward would form part of the revised Murton East district ward. Dalton Urban parish ward should be represented by five parish councillors, and Dalton Village parish ward by four parish councillors. This proposal is illustrated on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

79 Our draft recommendations proposed that the parish of Seaham should continue to be warded for parish council purposes but that the boundaries of the parish wards should be amended to be coterminous with the proposed district wards. In the light of representations received during Stage Three we have slightly modified our draft recommendations affecting the proposed district wards of Dawdon and Seaham Harbour, as detailed earlier. Consequentially, we are proposing slight modifications to the boundaries of the proposed parish wards in order to make them coterminous (where appropriate) with the proposed district wards.

Final Recommendation

The parish of Seaham should comprise four parish wards and twenty one parish councillors. A new Seaham Harbour parish ward should be created, represented by six parish councillors, and be coterminous with the proposed district council ward of the same name. A new Seaham North parish ward should be created, represented by five parish councillors, and should cover the area of that part of the parish of Seaham that lies within the proposed Seaham North district council ward. A revised Dawdon parish ward should be coterminous with the proposed district ward of the same name and should be represented by five parish councillors. A revised Deneside parish ward should be represented by five parish councillors and should cover the area of that part of the parish of Seaham that lies within the proposed Deneside district council ward.

80 Our draft recommendations proposed that the parish of Peterlee should continue to be warded for parish council purposes, but that the boundaries of the parish wards should be amended to be coterminous with the proposed district wards. At Stage Three we received a representation from Peterlee Town Council opposing our proposal to place part of the current Edenhill district council ward into Passfield district council ward. However, in the light of our final recommendation for the district council warding arrangements we are confirming our draft recommendation as final.

Final Recommendation

The parish of Peterlee should comprise five parish wards and twenty two parish councillors. A revised Acre Rigg parish ward should be coterminous with the proposed district ward of the same name and should be represented by four parish councillors. A revised Dene House parish ward should be coterminous with the proposed district ward of the same name and should be represented by four parish councillors. A revised Edenhill parish ward should be coterminous with the proposed district ward of the same name and should be represented by four parish councillors. An unchanged Howletch parish ward should continue to be represented by four parish councillors. A revised Passfield parish ward should be coterminous with the proposed district ward of the same name and should be represented by six parish councillors.

81 In the light of our final recommendations for district wards, we propose that the parish wards in the parish of Murton be modified to reflect the proposed district council wards.

Final Recommendation

Murton Parish Council should continue to be served by 21 parish councillors, representing two wards. Murton East ward should return 12 parish councillors and Murton West ward should return nine parish councillors. The boundary between the parish council wards should be the same as that between the proposed district council wards of Murton East and Murton West as illustrated on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

82 In the light of our final recommendations for district wards, we propose that the parish wards in the parish of Horden be modified to reflect the proposed district council wards.

Final Recommendation

Horden Parish Council should continue to be served by 15 parish councillors, representing two wards. Horden North ward should return eight parish councillors and Horden South ward should return seven parish councillors. The boundary between the parish council wards should be the same as that between the proposed district council wards of Horden North and Horden South as illustrated on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

83 Following a request from the parish council, our draft recommendations proposed to increase the number of parish councillors representing Haswell parish. At Stage Three no comments were received in relation to this proposal and we are therefore content to confirm our draft recommendation as final.

Final Recommendation

Haswell Parish Council should be represented by nine parish councillors rather than the present seven, but should remain unwarded for parish council electoral purposes.

84 Following a request from the parish council, we also proposed to decrease the number of parish councillors representing Thornley parish. We did not receive any comments on this proposal at Stage Three and we have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendation as final.

Final Recommendation

Thornley Parish Council should be represented by 10 parish councillors rather than the present 15, but should remain unwarded for parish council electoral purposes.

85 In our draft recommendations we also proposed that there should not be any change to the electoral cycle of parish and town councils in the district. We have not received any evidence to consider moving away from this proposal during Stage Three, and therefore confirm it as final.

Final Recommendation

Elections for parish and town councils should continue to be held at the same time as elections for the District Council.

Map 2:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Easington



KEY	
PROPOSED WARD BOUNDARY	—————
EXISTING PARISH BOUNDARY	- - - - -

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Key to Wards

1 Acre Rigg	6 Easington Colliery	11 Horden South	16 Passfield
2 Blackhalls	7 Easington Village and South Hetton	12 Howletch	17 Seaham Harbour
3 Dawdon	8 Eden Hill	13 Hutton Henry	18 Seaham North
4 Dene House	9 Haswell and Shotton	14 Murton East	19 Thornley and Wheatley Hill
5 Deneside	10 Horden North	15 Murton West	20 Wingate

Figure 4:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Easington

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1997)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Acre Rigg (Peterlee)	2	2,898	1,449	1	2,909	1,455	1
2 Blackhalls	3	4,257	1,419	-1	4,296	1,432	-1
3 Dawdon (Seaham)	3	4,296	1,432	0	4,219	1,406	-2
4 Dene House (Peterlee)	2	3,111	1,556	8	3,137	1,569	9
5 Deneside (Seaham)	3	4,268	1,423	-1	4,348	1,449	0
6 Easington Colliery	3	4,103	1,368	-5	4,094	1,365	-5
7 Easington Village & South Hetton	3	4,067	1,356	-5	4,205	1,402	-3
8 Edenhill (Peterlee)	2	3,094	1,547	8	3,101	1,551	8
9 Haswell & Shotton	3	4,558	1,519	6	4,612	1,537	7
10 Horden North	3	3,897	1,299	-9	3,902	1,301	-10
11 Horden South	2	2,616	1,308	-9	2,621	1,311	-9
12 Howletch (Peterlee)	2	2,870	1,435	0	2,870	1,435	-1
13 Hutton Henry	1	1,358	1,358	-5	1,373	1,373	-5
14 Murton East	2	2,942	1,471	3	2,879	1,440	0
15 Murton West	2	2,986	1,493	4	2,986	1,493	4
16 Passfield (Peterlee)	3	4,324	1,441	0	4,407	1,469	2
17 Seaham Harbour	3	4,228	1,409	-2	4,254	1,418	-2
18 Seaham North	3	3,972	1,324	-8	4,140	1,380	-4
19 Thornley & Wheatley Hill	3	4,835	1,612	12	4,663	1,554	8
20 Wingate	3	4,479	1,493	4	4,539	1,513	5
Totals	51	73,159	—	—	73,555	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,434	—	—	1,442	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Easington 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.

6. NEXT STEPS

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

87 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 earlier than six weeks from the date that our recommendations are submitted to the Secretary of State.

88 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 Review
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for Easington: Detailed Mapping

The **large map** inserted at the back of the report illustrates the Commission's proposed warding arrangements for Seaham, Peterlee and the surrounding areas.

APPENDIX B

Draft Recommendations for Easington

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

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1 Acre Rigg (Peterlee)	2	Acre Rigg ward; Edenhill ward (part)
2 Blackhalls	3	Blackhalls ward (part – the Blackhalls Colliery parish ward and Blackhalls Rocks parish ward of Monk Hesleden parish)
3 Dawdon (Seaham)	3	Dawdon ward; Murton East ward (part)
4 Dene House (Peterlee)	2	Dene House ward (part)
5 Deneside (Seaham)	3	Deneside ward (part); Murton East ward (part)
6 Easington Colliery	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parish of Easington Colliery)
7 Easington Village & South Hetton	3	Easington Village ward; South Hetton ward
8 Edenhill (Peterlee)	2	Dene House ward (part); Edenhill ward (part)
9 Haswell & Shotton	3	Haswell ward; Shotton ward
10 Horden North	3	Horden North ward; Horden South ward (part)
11 Horden South	2	Horden South ward (part)
12 Howletch (Peterlee)	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Howletch ward)
13 Hutton Henry	1	Hutton Henry ward (part – the parishes of Nesbitt and Sheraton with Hulam and the Hutton Henry parish ward of Hutton Henry parish); Blackhalls ward (part – the Hesleden parish ward of Monk Hesleden parish); Wingate ward (part – the parish of Castle Eden)
14 Murton East	2	Murton East ward (part)
15 Murton West	2	Murton West ward; Murton East ward (part)
16 Passfield (Peterlee)	3	Passfield ward (part); Edenhill ward (part)
17 Seaham Harbour	3	Seaham ward (part); South ward

continued overleaf

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

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
18 Seaham North	3	Denside ward (part); High Colliery ward; Murton East ward (part – the parish of Seaton with Slingley); Park ward; Seaham ward (part)
19 Thornley & Wheatley Hill	3	Thornley ward; Wheatley Hill ward
20 Wingate	3	Deaf Hill ward; Hutton Henry ward (part – the Station Town parish ward of Hutton Henry parish); Wingate ward (part – the parish of Wingate)

Figure B2:
The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Easington

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1997)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Acre Rigg (Peterlee)	2	2,898	1,449	1	2,909	1,455	1
2	Blackhalls	3	4,257	1,419	-1	4,296	1,432	-1
3	Dawdon (Seaham)	3	4,156	1,385	-3	4,079	1,360	-6
4	Dene House (Peterlee)	2	3,111	1,556	8	3,137	1,569	9
5	Deneside (Seaham)	3	4,268	1,423	-1	4,348	1,449	0
6	Easington Colliery	3	4,103	1,368	-5	4,094	1,365	-5
7	Easington Village & South Hetton	3	4,067	1,356	-5	4,205	1,402	-3
8	Edenhill (Peterlee)	2	3,094	1,547	8	3,101	1,551	8
9	Haswell & Shotton	3	4,558	1,519	6	4,612	1,537	7
10	Horden North	3	3,897	1,299	-9	3,902	1,301	-10
11	Horden South	2	2,616	1,308	-9	2,621	1,311	-9
12	Howletch (Peterlee)	2	2,870	1,435	0	2,870	1,435	-1
13	Hutton Henry	1	1,358	1,358	-5	1,373	1,373	-5
14	Murton East	2	2,863	1,432	0	2,800	1,400	-3
15	Murton West	2	2,833	1,417	-1	2,833	1,417	-2
16	Passfield (Peterlee)	3	4,324	1,441	0	4,407	1,469	2
17	Seaham Harbour	3	4,600	1,533	7	4,626	1,542	7
18	Seaham North	3	3,972	1,324	-8	4,140	1,380	-4
19	Thornley & Wheatley Hill	3	4,835	1,612	12	4,663	1,554	8

continued overleaf

Figure B2:
The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Easington

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1997)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
20	Wingate	3	4,479	1,493	4	4,539	1,513	5
	Totals	51	73,159	—	—	73,555	—	—
	Averages	—	—	1,434	—	—	1,442	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Easington 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.

