

Final recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Stockton-on-Tees

Report to The Electoral Commission

March 2003

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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Stockton-on-Tees is inserted inside the back cover of this report.

What is The Boundary Committee for England?

The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of The Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. The functions of the Local Government Commission for England were transferred to The Electoral Commission and its Boundary Committee on 1 April 2002 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001 (SI 2001 No. 3692). The Order also transferred to The Electoral Commission the functions of the Secretary of State in relation to taking decisions on recommendations for changes to local authority electoral arrangements and implementing them.

Members of the Committee are:

Pamela Gordon (Chair)
Professor Michael Clarke CBE
Robin Gray
Joan Jones CBE
Ann M Kelly
Professor Colin Mellors

Archie Gall (Director)

We are required by law to review the electoral arrangements of every principal local authority in England. Our aim is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, the number of councillors and ward names. We can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils.

This report sets out our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Stockton-on-Tees.

Summary

The Local Government Commission for England (LGCE) began a review of Stockton-on-Tees electoral arrangements on 16 October 2001. As a consequence of the transfer of functions referred to earlier, it falls to us, The Boundary Committee for England, to complete the work of the LGCE.

- **This report summarises the representations we received during consultation on our draft recommendations and further draft recommendations, and contains our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission.**

We found that the existing arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Stockton-on-Tees:

- **in 22 of the 30 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10% from the average for the borough, and 15 wards vary by more than 20%;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10% from the average in 22 wards and by more than 20% in 16 wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 112 -113) are that:

- **there should be 26 wards, instead of 30 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of four.**

The purpose of these proposals is to ensure that, in future, each borough councillor represents approximately the same number of electors, bearing in mind local circumstances.

- **In 23 of the proposed 26 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10% from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in only one ward, Northern Parishes, expected to vary by more than 10% from the average for the borough in 2006.**

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

- **new warding arrangements for Grindon, Ingleby Barwick, Thornaby and Wolviston parishes;**
- **an increase in the number of councillors for Ingleby Barwick Parish Council and Yarm Town Council.**

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to The Electoral Commission, which will not make an Order implementing them before 29 April 2003. The information in the representations will be available for public access once the Order has been made.

**The Secretary
The Electoral Commission
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

Fax: 020 7271 0667

Email: implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk

Table 1: Final recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Billingham Central	2	Part of Charltons ward; part of St Aidan's ward	Large map
2	Billingham East	2	Part of Charltons ward; part of Grange ward; part of Marsh House ward	Large map
3	Billingham North	3	Part of Wolviston parish (the proposed Wolviston East parish ward); part of Marsh House ward	Large map
4	Billingham South	2	St Cuthbert's ward; part of Charltons ward	Large map and Map 2
5	Billingham West	2	Part of Grindon parish (the proposed Grindon East parish ward); part of Glebe ward; part of Northfield ward; part of St Aidan's ward; part of Norton ward	Large map
6	Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree	2	Part of Bishopsgarth ward; part of Elm Tree ward; part of Hardwick ward; part of Mile House ward	Large map and Map 2
7	Eaglescliffe	3	The parishes of Aislaby, Egglecliffe, Newsham and Preston-on-Tees; part of Hartburn ward; part of Parkfield of ward	Large map and Map 2
8	Fairfield	2	Part of Bishopsgarth ward; part of Elm Tree ward; part of Hartburn ward	Large map
9	Grangefield	2	Fairfield ward; part of Grangefield ward	Large map
10	Hardwick	2	Part of Hardwick ward; part of Mile House ward	Large map
11	Hartburn	2	Part of Grangefield ward; part of Hartburn ward	Large map and Map 2
12	Ingleby Barwick East	3	The parishes of Hilton and Maltby; part of Ingleby Barwick parish (the proposed Ingleby Barwick East parish ward)	Large map and Map 2
13	Ingleby Barwick West	3	Part of Ingleby Barwick parish (the proposed Ingleby Barwick West parish ward)	Large Map
14	Mandale & Victoria	3	Part of Thornaby parish (the proposed Mandale & Victoria parish ward)	Large map
15	Newtown	2	Part of Grangefield ward; part of Mile House ward; part of Newtown ward; part of Roseworth ward	Large map
16	Northern Parishes	1	Part of Grindon parish (the proposed Grindon West parish ward); part of Wolviston parish (the proposed Wolviston West parish ward)	Large map and Map 2
17	Norton North	2	Part of Blue Hall ward; part of Norton ward	Large map
18	Norton South	2	Part of Blue Hall ward; part of Norton ward; part of Portrack & Tilery ward	Large map
19	Norton West	2	Part of Glebe ward	Large map
20	Parkfield & Oxbridge	2	Part of Grangefield ward; part of Parkfield ward	Large map

Continued overleaf

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
21	Roseworth	2	Part of Mile House ward; part of Newtown ward	Large map
22	Stainsby Hill	2	Part of Thornaby parish (the proposed Stainsby Hill parish ward)	Large map
23	Stockton Town Centre	2	Part of Parkfield ward; part of Portrack & Tilery ward; part of Roseworth ward	Large map
24	Village	2	Part of Thornaby parish (the proposed Village parish ward)	Large map
25	Western Parishes	1	The parishes of Carlton, Elton, Longnewton, Redmarshall and Stillington & Whitton	Large map and Map 2
26	Yarm	3	The parishes of Castlelevington, Kirklevington and Yarm	Large map and Map 2

Notes: 1 The towns of Billingham and Stockton are the only unparished parts of the borough.

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

Table 2: Final recommendations for Stockton-on-Tees

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Billingham Central	2	5,415	2,708	9	5,215	2,608	3
2	Billingham East	2	5,084	2,542	3	4,898	2,449	-3
3	Billingham North	3	7,252	2,417	-2	7,491	2,497	-1
4	Billingham South	2	5,037	2,519	2	4,878	2,439	-4
5	Billingham West	2	5,054	2,527	2	4,866	2,433	-4
6	Bishopgarth & Elm Tree	2	5,100	2,550	3	5,073	2,537	0
7	Eaglescliffe	3	7,967	2,656	7	8,150	2,717	7
8	Fairfield	2	5,100	2,550	3	4,912	2,456	-3
9	Grangefield	2	4,907	2,454	-1	4,910	2,455	-3
10	Hardwick	2	5,186	2,593	5	5,204	2,602	3
11	Hartburn	2	5,699	2,850	15	5,489	2,745	8
12	Ingleby Barwick East	3	4,710	1,570	-37	7,466	2,489	-2
13	Ingleby Barwick West	3	5,846	1,949	-21	6,993	2,331	-8
14	Mandale & Victoria	3	7,457	2,486	0	7,168	2,389	-6
15	Newtown	2	5,244	2,622	6	5,021	2,511	-1
16	Northern Parishes	1	1,734	1,734	-30	2,226	2,226	-12
17	Norton North	2	5,094	2,547	3	5,084	2,542	0
18	Norton South	2	5,311	2,656	7	5,193	2,597	3
19	Norton West	2	5,137	2,569	4	5,218	2,609	3
20	Parkfield & Oxbridge	2	5,055	2,528	2	5,353	2,677	6
21	Roseworth	2	5,460	2,730	10	5,259	2,630	4
22	Stainsby Hill	2	5,134	2,567	4	4,947	2,474	-2
23	Stockton Town Centre	2	4,906	2,453	-1	5,397	2,699	7
24	Village	2	5,067	2,534	2	4,958	2,479	-2
25	Western Parishes	1	2,494	2,494	1	2,460	2,460	-3

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
26 Yarm	3	8,123	2,708	9	7,892	2,631	4
Averages	56	138,573	-	-	141,721	-	-
	-	-	2,475	-	-	2,531	-

Source: *Electorate figures are based on information provided by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.*

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

1 Introduction

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Stockton-on-Tees. We have reviewed Stockton-on-Tees as part of the programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England started by the LGCE in 1996. We have inherited that programme, which we currently expect to complete in 2004.

2 Stockton-on-Tees's last review was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which reported to the Secretary of State in November 1975 (Report no. 97). Since undertaking that review, Stockton-on-Tees became a unitary authority on 1 April 1996.

3 In making final recommendations to The Electoral Commission, we have had regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3692), i.e. the need to:
 - reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
 - secure effective and convenient local government; and
 - achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of Stockton-on-Tees was conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Periodic Electoral Reviews*. This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review.

5 Our task is to make recommendations on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also propose changes to the electoral arrangements for parish and town councils in the borough.

6 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as possible, equal representation across the district as a whole. Schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10% in any ward will have to be fully justified. Any imbalances of 20% or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

7 We are not prescriptive on council size. Insofar as Stockton-on-Tees is concerned, we started from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but were willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and that any proposal for an increase in council size would need to be fully justified. In particular, we did not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

8 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 16 October 2001, when the LGCE wrote to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. It also notified Cleveland Police Authority, the local authority associations, Cleveland Local Councils Association, parish and town councils in the borough, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the Cleveland and Yorkshire North region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. It placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 7 January 2002. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

9 Stage Three began on 14 May 2002 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Stockton-on-Tees*, and ended on 8 July 2002. During this period comments were sought from the public and any other interested parties on the preliminary conclusions. During this stage, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council submitted revised projected electorate forecast figures for the Ingleby Barwick wards, and as a result, further consultation was undertaken on an increase in council size from 55 to 56, and new warding arrangements for two three-member Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards over a six week period ending on 25 November 2002. Finally, during Stage Four the draft recommendations were reconsidered in the light of the Stage Three consultation and we now publish the final recommendations.

2 Current electoral arrangements

10 The borough of Stockton-on-Tees covers 20,020 hectares and has a population of just over 179,000. The borough of Stockton-on-Tees is situated in the heart of Teesside and is bounded by the borough of Middlesbrough to the east, the borough of Darlington to the west and the borough of Hartlepool to the north. It has three principal urban settlements, Billingham in the north of the borough, Stockton in the centre of the borough and Thornaby in the east of the borough. Stockton-on-Tees is predominantly urban in character and contains 17 parishes, primarily in the south and the west of the borough.

11 The electorate of the borough is 138,573 (February 2001). The Council presently has 55 members who are elected from 30 wards, 25 of which are relatively urban in character with the remainder being predominantly rural. Twenty-five of the wards are represented by two councillors each, and five are single-member wards. The Council is elected as a whole every four years.

12 To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated, in percentage terms, the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward (the councillor:elector ratio) varies from the borough average in percentage terms. In the text which follows this calculation may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

13 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,520 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,559 by the year 2006 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 22 of the 30 wards varies by more than 10% from the borough average, in 15 wards by more than 20% and in six wards by more than 30%. The worst imbalance is in Ingleby Barwick ward, where the councillor represents 356% more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing wards in Stockton-on-Tees

Table 3: Existing electoral arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Bishopsgarth	2	6,146	3,073	22	5,920	2,960	16
2	Blue Hall	2	4,564	2,282	-9	4,423	2,212	-14
3	Charltons	2	3,591	1,796	-29	3,458	1,729	-32
4	Eggescliffe	2	6,386	3,193	27	6,621	3,311	29
5	Elm Tree	1	3,816	3,816	51	3,675	3,675	52
6	Fairfield	2	3,883	1,942	-23	3,925	1,963	-23
7	Glebe	2	5,137	2,569	2	5,218	2,609	2
8	Grange	2	3,024	1,512	-40	2,914	1,457	-43
9	Grangefield	2	3,891	1,946	-23	3,746	1,873	-27
10	Hardwick	2	3,329	1,665	-34	3,483	1,742	-32
11	Hartburn	2	5,452	2,726	8	5,251	2,626	3
12	Ingleby Barwick	1	11,486	11,486	356	15,418	15,418	465
13	Mandale	2	4,909	2,455	-3	4,715	2,358	-8
14	Marsh House	2	6,254	3,127	24	6,487	3,244	27
15	Mile House	2	4,293	2,147	-15	4,228	2,114	-17
16	Newtown	2	4,208	2,104	-16	4,023	2,012	-21
17	Northfield	2	3,795	1,898	-25	3,655	1,828	-29
18	Norton	2	4,807	2,404	-5	4,842	2,421	-5
19	Parkfield	2	4,574	2,287	-9	5,036	2,518	-2
20	Portrack & Tilery	2	4,240	2,120	-16	4,625	2,313	-10
21	Preston	1	2,435	2,435	-3	2,378	2,378	-7
22	Roseworth	2	3,902	1,951	-23	3,759	1,880	-27
23	St Aidan's	2	3,739	1,870	-26	3,600	1,800	-30
24	St Cuthbert's	2	4,493	2,247	-11	4,354	2,177	-15
25	Stainsby	2	4,258	2,129	-15	4,080	2,040	-20
26	Victoria	2	4,419	2,210	-12	4,255	2,128	-17
27	Village	2	4,072	2,036	-19	4,023	2,012	-21
28	Whitton	1	3,559	3,559	41	4,021	4,021	57

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
29 Wolviston	1	2,718	2,718	8	2,661	2,661	4
30 Yarm	2	7,193	3,597	43	6,927	3,464	35
Totals	55	138,573	-	-	141,721	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,520	-	-	2,577	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Grange ward were relatively over-represented by 40%, while electors in Ingleby Barwick ward were substantially under-represented by 356%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 Draft recommendations

14 During Stage One we received seven representations, including two borough-wide schemes from Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, and representations from the Conservative and Labour groups on the Council, Stockton Liberal Democrats, Ingleby Barwick Parish Council, Norton Grange Community Forum and one local resident. In the light of these representations and evidence available, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in the report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Stockton-on-Tees*.

15 Our draft recommendations were broadly based on the Borough Council's Option 2 proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality, and provided a mix of single, two-member and three-member wards across the borough. However, we moved away from the Borough Council's scheme in a number of areas, affecting Billingham, Ingleby Barwick, and Thornaby as well as the far north-west of the borough, and wards in Stockton town. In these areas we adopted the Borough Council's Option 1, together with some of our own proposals. We proposed that:

- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council should retain 55 councillors, as at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified;
- there should be new warding arrangements for Grindon, Ingleby Barwick, Thornaby and Wolviston parishes, and an increase in the number of councillors for Ingleby Barwick Parish Council.

Draft recommendation

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council should comprise 55 councillors, serving 26 wards.

16 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 23 of the 26 wards varying by no more than 10% from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with only one ward, Northern Parishes, varying by more than 10% from the average in 2006.

4 Responses to consultation

17 During the consultation on the draft recommendations report, 12 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

18 The Borough Council broadly supported the draft recommendations, including the amendments we proposed to its Stage One submission in the Newtown and Norton areas. The Council opposed amendments made to its Stage One submission in the Billingham, Preston, Thornaby and Stockton town areas, and put forward minor changes to return the boundaries to those proposed in its original submission, and to tie boundaries to better ground detail. The Council also submitted revised projected electorate figures for Ingleby Barwick, and stated that its Stage One proposals for Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards should be adopted. Eight new ward names were put forward by the Borough Council, as agreed by all Groups on the council.

The Conservative Group on the Borough Council

19 The Conservative Group on the Council expressed broad support for the draft recommendations, but submitted alternative proposals for Stockton Grangefield and Stockton Parkfield & Oxbridge wards. The Conservative Group supported the Borough Council's Stage Three submission concerning Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards. Fifteen alternative ward names were proposed by the Conservative Group.

The Labour Group on the Borough Council

20 The Labour Group on the Borough Council opposed the proposed boundary between Thornaby West and Thornaby South wards. The Labour Group supported the proposed two-member Ingleby Barwick East and three-member Ingleby Barwick West, but proposed a minor boundary amendment to better reflect ground detail. The Labour Group put forward 10 alternative ward names.

The Liberal Democrat Group on the Borough Council

21 The Liberal Democrat Group broadly supported the draft recommendations, with the exception of our proposals for Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree, Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards, for which they submitted alternative proposals. The Liberal Democrats supported the Borough Council's Stage Three submission concerning Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards. They put forward new electoral arrangements for Thornaby Town Council. The Liberal Democrat Group put forward an alternative ward name of Elm Tree Park for Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree ward, and they broadly supported the draft recommendations for Egglecliffe & Preston ward.

Parish and town councils

22 Ingleby Barwick Parish Council supported the Borough Council's Stage Three submission concerning Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards.

23 Preston-on-Tees Parish Council supported the proposed Egglecliffe & Preston ward, though it proposed a very slight boundary modification to the north of the ward. Wolviston Parish Council objected to the proposed warding of Wolviston parish. Yarm Town Council proposed revised electoral arrangements for its parish.

Other representations

24 A further four representations were received in response to the draft recommendations from local councillors and residents.

25 Councillors Cains and Cains, both members for Glebe ward, supported the proposed Stockton Glebe ward boundaries, but proposed that the ward be called Norton West ward.

26 District councillors Ingram, Walmsley, Norton, Hoban, Craggs and Robinson (hereafter known as 'a group of Thornaby councillors'), in a combined letter, agreed with the draft recommendation to reduce the number of councillors and wards for the Thornaby area. However, they put forward alternative electoral arrangements for the area.

27 A local resident of Eaglescliffe put forward the name Carter Moor in place of the proposed Eggescliffe & Preston ward.

28 A local resident of Billingham broadly supported our draft recommendations, but expressed concern regarding the proposals for the Ingleby Barwick area, where the rapid housing development would mean that the electorate would soon become under-represented again under our proposal for five councillors.

5 Further draft recommendations

29 As part of our draft recommendations, we proposed amendments to the Borough Council's proposals in the Ingleby Barwick area. We proposed that the boundary between Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards be amended, and that Ingleby Barwick East ward be represented by two councillors instead of three, as proposed by the Borough Council. This amendment provided the correct allocation of councillors across the borough and better reflected the statutory criteria.

30 During Stage Three the Borough Council submitted revised projected electorate forecasts for the parish of Ingleby Barwick. It stated that by 2006, there would be a further increase of 954 electors, giving the parish a total electorate of 14,459 as opposed to the 13,505 stated in the Borough Council's original electorate projections at the start of Stage One. It argued that, under the revised electorate projections, the proposed Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards would merit six councillors by 2006 and not five, as proposed in the draft recommendations report. Under the Borough Council's revised projected electorate figures, Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards, as proposed in the draft recommendations report, would contain 57% more and 18% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2006.

31 The Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups, Ingleby Barwick Parish Council and a local resident each supported the Borough Council's revised electorate projections, while the Labour Group supported the draft recommendations for five councillors for Ingleby Barwick.

32 In light of the Borough Council's revised projected electorate figures for Ingleby Barwick, and the local support they received, we requested further evidence and argumentation on the revised figures because of the potential effects on the PER process. We carefully considered the additional evidence and argumentation received from the Borough Council, the Conservative Group, the Labour Group, the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor Beaumont, Ingleby Barwick Parish Council and a local resident, in relation to Ingleby Barwick. We accept that forecasting electorates is difficult. However, in the light of the Borough Council's revised electorate projections, the degree of local support for the Borough Council's Stage Three submission and the additional evidence received, the Committee was persuaded that they were the best estimates that could be reasonably made at that time.

33 Under a council size of 55 Ingleby Barwick would be entitled to 5.6 councillors by 2006 (rounded up to six) rather than the five allocated in the draft recommendations report. Therefore our draft recommendation for a council size of 55 would result in a misallocation of councillors. We therefore considered an increase of one in council size, from 55 to 56 members. Under a council size of 56, the area covered by the proposed Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards would be entitled to 5.7 councillors by 2006 (rounded up to six). We also considered the effect that an increase of one councillor would have on councillor allocation in each of the distinct areas in the borough and whether or not the number of councillors in each area would best meet the statutory criteria. We found that the small increase in the 2006 projected electorate figures and in council size had little effect on councillor allocation and that each distinct area would have the correct councillor allocation under a council size of 56. We therefore proposed moving away from our draft recommendations to adopt a council size of 56 which, given the new evidence available to us, provided the best balance of the statutory criteria.

34 We decided to further modify the proposed Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards to broadly reflect the Borough Council's Stage One proposal in this area. Under our further draft recommendations, Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards would each be represented by three councillors. We therefore consulted on a new council size of 56 members and the proposed changes to the electoral arrangements in Ingleby Barwick East and

Ingleby Barwick West wards. We did not seek comments on the draft recommendations for the rest of the borough of Stockton-on-Tees. There was a consultation period of six weeks, from 14 October 2002 to 25 November 2002, during which respondents were invited to comment on the new draft recommendations for Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards and for a council size of 56.

Responses to further consultation

35 During the consultation on our further draft recommendations, we received six submissions. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices.

36 Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council stated that all three political groups 'support fully the Boundary Committee's recommendation for 56 Members on the Council.' The Council also stated that the two Ingleby Barwick wards should be divided by Barwick Way and the new relief road dual carriageway.

37 The local Conservative Party and Conservative Group agreed with our 'proposals to increase the number of Councillor's (*sic*) from 55 to 56.'

38 Yarm Town Council 'fully agree with the draft recommendations in regard to the proposals for Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West' wards.

39 Ingleby Barwick Parish Council supported the recommendation to increase the Borough Council size from 55 to 56 members, and the revised projected figures supplied by the Borough Council, for Ingleby Barwick. It expressed concern that the elections in May 2003 would be held on the existing ward boundaries instead of the new wards. Ingleby Barwick Parish Council supported the draft recommendations for new electoral arrangements in its parish.

40 Councillor Beaumont supported our recommendation for a 56-member council, and the proposed boundary between Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards.

41 A local resident 'strongly' agreed with our further draft recommendations for three councillors for both Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards. The local resident also commented that rural sparsity needed to be taken into account, and recognition given to the work of councillors covering large rural areas.

6 Analysis and final recommendations

42 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Stockton-on-Tees is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended) – the need to secure effective and convenient local government; reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and secure the matters referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (equality of representation). Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being ‘as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough’.

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

44 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which results in 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.

45 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 minimised, the aim of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should make electoral equality their starting point, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate must also be considered and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

Electorate forecasts

46 Since 1975 there has been a 17% increase in the electorate of Stockton-on-Tees borough. During Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 2% from 138,573 to 140,767 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expected most of the growth to be in Ingleby Barwick ward. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates.

47 Following the publication of our draft recommendations, the Borough Council submitted revised projected electorate figures and additional information for the Ingleby Barwick area, as a result of the Council having reviewed their original submission ‘in light of accelerated building on the estate beyond the original estimate.’ This brought the forecast electorate of Stockton-on-Tees in 2006 to 141,721, and meant that Ingleby Barwick was entitled to six councillors, as opposed to five councillors as proposed in our draft recommendations. The revised figures for Ingleby Barwick were fully supported by the Conservative Group, who also provided evidence of local electors support for six Ingleby Barwick borough councillors. The Labour Group supported the draft recommendations regarding Ingleby Barwick councillor numbers. The Liberal Democrat Group supported the Borough Council’s revised figures, and commented that after 2006 the electorate of Ingleby Barwick is expected to increase enough to justify seven councillors. Ingleby Barwick Parish Council also supported the Borough Council’s revised figures, and argued that they justified a total of six councillors for the parish. A resident of Billingham also expressed concern in relation to the draft recommendations for the number of Ingleby Barwick councillors, in light of the rapid housing development in the area.

48 Following the end of Stage Three we asked the Borough Council to provide us with further evidence to support its new electorate forecasts. The Borough Council supplied us with further evidence, and we are content to accept the revised electorate forecasts for Ingleby Barwick and Stockton-on-Tees as a whole. We recognise that forecasting electorates is a difficult and inexact science and we are now satisfied that the Borough Council's electorate forecasts represent the best estimates currently available.

Council size

49 As already explained, we started our review by assuming that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although we are willing to look carefully at arguments as to why this might not be the case.

50 Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council presently has 55 members. The Borough Council stated in its submission that 'no community has been divided and natural boundaries have been used wherever possible' resulting in an increase of two councillors under Option 1 and an increase of one councillor under Option 2. We acknowledged the Conservative's desire that 'the Council remains with approximately' 55 members. We also noted that, on the current and the 2006 projected electorate, the parish of Ingleby Barwick was entitled to five borough councillors and not six as the Council proposed. The additional councillor appeared to have been allocated in anticipation of development scheduled to take place after 2006. We therefore decided to base the draft recommendations on Option 2 as a starting point, as it provided better electoral equality than Option 1. We decided to retain the current council size of 55 as this further improved upon the electoral equality achieved under Option 2 and gave the correct allocation of councillors throughout the borough.

51 Having accepted the Borough Council's revised electorate forecasts for Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards, we noted that a council size of 55 no longer provided the correct allocation of councillors between the distinct areas of the borough. We considered a number of alternative council sizes, and noted that a council size of 56 provided the correct allocation of councillors across the borough. We therefore consulted upon further draft recommendations for a council size of 56.

52 Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, the Conservative Group, Councillor Beaumont, Yarm Town Council and Ingleby Barwick Parish Council supported our further draft recommendations for a council size of 56.

53 Having looked at the current and projected size and distribution of the electorate and the responses received, we conclude that a council of 56 members would best meet the achievement of the statutory criteria.

Electoral arrangements

54 Our draft recommendations were predominantly based on the Borough Council's Option 2 proposals, and its Option 1 proposals in the Northern Parishes and Western Parishes wards. However, we proposed to depart from them in the Billingham, Ingleby Barwick, and Thornaby areas, and in three areas of Stockton town. In response to the draft recommendations report, a number of respondents expressed the view that the Ingleby Barwick area warranted an additional councillor due to the area's rapidly rising population. In light of revised projected electorate figures, they argued that the Ingleby Barwick area was entitled to six councillors. As a result of this we consulted upon further draft recommendations for Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards, and a council size of 56. As discussed earlier, we propose adopting a council size of 56. Given the increase in the 2006 forecast electorate and council

size, the 2006 councillor:elector ratio by 2006 for Stockton-on-Tees has increased from 1:2,559 under the draft recommendations to 1:2,531 under these final recommendations.

55 At Stage Three the Borough Council and all three political parties submitted comments, in many cases reiterating their Stage One submissions. However, we received no new evidence to support their proposed amendments, and therefore we have only adopted proposals submitted at Stage Three, in which electoral equality will not be affected.

56 The Borough Council put forward a number of amendments to boundaries, which would result in new parish wards. However, we cannot endorse proposals that would require the creation of parish wards which contain no electors. In these areas we have been unable to adopt the Borough Council's proposals. However, under the 1997 Local Government & Ratings Act, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council can carry out a review of parish boundaries. Following such a review the Borough Council can request that The Electoral Commission make consequential changes to borough ward boundaries.

57 A local resident felt that the large size of rural parishes, particularly in relation to the proposed Northern Parishes ward, needed to be taken into consideration. Whilst we recognise the problems associated with achieving equality of representation in sparsely populated rural areas, and also densely populated urban areas, there is no provision in legislation to take these circumstances into account in our recommendations.

58 During Stage Three, submissions were received from the Borough Council, the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat groups which removed the preface 'Stockton' from some of the proposed ward names. In the interest of consistency we have therefore removed the preface 'Stockton' from all of the relevant wards, with the exception of Stockton Town Centre ward, in order that it can be easily be identified in relation to other town centres.

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

- (a) Eggescliffe, Northfield, Preston, Whitton and Wolviston wards;
- (b) Charltons, Grange, Marsh House, St Aidan's and St Cuthbert's wards;
- (c) Blue Hall, Glebe, Norton, Parkfield and Portrack & Tilery wards;
- (d) Bishopsgarth, Elm Tree, Hardwick, Mile House, Newtown and Roseworth wards;
- (e) Fairfield, Grangefield and Hartburn wards;
- (f) Mandale, Stainsby, Victoria and Village wards;
- (g) Ingleby Barwick and Yarm wards.

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

Eggescliffe, Northfield, Preston, Whitton and Wolviston wards

61 The wards of Eggescliffe, Preston and Whitton cover the parished area of the borough running from the northern to the southern boundary of the borough. The two-member Eggescliffe ward, comprising the parish of the same name, is currently 27% under-represented (29% by 2006). The single-member Preston ward, comprising the parishes of Aislaby, Elton, Longnewton, Newsham and Preston-on-Tees, is currently over-represented, with 3% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (7% fewer by 2006). The single-member Whitton ward, comprising the parishes of Carlton, Grindon, Redmarshall and Stillington & Whitton, is currently 41% under-represented (57% by 2006). At present the wards of Northfield and Wolviston have 25% fewer and 8% more electors than the borough average respectively (29% fewer and 4% more by 2006).

62 At Stage One we received four representations in relation to this area. The Borough Council proposed a new three-member Egglecliffe & Preston ward, based on the parishes of Aislaby, Egglecliffe, Newsham and Preston-on-Tees, and part of the existing Parkfield ward. This proposed ward was broadly supported by the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, although the Liberal Democrats proposed two minor boundary modifications to better reflect community identity. A new two-member Billingham West ward was also proposed by the Borough Council, and supported by the Labour Group, based on the existing Northfield ward and part of Grindon parish. The Borough Council proposed an option for a one-member Northern Parishes ward, which contained Grindon parish and part of Wolviston parish, and a single-member Western Parishes ward which consisted of the parishes of Carlton, Elton, part of Longnewton, Redmarshall, and Stillington & Whitton. These wards were supported by the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat groups. The Borough Council proposed an alternative two-member Western Parishes ward, incorporating the Western Parishes and Northern Parishes wards described, less Wolviston parish, which the Conservatives, Labour and Liberal Democrats argued would be too large to be effective. The Borough Council proposed that the remainder of the existing Wolviston ward form part of a new Billingham North ward, supported by the Labour Group. The Borough Council stated that in the case of Wolviston, the first option for two wards retains the rural area of Wolviston parish in a rural ward and provides for better electoral equality than under one two-member Western Parishes ward. However, they stated that as regards the latter option, the rural area of Wolviston parish is 'so close to the urban area of Billingham' that it could be considered part of Billingham.

63 Having considered all the representations received at Stage One, we decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposed Egglecliffe & Preston ward as part of our draft recommendations, in view of the support expressed for it locally. We also decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposals for single-member Northern Parishes and Western Parishes wards, as we considered these to provide better electoral equality than a large rural two-member Western Parishes ward. Having visited the area, we considered that Wolviston village should be retained in the proposed rural Northern Parishes ward. We also decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposed Billingham West ward subject to a minor amendment to the eastern boundary. We proposed transferring 317 electors from Billingham Central ward to the proposed Billingham West ward, as this provided better levels of electoral equality than the Borough Council's proposed warding arrangements in this area.

64 Under the draft recommendations for a 55-member council, the number of electors per councillor for the wards of Billingham West, Egglecliffe & Preston, Northern Parishes and Western Parishes would be equal to, 5% more, 31% fewer and 1% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (5% fewer, 6% more, 13% fewer and 4% fewer by 2006).

65 At Stage Three Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council put forward a number of minor amendments. The Council stated that Northfield School should be included in the proposed Billingham West ward rather than the proposed Northern Parishes ward. The Borough Council proposed that the boundary between the proposed Northern Parishes ward and Stockton Glebe ward be amended to follow the A19 and Billingham Beck rather than the existing parish boundary, as this would tie the boundary to ground detail. It also proposed that the whole of Preston cemetery be placed within Egglecliffe & Preston ward, altering its boundary slightly with Stockton Parkfield & Oxbridge ward. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council proposed that the land north of Preston parish and south of the A66 be transferred into the proposed Egglecliffe & Preston ward. It also reiterated its original proposal regarding the proposed boundary between Egglecliffe & Preston and Stockton Parkfield & Oxbridge wards. It proposed that the boundary should follow a track, which is a visible feature. The Borough Council proposed to move a small piece of vacant land from Billingham Central ward to Billingham North ward, with the boundary between the two wards following Cowbridge Beck. The Council opposed our proposal to move an area of Billingham Central ward, east of Wolviston Road, into Billingham West ward. It stated that electors would be cut off from the remainder of Billingham West ward

by the dual carriageway, and that the electors have more in common with those in Billingham Central ward. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council also submitted Eaglescliffe ward as a new ward name for Eggescliffe & Preston ward, which all groups on the Council agreed upon.

66 The Conservative Group put Grindon forward as an alternative name for the Northern Parishes ward, and Whinney Hill as an alternative name for the Western Parishes ward. The Labour Group put Wolviston forward as a more suitable name for the Northern Parishes ward.

67 The Liberal Democrat Group expressed broad support for the draft recommendations for Eggescliffe & Preston ward. It also supported the Borough Council's proposed amendment to Eggescliffe & Preston ward's boundaries with Stockton Hartburn and Stockton Parkfield & Oxbridge wards. Preston-on-Tees Parish Council supported Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's proposal to alter the boundaries of the proposed Eggescliffe & Preston ward. A local resident supported the warding of Wolviston parish, as well as the proposal to incorporate small areas such as Preston Lane, formerly in Parkfield ward, into the new Eggescliffe & Preston ward. Another local resident expressed concern regarding the naming of Eggescliffe ward, which he proposed be called Carter Moor on the grounds of history and to avoid confusion over the names Eggescliffe and Eaglescliffe.

68 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to broadly endorse the draft recommendations for Billingham West, Eggescliffe & Preston, Northern Parishes and Western Parishes wards, as they would achieve reasonable electoral equality and have received some local support. We do not propose to take Northfield School out of Northern Parishes ward and transfer it into Billingham West ward, as put forward by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, as this proposal would require the creation of a parish ward with no electors in Wolviston parish. We do not consider that such a parish ward would provide for convenient and effective local government. We do not propose to support the Borough Council's proposal to revert to its proposed Billingham West and Billingham Central wards, put forward in its original submission. Having considered alternative options, we proposed to transfer this area into Billingham West ward for purposes of electoral equality, and transferring it into Billingham Central ward would result in unacceptable increases in the electoral variances of the two wards. Additionally we have received no new evidence to suggest that our draft recommendations do not provide the best balance between the statutory criteria; therefore we endorse our draft recommendations as final. We note the concerns raised by a local resident over the size of Northern Parishes ward, however, any proposal to reduce the size of Northern Parishes ward would result in an unacceptably high electoral variance. Another local resident stated that the new Eggescliffe & Preston ward be named Carter Moor, however, we do not propose adopting Carter Moor as a new ward name for Eggescliffe & Preston ward as we have not received any other support for this ward name.

69 We have decided to move away from the draft recommendations and make a minor modification to the proposed boundary between Eggescliffe & Preston and Stockton Parkfield & Oxbridge wards, so that the whole of the cemetery in the north of Preston parish is within Eggescliffe & Preston ward, as put forward by the Borough Council, Preston-on-Tees Parish Council and the Liberal Democrat Group. This proposal is sensible, and ensures that the cemetery is not divided between two wards and the boundary is fixed to clearer ground detail. We propose to endorse the Borough Council's proposal for Billingham Central and Billingham North wards, as no electors would be affected by this amendment, and the boundary will be tied to better ground detail. We also propose to endorse the Borough Council's proposal to utilise the A19 road and Billingham Beck, instead of the parish boundary, for the boundary between the proposed wards of Stockton Glebe and Northern Parishes. This would result in a very minor boundary change, and would attach the boundary to improved ground features. We noted the Borough Council's submission to transfer the area of the proposed Stockton Hartburn ward north of the Preston parish boundary and south of the A66 road, into the proposed Eggescliffe & Preston ward. We propose adopting the Borough Council's proposal for this, as no electors are affected and it ties the boundary to better ground detail. We propose to change the name of

Egglescliffe & Preston ward to Eaglescliffe ward, in light of the unanimous agreement of the Council regarding this name.

70 Under our final recommendations, for 56 councillors, the number of electors per councillor in the wards of Billingham West, Eaglescliffe, Northern Parishes and Western Parishes wards would be 2%, 7% above the borough average and 30% below, and 1% above the borough average respectively (4% below, 7% above, 12% below and 3% below in 2006). Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of this report.

Charltons, Grange, Marsh House, St Aidan's and St Cuthbert's wards

71 The two-member wards of Charltons, Grange, Marsh House, St Aidan's and St Cuthbert's are located in the north-east corner of the borough, in an unparished area known locally as Billingham. The wards of Charltons, Grange, St Aidan's and St Cuthbert's are each currently over-represented, with 29%, 40%, 26% and 11% fewer electors than the borough average respectively (33%, 43%, 30% and 16% fewer by 2006). Marsh House ward varies by 24% more than the borough average (26% more by 2006).

72 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed a reconfiguration of the wards in this area, resulting in three two-member wards: Billingham Central ward based on the existing St Aidan's ward, Billingham East ward, incorporating the Charltons and Grange areas, and Billingham South ward, covering St Cuthbert's area. The Labour Group and the Liberal Democrats expressed broad support for the Borough Council's proposals. The Borough Council put forward a new three-member Billingham North ward based on part of Wolviston parish and part of Marsh House ward. The Borough Council also proposed an alternative option for Billingham North ward, which included the whole of Wolviston parish in a ward with the majority of the existing Marsh House ward. In relation to the proposed Billingham North ward we decided to put forward the Borough Council's proposal to place part of Wolviston parish in Billingham North ward and part in Northern Parishes ward as part of our draft recommendations, as we considered that they best reflected the statutory criteria. We noted the local support for the Borough Council's Billingham Central, Billingham East and Billingham South wards, and that under the Borough Council's proposals there was a substantial improvement in electoral equality during the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. We therefore decided to adopt, as part of our draft recommendations, the Borough Council's proposals for Billingham East, Billingham North and Billingham South wards. However, we proposed an amendment to the boundary between Billingham Central and Billingham West wards, to transfer an area east of Wolviston Road from Billingham Central ward into Billingham West ward, for purposes of electoral equality.

73 Under our draft recommendations, for 55 councillors, the proposed wards of Billingham Central, Billingham East, Billingham North and Billingham South would have 7% more, 1% more, 4% fewer and equal to the average number of electors per councillor respectively (2% more, 4% fewer, 2% fewer and 5% fewer by 2006).

74 At Stage Three, in response to the draft recommendations, the Borough Council proposed three minor amendments that reiterated both of their original submissions. They put forward their proposal to move a small piece of vacant land south of Warkworth Road, from Billingham Central into Billingham North ward and to use Cowbridge Beck and Wolviston Road as the boundary instead of the existing ward boundary. The Council also proposed to include the area east of Wolviston Road, in Billingham Central ward, an area which we had transferred in our draft recommendations to Billingham West ward in order to improve electoral equality. The Council again proposed that Holme Fleet Channel be used as the northern boundary between Billingham East and Billingham South wards, instead of a drain.

75 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received during Stage Three. We noted the comments of the Borough Council, which reiterated their original proposals for the Billingham area. We do not propose to include the area east of Wolviston Road in Billingham Central ward this would result in the ward having an electoral variance 9% over the borough average, and no substantial argumentation or evidence was provided against our recommendation to justify this amendment. We do not propose to alter the boundary between Billingham East and Billingham South wards, as keeping the boundary along the drain produces a clearer boundary which links Seaton Carew Road on one side of the nature reserve and the A1185 on the other. However, we do propose to adopt the Borough Council's proposal to modify the boundary between Billingham Central and Billingham North wards. This amendment would not affect any electors and would tie the boundary to better ground detail.

76 Under our final recommendations for 56 councillors, the number of electors per councillor for Billingham Central would be 9% above the average (3% more by 2006), Billingham East would have 3% more (3% below by 2006), and Billingham North would have 2% below the average (1% below by 2006). Billingham West would have 2% above the average number of electors per councillor (4% below by 2006).

Blue Hall, Glebe, Norton, Parkfield and Portrack & Tilery wards

77 The two-member wards of Blue Hall, Glebe, Norton, Parkfield, and Portrack & Tilery are located in the north and eastern parts of the unparished Stockton town area. At present, Glebe ward has 2% more electors per councillor than the borough average in 2001 and 1% more by 2006. The wards of Blue Hall, Norton, Parkfield and Portrack & Tilery all have fewer electors per councillor than the borough average: 9%, 5%, 9% and 16% respectively (14%, 6%, 2% and 10% fewer by 2006).

78 During Stage One the Borough Council proposed five new two-member wards in this area. The Borough Council proposed Stockton Glebe ward, based on the existing Glebe ward less one small part, Norton North ward based on parts of Blue Hall and Norton wards, and Norton South ward based on parts of Blue Hall, Norton, and Portrack & Tilery wards. The Borough Council also put forward a new two-member Stockton Town Centre ward based on an area of the Parkfield ward and the remainder of the existing Portrack & Tilery wards. It put forward two options for Stockton Parkfield & Oxbridge ward, one based on part of Grangefield and Parkfield wards, and one broadly the same, but less a small area of Grangefield. The Conservatives, The Labour Group and the Liberal Democrats expressed broad support for the Borough Council's proposals in this part of Stockton town. Norton Grange Community Forum opposed the Borough Council's proposal to include part of the existing Blue Hall ward in the proposed Norton wards. We noted that the Borough Council's proposals would provide for a significant improvement in electoral equality in this part of the town, and we also noted the support that they received, and therefore we decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposals in this area as part of our draft recommendations.

79 Under the draft recommendations for a council size of 55, the proposed wards of Norton North, Norton South, Stockton Glebe, Stockton Parkfield & Oxbridge, and Stockton Town Centre wards would have 1% more, 5% more, 2% more, equal to, and 3% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1% fewer, 1% more, 2% more, 5% more and 5% more by 2006).

80 In response to the draft recommendations, the Borough Council proposed a minor amendment to the boundary between Northern Parishes and Stockton Glebe wards. It proposed that the boundary be amended to follow the A19 and Billingham Beck rather than the existing parish boundary, as this would tie the boundary to ground detail. The Borough Council also proposed to alter the boundary between Stockton Parkfield & Oxbridge, and Eggescliffe & Preston wards so that the whole of Preston cemetery would lie within Eggescliffe & Preston

ward. The Borough Council reiterated its original proposal regarding the boundary between Eggescliffe & Preston and Stockton Parkfield & Oxbridge wards that the boundary should follow a track, which is a visible feature. Councillors Cains and Cains supported our proposals for Stockton Glebe ward, and put forward the alternative name Norton West for reasons of clarity, so that electors would no longer feel that their councillors only represented electors from Glebe. The Conservatives and all the political groups on the Borough Council also agreed that the proposed Stockton Glebe ward name be changed to Norton West. The Labour Group put the name Preston Farm forward as an alternative ward name for Stockton Parkfield & Oxbridge, and the Conservative and Labour Groups additionally submitted the name Town Centre in place of Stockton Town Centre ward.

81 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received. We propose to endorse the changes described above, in relation to the boundaries between Stockton Glebe and Northern Parishes wards, and Stockton Parkfield & Oxbridge, and Eggescliffe & Preston wards. These changes do not affect any electors, and tie the boundaries to clear ground detail. We propose to endorse the new ward name of Norton West, supported by the Council, the Conservatives and Councillors Cains and Cains. For consistency, the preface 'Stockton' has been removed from all but one of the Stockton wards, including Parkfield & Oxbridge ward. We do not propose to adopt the name Town Centre ward in place of Stockton Town Centre ward, for reasons of identification.

82 Under our final recommendations for 56 councillors, the number of electors per councillor in the wards of Norton North, Norton South, Norton West, Parkfield & Oxbridge, and Stockton Town Centre would be 3% above, 7% above, 4% above, 2% above, and 1% below the borough average respectively (0%, 3%, 3%, 6% and 7% above by 2006). Our final recommendations for these wards are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

Bishopsgarth, Elm Tree, Hardwick, Mile House, Newtown and Roseworth wards

83 The two-member Bishopsgarth, and single-member Elm Tree wards are located in the unparished Stockton town area. At present these wards have 22% more and 51% more electors than the borough average respectively (15% more and 52% more by 2006). The two-member wards of Hardwick, Mile House, Newtown and Roseworth have 34% fewer, 15% fewer, 16% fewer and 23% fewer electors than the borough average respectively (32%, 18%, 22% and 27% fewer by 2006).

84 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed a reconfiguration of the warding arrangements in this area, resulting in four new two-member wards. The Borough Council put forward two options for Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree ward. One option was based on parts of the existing Elm Tree, Bishopsgarth, Hardwick and Mile House wards. The other option was based on parts of the existing Elm Tree, Fairfield, Hardwick and Mile House wards. The Borough Council proposed Stockton Hardwick ward, based on part of the existing Mile House and Hardwick wards, and Stockton Newton ward, based on parts of the Grangefield, Mile House, Newtown and Roseworth wards. The Borough Council proposed Stockton Roseworth ward, which contained part of Mile House and Newtown wards. We received a further three representations in relation to this area at Stage One. The Conservatives expressed broad support for the first of the Borough Council's proposals for Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree ward, and other wards in this area, but submitted alternative proposals for Stockton Newton ward on the basis of community identity. The Labour Group expressed broad support for the Borough Council's second option for a Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree ward based on parts of the existing Elm Tree, Fairfield, Hardwick and Mile House wards. The Labour Group also supported the Borough Council's proposals for the other wards in the Stockton area. The Liberal Democrats also broadly supported the Borough Council's proposals for the Stockton town area, though they put forward alternative warding arrangements for the Elm Tree and Hardwick areas

that they stated kept 'together natural communities.' We decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposals in this area as part of our draft recommendations subject to two boundary amendments to better reflect community identity in the Stockton Hardwick ward, and to further improve electoral equality in Stockton Newton ward.

85 Under the draft recommendations for 55 councillors, the proposed wards of Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree, Stockton Hardwick, Stockton Newton and Stockton Roseworth would have 1% more, 3% more, 4% more and 8% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1% fewer, 2% more, 2% fewer and 3% more by 2006).

86 At Stage Three the Borough Council opposed the draft recommendation to transfer a small number of electors from Stockton Newton ward into Stockton Hardwick ward, and reiterated its original submission that the area be part of Stockton Newton ward. The Borough Council proposed that 369 electors from part of the Lakes estate be transferred from Stockton Newton ward back into Stockton Grange field ward, as it proposed at Stage One, so that the community would not be split. The Borough Council, supported by the Liberal Democrat Group, proposed that the boundary between Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree and Stockton Newton wards, be amended so that it follows Green Lane instead of the path through Newham Grange Park, so that the whole of the park would be situated in Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree ward. The Liberal Democrat Group also supported the draft recommendation to transfer part of a southern area of the existing Hardwick ward into Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree ward. However it opposed the draft recommendation to include part of the existing Bishopsgarth ward, north of Darlington Back Lane, including Harrowgate Lane and Bishopsgarth Comprehensive School, in Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree ward. They stated that this area has 'no natural links' with the rest of the proposed ward, and that electors living in the Rimswell estate would prefer to remain in Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree ward rather than be transferred into Stockton Fairfield ward. The Conservatives and Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council proposed that Stockton Hardwick ward be called Hardwick, Stockton Newton ward be called Newtown, and Stockton Roseworth ward be named Roseworth. The Conservatives also put forward Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree ward as an alternative name for Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree ward, and Hartburn as an alternative name for Stockton Hartburn ward. Labour proposed that Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree ward be named Bishopsgarth, and that Stockton Hartburn ward be called West Stockton. The Liberal Democrat Group stated that the ward name Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree ward was 'too cumbersome', and proposed that it be renamed Elm Tree Park.

87 Having carefully considered the representations received, we do not propose to adopt the Borough Council's proposal to amend the boundary between Stockton Grange field and Stockton Newton wards. The draft recommendation to transfer 369 electors south of Bishopton Road, as described above, into Stockton Newton ward, was proposed to improve the levels of electoral equality. The Conservatives supported it, and we have received no new evidence to suggest that our draft recommendations do not provide the best balance between the statutory criteria. We also do not propose to endorse the Liberal Democrat Group's comments regarding Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree ward, as no evidence was provided that our draft recommendations did not reflect community identity, while they did receive support from the Borough Council. However, we have decided to move away from the draft recommendations and slightly modify the boundary between Stockton Hardwick and Stockton Newton wards. We have decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposal to place 11 electors situated on Darlington Lane and the northern edge of Newham Grange Park, within Stockton Newton ward, as the Borough Council stated that this would improve community identity and would not affect the electoral variances in the area. We also propose to alter the draft recommendations boundary between Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree and Stockton Newton wards to run along Green Lane, so that the whole of Newham Grange Park lies within Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree ward, a proposal put forward by the Borough Council and Liberal Democrat Group. This proposal will tie the boundary to clearer ground detail, and does not affect any electors. We do not propose to adopt the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal to rename Stockton

Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree ward, Elm Tree Park, as there was no real local consensus or support for this ward name. We propose to adopt the proposed ward names of Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree, put forward by the Borough Council, and Hardwick, Hartburn, Newtown, and Roseworth, as put forward by the Borough Council and the Conservatives, in place of Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree, Stockton Hardwick, Stockton Hartburn, Stockton Newton and Stockton Roseworth. The result being, that for consistency, and in order to reduce the length of the ward names, the preface 'Stockton' has been removed from all of the Stockton town wards in this area, and Newton ward has been returned to its original name of Newtown. We have decided to endorse the draft recommendations for Stockton Roseworth ward as they would achieve reasonable electoral equality, and no submissions have been received opposing it.

88 Under our final recommendations for a 56 member council, the number of electors per councillor in Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree, Hardwick, Newtown and Roseworth wards would be 3%, 5%, 6%, and 10% above the borough average respectively (0% and 3% above, 1% below and 4% above in 2006). Our final recommendations for these wards are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

Fairfield, Grangefield and Hartburn wards

89 The two-member wards of Fairfield, Grangefield and Hartburn are located in the south of the unparished Stockton town area. At present the wards of Fairfield, Grangefield and Hartburn have 23% fewer, 23% fewer and 8% more electors than the borough average respectively (24% fewer, 27% fewer and 2% more by 2006).

90 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed two different options for each of the three two-member wards in this area. They proposed a Stockton Fairfield ward, based on parts of the existing Bishopsgarth, Hartburn and Elm Tree wards, and alternatively a Bishopsgarth ward based on parts of the existing Bishopsgarth and Elm Tree wards. The Borough Council put forward a Stockton Grangefield ward, based on the existing Fairfield ward and part of Grangefield ward, and an alternative of the same Stockton Grangefield ward less part of Fairfield ward. The Borough Council also proposed a Stockton Hartburn ward, based on the current Hartburn ward and a small part of Grangefield ward, and an alternative Stockton Hartburn ward less Grangefield ward. The Conservatives expressed broad support for the Borough Council's proposed Stockton Fairfield ward, Stockton Grangefield ward based on the existing Fairfield ward and part of Grangefield ward, and Stockton Hartburn ward based on the current Hartburn ward and a small part of Grangefield ward, but put forward some minor alternative warding arrangements for the boundaries of the Borough Council's proposed wards in this area. The Labour Group expressed support for the Borough Council's alternative proposals in this area. The Liberal Democrats stated that although they supported the majority of the Borough Council's proposals (they did not state which options) in the Stockton area, in the western part of Stockton they put forward alternative warding arrangements based on a uniform pattern of three-member wards.

91 In the draft recommendations we noted the local support for both sets of the Borough Council's proposals in this area. We also noted that under the Borough Council's proposals there would be a substantial improvement in electoral equality in this area over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. While we noted the Conservatives' alternative warding arrangements, we also noted that their proposed wards were broadly similar to the Borough Council's proposed Stockton Fairfield ward based on parts of the existing Bishopsgarth, Hartburn and Elm Tree wards, and Stockton Hartburn ward based on the current Hartburn ward and a small part of Grangefield ward. In relation to the Conservatives' proposed Grangefield ward, we did not consider that it provided a better reflection of the statutory criteria than the Borough Council's proposals and therefore decided not to adopt it as part of our draft recommendations. While we noted the Liberal Democrats' proposals for two three-member wards here, we were not persuaded by the evidence received that this would best reflect the statutory criteria. In the light

of the representations and evidence received, we decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposals in this area as part of our draft recommendations, subject to two boundary amendments to the proposed Stockton Grange field ward. We proposed a boundary amendment to the northern boundary, and a minor modification to the western boundary, affecting 27 electors, to better reflect community interests and identities.

92 Under our draft recommendations for a 55 member council, the proposed wards of Stockton Fairfield, Stockton Grange field and Stockton Hartburn would have 1% more, 2% fewer and 13% more electors per councillor than the borough average (5% fewer, 4% fewer and 7% more by 2006).

93 In response to the draft recommendations, the Borough Council proposed that the boundary between Stockton Grange field and Stockton Newton wards be amended to reflect its Stage One submission. The Borough Council also reiterated its original proposal for 27 electors located on the western side of Green's Lane, by Ian Ramsey Secondary School, to be part of Fairfield ward, and not Stockton Grange field ward as proposed in the draft recommendations. The Council stated that this area is 'more logically associated' with Stockton Fairfield ward.

94 The Conservative Group opposed the draft recommendations for Stockton Grange field and Stockton Parkfield & Oxbridge wards, and stated that a community west of the ring road had been divided, and a 'somewhat convoluted boundary' had been proposed. They put forward an alternative warding arrangement for the area of Stockton Parkfield & Oxbridge ward west of Ropner Park and Lustrum Beck, east of the dismantled railway, south of Kilburn Road and north of the junction of Hartburn Lane and Darlington Road, to be transferred into Stockton Grange field ward. The Conservative Group also proposed that electors located east of Oxbridge Avenue in the proposed Stockton Grange field ward, be transferred to Stockton Parkfield & Oxbridge ward. They stated that this configuration would result in 'socio-economic and community grouping' and more clearly defined boundaries. The Conservatives proposed Fairfield West as an alternative name for Stockton Fairfield ward, and Fairfield East for Stockton Grange field ward. The Labour Group put forward the ward names of Rimswell, Grange field, and West Stockton, in place of Stockton Fairfield, Stockton Grange field and Stockton Hartburn wards respectively.

95 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received, and we have decided to endorse the majority of our draft recommendations for this area. We noted the Borough Council's proposal to transfer 27 electors back into Stockton Fairfield ward, and acknowledge that, as the Borough Council has stated, this would provide a better reflection of community identities. As electoral variances would not be affected by this change, we propose to adopt this amendment as part of our final recommendations. We also noted the Borough Council's proposal that part of the proposed Stockton Grange field ward, which was transferred into Stockton Newton ward as part of the draft recommendations, be transferred back into Stockton Grange field ward. We decided not to adopt this proposal because the draft recommendation received support from the Conservatives, and was implemented to improve electoral equality. To revert to the Borough Council's proposal would provide an unacceptably high level of electoral inequality. We noted the Conservative Group's proposal for an alternative boundary between Stockton Parkfield & Oxbridge ward and Stockton Grange field ward, but do not propose to adopt its proposal, as it would worsen the councillor:elector ratio for Stockton Grange field to 12% below the average, and 13% above the borough average in Stockton Parkfield & Oxbridge ward by 2006. We also received some local support for our draft recommendations. We have decided to change the names of Stockton Fairfield, Stockton Grange field, and Stockton Hartburn wards, to Fairfield, Grange field and Hartburn wards, the latter two names put forward by Labour and the Conservatives respectively. We decided to remove the preface 'Stockton' from all of the Stockton wards (with the exception of Stockton Town Centre ward) for consistency, in the light of submissions received which removed the preface from a number of Stockton wards.

96 Under our final recommendations for a council size of 56, the number of electors per councillor would be 3% above the borough average in Fairfield ward, 1% below in Grangefield ward, and 15% above in Hartburn ward (changing to 3% below in both Fairfield and Grangefield, and 8% above in Hartburn in 2006). Our final recommendations for these wards are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

Mandale, Stainsby, Victoria and Village wards

97 The two-member wards of Mandale, Stainsby, Victoria and Village are each contained within the parish of Thornaby in the east of the borough. At present the wards of Mandale, Stainsby, Victoria and Village have 3% fewer, 15% fewer, 12% fewer and 19% fewer electors than the borough average respectively (9%, 21%, 17% and 22% fewer by 2006).

98 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed a reconfiguration of the four wards in this area, resulting in a net reduction of one, to three wards. It put forward a new three-member Thornaby North ward and two-member Thornaby South and Thornaby West wards. The proposed Thornaby North ward would contain the existing Victoria ward plus an area transferred from the current Mandale ward. Thornaby South ward would be based on the existing Stainsby ward less an area transferred to its proposed Thornaby West ward, plus the remainder of the existing Mandale ward. The Borough Council also put forward a new Thornaby West ward based on the existing Village ward. The Labour Group and the Liberal Democrats expressed broad support for the Borough Council's proposals in the Thornaby area. We noted the local support for the Borough Council's proposals in this area, and that the Borough Council's proposals provided for an improvement in electoral equality in this area. In the light of these considerations we decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposals in this area subject to two minor boundary amendments. We transferred an area from Thornaby West ward to Thornaby South ward to better reflect community interests and identities, and made an amendment to the boundary between Thornaby North and Thornaby West wards, to better reflect the statutory criteria.

99 Under the draft recommendations for a council size of 55, the proposed wards of Thornaby North, Thornaby South and Thornaby West would have 1% fewer, 2% more and equal to the average number of electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (6% fewer, 3% fewer and 4% fewer by 2006).

100 At Stage Three the Borough Council opposed the draft recommendation to transfer 40 electors from the south side of Humber Road in Thornaby West ward into Thornaby North ward, as it could see no 'logical reason for the transfer of these properties'. The Borough Council and the Labour Group also objected to the transfer of 224 electors from the area west of Trenchard Avenue from Thornaby West ward to Thornaby South ward, as this would mean the electorate 'would have to cross a busy road to vote'. The Borough Council put the 'Brimms' estate, south of the Harold Wilson Recreation Centre, forward as an alternative area to relocate into the Thornaby South ward. However the Borough Council acknowledged that this proposal would result in the transferred electors being 'landlocked from the rest of the Ward' and 'separated by a busy road.' A group of Thornaby councillors wrote a joint letter setting out their comments and proposals for the Thornaby area. The councillors agreed with the draft recommendation to reduce the number of borough councillors for Thornaby, and the geographical arrangement of the wards in the north, south and east of Thornaby. However, they put forward a proposal for modifications to the boundaries to create three wards, with two councillors representing the ward in the north of Thornaby, a three-member central ward and a two-member south ward. The councillors did not submit names for their proposed wards. The wards put forward were based broadly on the existing wards of Mandale, Stainsby, Village and Victoria, but they broadly merged Mandale and Village wards together. Under the councillors' proposals for their north Thornaby ward, the current ward of Victoria would be extended to include the Beechwood estate, with the boundary running south from where Thornaby Road meets Lanehouse Road, which it would follow as far as Northumberland Road, and run east along Northumberland

Road, before going north along Thorntree Road to the existing boundary at Lanehouse Road. Their central ward would be based on the current Mandale ward, less the area described above, and including the area north of Millbank Lane and Green Lane. The councillors' south Thornaby ward would use Mill Lane as its northern boundary, and include the whole of the existing Stainsby ward. The councillors stated that their proposals took social deprivation into account, grouping the most deprived areas in the Central ward, and were also based on identifiable boundaries. All groups on the Borough Council and the Conservatives put forward the names Mandale & Victoria in place of Thornaby North ward, Stainsby Hill in place of Thornaby South ward, and Village as an alternative name for Thornaby West ward.

101 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to endorse the draft recommendation for Thornaby South ward. We noted the comments of the Borough Council and the Labour Party regarding the transfer of the area described above from Thornaby West to Thornaby South ward. However, we have decided not to adopt the alternative proposal of the Council and Labour Group, because as the Council acknowledges, the 'Brims' estate would have no road links to the rest of the ward if it were moved into Thornaby South ward. We consider that such a proposal would not provide effective and convenient local government. The proposal for the Thornaby area put forward by a group of Thornaby councillors did not include any electorate figures or detailed mapping. However, on the basis of their description we have calculated the 2001 electorate figures for their proposal, which indicate that under their proposal the electoral variances for the area overall are not improved, compared to the draft recommendations. The proposed Thornaby west ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 12% above the borough average, and the proposed Thornaby south ward would be 20% below the average based on 2001 figures. The boundaries also do not better reflect community identities. Therefore we propose to endorse the draft recommendations for the boundary between Thornaby West and Thornaby South wards.

102 However, we have decided to move away from the draft recommendations and modify the proposed boundary between Thornaby North and Thornaby West wards to go along Humber Road, in line with the Borough Council's proposal. The small group of electors south of Humber Road would be transferred into Thornaby West ward, as we have been convinced that this modification would better reflect community identities, and it would have a negligible effect on electoral variance in the two wards. We have decided to endorse the new ward names submitted by the Conservatives and the Council, due to the unanimous support received for the names, and their basis in the existing ward names. Therefore Thornaby North ward will be named Mandale & Victoria, Thornaby South ward will be Stainsby Hill and Thornaby West ward will be named Village.

103 Under our final recommendations for 56 councillors, the number of electors per councillor in Mandale & Victoria, Stainsby Hill, and Village wards would be equal to, 4% above and 2% below the borough average respectively (6% below, 2% below and 2% below in 2006). Our final recommendations for these wards are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

Ingleby Barwick and Yarm wards

104 The single-member Ingleby Barwick ward, comprising the parishes of Castlelevington, Hilton, Ingleby Barwick, Kirklevington and Maltby, is substantially under-represented, due to substantial development within the parish boundaries of Ingleby Barwick since the last review, and it is forecast to continue to grow. At present Ingleby Barwick ward has 356% more electors per councillor than the borough average. This variance is expected to worsen considerably by 2006, when it is projected to be 498% more than the average. The two-member Yarm ward, which is coterminous with the parish of Yarm, currently has 43% more electors per councillor than the borough average (34% more by 2006).

105 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed a reconfiguration of parishes in this area, resulting in a net increase of one ward in the south of the borough. It proposed dividing Ingleby Barwick ward between two new borough wards. It proposed that a new three-member Ingleby Barwick East ward contain an area of Ingleby Barwick parish to the east of Barwick Way and to the north of Ingleby Way. The Borough Council proposed two different options for a new three-member Ingleby Barwick West ward. Its proposed Option 1 Ingleby Barwick West ward contained an area of Ingleby Barwick parish to the west of Barwick Way and to the north of Low Lane, and the Option 2 Ingleby Barwick West ward contained an area of Ingleby Barwick parish to the west of Barwick Way and the parishes of Hilton and Maltby. Under Option 2 the Borough Council also proposed a new single-member Southern Parishes ward containing the parishes of Castlelevington, Hilton, Kirklevington and Maltby, currently in Ingleby Barwick ward. The Borough Council also proposed two options for a revised three-member Yarm ward. Under Option 1 Yarm ward was based on the existing Yarm ward, and under Option 2 it was based on the existing Yarm ward, together with the parishes of Kirklevington and Castlelevington. The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats expressed broad support for Option 2 in this area. The Labour Group expressed broad support for the Borough Council's Option 1 in the Ingleby Barwick area. Ingleby Barwick Parish Council expressed its support for the Borough Council's proposal to ward the parish between two borough wards. It also supported the Borough Council's proposal to increase the number of borough councillors representing the parish from one to six. The draft recommendations noted the local support for the Borough Council's proposals in this area, and that the Borough Council's proposals would provide for a significant improvement in electoral equality from 2001 to 2006. They also noted that, based on the current and the 2006 projected electorate, Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards were entitled to five borough councillors and not six as the Council proposed. The additional councillor appeared to have been allocated in anticipation of development scheduled to take place after 2006, however we are unable to take into account any developments which will take place after 2006. We therefore decided to broadly base our draft recommendations for Ingleby Barwick on the Borough Council's Option 2 proposals, which proposed a council size of 56, as opposed to the Borough Council's Option 1, which proposed a council size of 57 as well as an additional Southern Parishes ward. However, we proposed two amendments to the proposed Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards. We proposed that two councillors instead of the proposed three, represent Ingleby Barwick East ward. We also proposed transferring 1,218 electors from Ingleby Barwick East ward to the proposed Ingleby Barwick West ward. We considered that our proposed amendments provided a better balance of the statutory criteria than the arrangements put forward by the Borough Council, and provided the correct allocation of councillors for Ingleby Barwick. As we proposed to adopt the Borough Council's Option 2 Ingleby Barwick West and Yarm wards as part of the draft recommendations, these incorporated the additional Option 1 Southern Parishes ward, which consisted of Castlelevington, Hilton, Kirklevington and Maltby parishes.

106 Under our draft recommendations for a council size of 55, the proposed wards of Ingleby Barwick East, Ingleby Barwick West and Yarm would have 31% fewer, 7% fewer and 7% more electors per councillor than the borough average (6% more, 5% more and 3% more by 2006).

107 In response to the draft recommendations, the Borough Council, fully supported by Ingleby Barwick Parish Council, proposed that the boundary between Ingleby Barwick and Yarm wards follow the existing course of the River Leven, rather than its former course. The Borough Council also reiterated its original Stage One proposal that the boundary between Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards should run along the new road linking Queen Elizabeth Way and Myton Road southwards to Ingleby Way, then eastwards along part of Ingleby Way, before going south along Barwick Way to Low Lane. The hedge line was proposed in the draft recommendations on the advice of Ordnance Survey, in order to tie the boundary to an existing ground feature, as the new road was not in existence at the time. Rather than the five councillors proposed in the draft recommendations, the Borough Council again put forward its proposal for six councillors for the Ingleby Barwick area. It argued that in view of 'the accelerated building' in Ingleby Barwick 'beyond the original estimate', the area is

entitled to six councillors. It submitted revised figures, which increased the projected electorate for Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards in 2006 from 13,505 to 14,459. The Conservatives supported the Council's revised figures, as well as its proposed boundary, and also submitted a list of 37 residents who supported the Conservatives' proposal for six councillors in the Ingleby Barwick area. The Labour Group supported the draft recommendations that allocated Ingleby Barwick a two-member Ingleby Barwick East ward and a three-member Ingleby Barwick West ward. However, it proposed that the boundary between Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards follow Barwick Way in the south as far as Ingleby Way, then follow the cycle path and drain north to Thornaby Wood and the existing ward boundary. The Labour Group also put Ingleby East, and Ingleby West forward as alternative ward names for Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards. The Liberal Democrat Group supported the revised figures and ward boundaries for Ingleby Barwick submitted by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. It argued that in the light of the revised figures, Ingleby Barwick is entitled to six councillors, and that the boundary in the draft recommendations would split the area east of Barwick Way and south of Ingleby Way and its associated community spirit. A local resident argued that the electorate of Ingleby Barwick is currently extremely under-represented, and as the electorate is certain to continue to grow, the area ought to be entitled to additional councillors.

108 In light of the revised projected electorate figures for Ingleby Barwick provided by the Borough Council, we undertook a six-week period of further consultation on alternative electoral arrangements, as described in Chapter 5. We consulted on the further draft recommendations for an alternative boundary between two three-member Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards, and a council size of 56. Six submissions were received, from Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, the local Conservative Party and Conservative Group, Ingleby Barwick Parish Council, Yarm Town Council, Councillor Beaumont, and a local resident; all of which supported the further draft recommendations

109 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received, in response to the further consultation. We do not propose adopting the Labour proposal for the boundary between Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards, as the new road provides a clearer boundary than the cycle path, and logically divides the estates. In addition, the Labour Group's proposal received no local support. In light of the support received for the further draft recommendations we have decided to endorse the further draft recommendations for the Ingleby Barwick area as final. The boundary between Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards will follow the new road linking Queen Elizabeth Way southwards to Ingleby Way, then eastwards along part of Ingleby Way, before running south along Barwick Way to Low Lane. Ingleby Barwick East ward will be based on part of Ingleby Barwick parish, and include the parishes of Maltby and Hilton, and Ingleby Barwick West ward will be based on the remainder of Ingleby Barwick parish. The further draft recommendations provide good levels of electoral equality, as well as sensible boundaries. We do not propose adopting the Labour Group's suggestions for new ward names, as they gained no local support, and so we have decided not to implement the ward names Ingleby East and Ingleby West. We noted the Borough Council's and Ingleby Barwick Parish Council's proposal for the boundary between Yarm and Ingleby Barwick West wards to follow the existing course of the River Leven, rather than its former route. However, we are unable to alter this boundary, as it would lead to the creation of an unpopulated parish ward. We confirm the draft recommendations for Yarm ward.

110 Under our final recommendations for a 56 member council, the number of electors per councillor in Ingleby Barwick East, Ingleby Barwick West, and Yarm wards would be 37% and 21% below and 9% above the borough average respectively (2% and 8% below and 4% above by 2006). Our final recommendations for these wards are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

Electoral cycle

111 By virtue of the amendments made to the Local Government Act 1992 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001, we have no powers to make recommendations concerning the electoral cycle.

Conclusions

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

- We propose minor boundary amendments to Billingham Central, Billingham North, Egglecliffe & Preston, Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree, Stockton Fairfield, Stockton Glebe, Stockton Grangefield, Ingleby Barwick East, Ingleby Barwick West, Stockton Newton, Stockton Parkfield & Oxbridge, Northern Parishes, Thornaby North and Thornaby West wards in light of submissions received at Stage Three.

- We propose renaming a number of borough wards as follows:

Egglecliffe & Preston ward to Eaglescliffe;
Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree ward to Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree;
Stockton Fairfield ward to Fairfield;
Stockton Glebe ward to Norton West;
Stockton Grangefield ward to Grangefield;
Stockton Hardwick ward to Hardwick;
Stockton Hartburn ward to Hartburn;
Stockton Newton ward to Newtown;
Stockton Parkfield & Oxbridge ward to Parkfield & Oxbridge;
Stockton Roseworth ward to Roseworth;
Thornaby North ward to Mandale & Victoria;
Thornaby South ward to Stainsby Hill;
Thornaby West ward to Village.

113 We conclude that in Stockton-on-Tees:

- there should be an increase in council size from 55 to 56;
- there should be 26 wards, four fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified.

114 Table 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2001 and 2006 electorate figures.

Table 4: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	55	56	55	56
Number of wards	30	26	30	26
Average number of electors per councillor	2,520	2,475	2,559	2,531
Number of wards with a variance of more than 10 per cent from the average	22	4	22	1
Number of wards with a variance of more than 20 per cent from the average	14	3	17	0

115 As Table 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from 22 to four, with three wards varying by more than 20% from the borough average. The level of electoral equality would improve further in 2006, with only one ward, Northern Parishes, varying by more than 10% from the average, at 12% below. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the statutory criteria.

Final recommendation

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council should comprise 56 councillors serving 26 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover.

Parish and town council electoral arrangements

116 When reviewing parish electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Local Government Act. The Schedule states that if a parish is to be divided between different borough wards, it should also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. In our draft recommendations report we proposed consequential changes to the warding arrangements for four parishes, Grindon, Ingleby Barwick, Thornaby and Wolviston, creating new parish wards, to reflect the proposed borough wards.

117 The parish of Grindon is currently served by seven councillors and is not warded. In our draft recommendations for this area we proposed to create two new parish wards, Grindon East ward and Grindon West ward, to facilitate the division of the parish between the proposed Billingham West and Northern Parishes borough wards. The boundary between the proposed Grindon East and Grindon West parish wards reflected the proposed borough ward boundary. We proposed that Grindon East parish ward should return three councillors and Grindon West parish ward should return four councillors.

118 At Stage Three, in response to the draft recommendations, we received no representations in relation to parish warding arrangements for this area. Having considered all the evidence received, and in light of the confirmation of our proposed borough wards in the area, we confirm the draft recommendations for warding Grindon parish as final.

Final recommendation

Grindon Parish Council should comprise seven parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Grindon East (returning three councillors) and Grindon West (returning four councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted in the back of this report.

119 The parish of Ingleby Barwick is currently served by eight councillors and is not warded. At Stage One, Ingleby Barwick Parish Council proposed that the parish should be represented by 12 councillors and that two wards should be created, each represented by six councillors. In the draft recommendations in this area, we proposed to modify the boundaries between the Borough Council's proposed borough wards. Therefore, while we supported Ingleby Parish Council's proposal that the parish should be represented by 12 councillors, we proposed to create two new parish wards, Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West, to facilitate the division of the parish between the proposed Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West borough wards. We proposed that the Ingleby Barwick East parish ward should return four councillors and the Ingleby Barwick West parish ward should return eight councillors.

120 In response to the draft recommendations report, Ingleby Barwick Parish Council supported the draft recommendation for an increase in its number of parish councillors, from eight to 12. However, it also supported the Borough Council's reiteration of its Stage One proposals for the Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards. Due to the revised electorate forecasts received for Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards, we adopted as part of our further draft recommendations the Borough Council's Stage One proposals for Ingleby Barwick, as discussed earlier.

121 Having considered all the evidence received in response to our further draft recommendations we adopted the Borough Council's proposals for Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West borough wards. Therefore we propose that the boundaries of the Ingleby Barwick parish wards reflect the borough wards of Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West. We propose that each parish ward return six councillors.

Final recommendation

Ingleby Barwick Parish Council should comprise 12 parish councillors, four more than at present, representing two wards: Ingleby Barwick East, (returning six councillors), and Ingleby Barwick West, (returning six councillors). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

122 The parish of Thornaby is currently served by 13 councillors and is not warded. In light of our draft recommendations in this area, we proposed to create three new parish wards, Thornaby North, Thornaby South and Thornaby West, to facilitate the division of the parish between the proposed Thornaby North, Thornaby South and Thornaby West borough wards. We proposed that the Thornaby North ward should return seven councillors, and the Thornaby South and Thornaby West wards should each return three councillors.

123 During Stage Three the Liberal Democrat Group proposed that Thornaby parish has a large enough electorate to generate a sufficient workload to justify an increase from 13 to 16 town councillors.

124 Having considered all the evidence received, we do not propose adopting the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal to increase Thornaby Town Council from 13 to 16 councillors. We have not received any comments from Thornaby Town Council or Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, supporting this proposal, which we would normally wish to receive, in order to put forward a change in council size. The Borough Council has the power to change electoral arrangements for any parish under the 1997 Local Government & Ratings Act. We would suggest that the Liberal Democrat Group contact the Borough Council to pursue this proposal. In light of our proposed borough wards in the area, we have decided to amend the names of Thornaby parish wards in line with the amendments to the borough ward names. Therefore Thornaby North will be renamed Mandale & Victoria parish ward, Thornaby South will become Stainsby Hill parish ward, and Thornaby West will be Village parish ward.

Final recommendation

Thornaby Town Council should comprise 13 town councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Mandale & Victoria, (returning seven councillors), and Stainsby Hill and Village (each returning three councillors). The boundaries between the three parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

125 The parish of Wolviston is currently served by 10 councillors and is not warded. In the draft recommendations for this area, we proposed the creation of two new parish wards, Wolviston East and Wolviston West, to facilitate the division of the parish between the proposed Billingham North and Northern Parishes borough wards. The boundary between the proposed Wolviston East and Wolviston West parish wards reflected the proposed borough ward boundary. We proposed that the Wolviston East ward should return seven councillors and the Wolviston West ward should return three councillors.

126 During Stage Three, Wolviston Parish Council was concerned about the draft recommendation to ward its parish. However, it is necessary to ward the area in light of the alterations to the borough ward boundaries in the area, which have resulted in the creation of Billingham North and Northern Parishes borough wards. Having considered all the evidence received, we confirm the draft recommendations for the warding of Wolviston parish as final.

Final recommendation

Wolviston Parish Council should comprise 10 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Wolviston East, (returning seven councillors), and Wolviston West, (returning three councillors). The boundaries between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

127 Yarm Town Council is currently served by nine town councillors, and is not warded. We did not propose to change the electoral arrangements of Yarm parish in the draft recommendations. During Stage Three, Yarm Town Council requested that the number of town councillors be increased from nine to 11 in order to introduce a committee system and be more representative. In the light of representation received we propose that Yarm Town Council return 11 councillors, an increase of two councillors. We do not propose any new warding arrangements.

Final recommendation

Yarm Town Council should comprise 11 town councillors, two more than at present, returned from the parish as a whole.

Map 2: Final recommendations for Stockton-on-Tees

7 What happens next?

128 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Stockton-on-Tees and submitted our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3692).

129 It is now up to The Electoral Commission to decide whether to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 29 April 2003.

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

**The Secretary
The Electoral Commission
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

Fax: 020 7271 0667

Email: implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk