

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Newcastle-under-Lyme in Staffordshire

May 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

The Local Government Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament. Our task is to review and make recommendations to the Government on whether there should be changes to the structure of local government, the boundaries of individual local authority areas, and their electoral arrangements.

Members of the Commission are:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)
Professor Michael Clarke CBE (Deputy Chairman)
Peter Brokenshire
Kru Desai
Pamela Gordon
Robin Gray
Robert Hughes CBE

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

We are statutorily required to review periodically the electoral arrangements – such as the number of councillors representing electors in each area and the number and boundaries of wards and electoral divisions – of every principal local authority in England. In broad terms our objective 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, and the number of councillors and ward names. We can also make recommendations for change to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils in the borough.

This report sets out the Commission's draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme in Staffordshire.

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A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for Newcastle-under-Lyme town is inserted inside the back cover of this report.

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Newcastle-under-Lyme on 28 September 1999.

- **This report summarises the representations we received during the first stage of the review, and makes draft recommendations for change.**

We found that the existing electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Newcastle-under-Lyme:

- **In 10 of the 23 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough, and one ward varies by more than 20 per cent from the average.**
- **By 2004 electoral equality is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 10 wards and by more than 20 per cent in one ward.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 101 – 102) are that:

- **Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council should have 60 councillors, four more than at present;**
- **there should be 24 wards, instead of 23 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 20 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one, and three wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In 23 of the proposed 24 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **An improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in 23 wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2004.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parish of Audley Rural and the town of Kidsgrove.**

This report sets out our draft recommendations on which comments are invited.

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for eight weeks from 9 May 2000. Because we take this consultation very seriously, we may move away from our draft recommendations in the light of Stage Three responses. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations and then make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.**
- **It will then be for the Secretary of State to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. He will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 3 July 2000:

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Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

| | Ward name | Number of councillors | Constituent areas | Map reference |
|----|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|---|----------------------|
| 1 | Audley & Bignall End | 3 | Audley & Bignall End ward (part – Audley ward of Audley Rural parish (part) and Bignall End ward of Audley Rural parish (part)) | Maps 2, A3 and A4 |
| 2 | Bradwell (in Newcastle-under-Lyme) | 3 | Bradwell ward (part); Porthill ward (part) | Large map |
| 3 | Butt Lane | 3 | Butt Lane ward (Butt Lane ward of Kidsgrove parish); Kidsgrove ward (part – Kidsgrove ward of Kidsgrove parish (part)) | Maps 2 and A2 |
| 4 | Chesterton (in Newcastle-under-Lyme) | 3 | Audley & Bignall End ward (part – unparished area); Chesterton ward (part) | Large map |
| 5 | Clayton (in Newcastle-under-Lyme) | 2 | <i>Unchanged</i> | Large map |
| 6 | Cross Heath (in Newcastle-under-Lyme) | 3 | Cross Heath ward (part); Holditch ward (part); Silverdale ward (part); Town ward (part) | Large map |
| 7 | Halmerend | 2 | Audley & Bignall End ward (part – Audley ward of Audley Rural parish (part) and Bignall End ward of Audley Rural parish (part)); Halmerend ward (Balterley parish, Betley parish and Halmerend ward of Audley Rural parish); Holditch ward (part); Silverdale ward (part) | Maps 2, A3 and A4 |
| 8 | Holditch (in Newcastle-under-Lyme) | 2 | Chesterton ward (part); Cross Heath ward (part); Halmerend ward (part); Holditch ward (part) | Large map |
| 9 | Keele | 2 | Keele ward (part – Keele parish and unparished area (part)); Silverdale ward (part) | Map 2 and large map |
| 10 | Kidsgrove | 3 | Kidsgrove ward (part – Kidsgrove ward of Kidsgrove parish (part)); Newchapel ward (part – Newchapel ward of Kidsgrove parish (part)) | Maps 2 and A2 |
| 11 | Madeley | 2 | <i>Unchanged</i> (Madeley parish) | Map 2 |
| 12 | May Bank (in Newcastle-under-Lyme) | 3 | Cross Heath ward (part); May Bank ward (part); Wolstanton ward (part) | Large map |
| 13 | Newchapel | 2 | Newchapel ward (part – Newchapel ward of Kidsgrove parish (part)) | Maps 2 and A2 |

| | Ward name | Number of councillors | Constituent areas | Map reference |
|----|--|------------------------------|---|----------------------|
| 14 | Porthill (in Newcastle-under-Lyme) | 2 | Bradwell ward (part); Porthill ward (part) | Large map |
| 15 | Ravenscliffe | 2 | Kidsgrove ward (part – Kidsgrove ward of Kidsgrove parish (part)) | Maps 2 and A2 |
| 16 | Seabridge (in Newcastle-under-Lyme) | 3 | Seabridge ward (part) | Large map |
| 17 | Silverdale & Knutton (in Newcastle-under-Lyme) | 2 | Silverdale ward (part); Town ward (part) | Large map |
| 18 | Silverdale & Parksite (in Newcastle-under-Lyme) | 2 | Keele ward (part – unparished area (part)); Silverdale ward (part) | Large map |
| 19 | Talke | 2 | <i>Unchanged</i> (Talke ward of Kidsgrove parish) | Map 2 |
| 20 | Thistleberry (in Newcastle-under-Lyme) | 3 | Thistleberry ward; Town ward (part) | Large map |
| 21 | Town (in Newcastle-under-Lyme) | 2 | Cross Heath ward (part); Town ward (part) | Large map |
| 22 | Westlands (in Newcastle-under-Lyme) | 3 | Seabridge ward (part); Westlands ward (part) | Large map |
| 23 | Whitmore & Loggerheads | 3 | Loggerheads ward (Loggerheads parish); Whitmore ward (Chapel & Hill Chorlton, Maer and Whitmore parishes) | Map 2 |
| 24 | Wolstanton (in Newcastle-under-Lyme) | 3 | May Bank ward (part); Porthill ward (part); Wolstanton ward (part) | Large map |

Notes: 1 The town of Newcastle-under-Lyme is the only unparished part of the borough and comprises the 14 wards indicated above.

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Newcastle-under-Lyme

| | Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (1999) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2004) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|----|-----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Audley & Bignall End | 3 | 4,509 | 1,503 | -4 | 4,335 | 1,445 | -5 |
| 2 | Bradwell | 3 | 4,869 | 1,623 | 4 | 4,825 | 1,608 | 5 |
| 3 | Butt Lane | 3 | 4,321 | 1,440 | -8 | 4,251 | 1,417 | -7 |
| 4 | Chesterton | 3 | 5,028 | 1,676 | 7 | 5,010 | 1,670 | 9 |
| 5 | Clayton | 2 | 3,302 | 1,651 | 5 | 3,125 | 1,563 | 2 |
| 6 | Cross Heath | 3 | 4,634 | 1,545 | -1 | 4,371 | 1,457 | -5 |
| 7 | Halmerend | 2 | 2,949 | 1,475 | -6 | 2,972 | 1,486 | -3 |
| 8 | Holditch | 2 | 3,192 | 1,596 | 2 | 3,051 | 1,526 | 0 |
| 9 | Keele | 2 | 3,082 | 1,541 | -2 | 3,026 | 1,513 | -1 |
| 10 | Kidsgrove | 3 | 4,518 | 1,506 | -4 | 4,511 | 1,504 | -2 |
| 11 | Madeley | 2 | 3,416 | 1,708 | 9 | 3,321 | 1,661 | 9 |
| 12 | May Bank | 3 | 5,128 | 1,709 | 9 | 4,881 | 1,627 | 7 |
| 13 | Newchapel | 2 | 2,868 | 1,434 | -9 | 2,973 | 1,487 | -3 |
| 14 | Porthill | 2 | 2,988 | 1,494 | -5 | 2,876 | 1,438 | -6 |
| 15 | Ravenscliffe | 2 | 3,274 | 1,637 | 4 | 3,143 | 1,572 | 3 |
| 16 | Seabridge | 3 | 4,527 | 1,509 | -4 | 4,395 | 1,465 | -4 |
| 17 | Silverdale & Knutton | 2 | 2,912 | 1,456 | -7 | 2,883 | 1,442 | -6 |
| 18 | Silverdale & Parksite | 2 | 2,914 | 1,457 | -7 | 2,882 | 1,441 | -6 |
| 19 | Talke | 2 | 3,211 | 1,606 | 2 | 3,077 | 1,539 | 1 |
| 20 | Thistleberry | 3 | 4,645 | 1,548 | -1 | 4,466 | 1,489 | -3 |
| 21 | Town | 2 | 3,440 | 1,720 | 10 | 3,324 | 1,662 | 9 |
| 22 | Westlands | 3 | 4,692 | 1,564 | 0 | 4,445 | 1,482 | -3 |

| Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (1999) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2004) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 23 Whitmore & Loggerheads | 3 | 5,258 | 1,753 | 12 | 5,219 | 1,740 | 14 |
| 24 Wolstanton | 3 | 4,369 | 1,456 | -7 | 4,290 | 1,430 | -6 |
| Totals | 60 | 94,046 | - | - | 91,652 | - | - |
| Average | - | - | 1,567 | - | - | 1,528 | - |

Source: *Electorate figures are based on Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council's submission.*

Note: *The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the 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 draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme in Staffordshire on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the eight districts in Staffordshire and the City of Stoke-on-Trent as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Newcastle-under-Lyme. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in 1977 (Report No. 200). The electoral arrangements of Staffordshire County Council were last reviewed in 1980 (Report No. 386). We expect to review the County Council's electoral arrangements shortly after completion of the district reviews in order to enable orders to be made by the Secretary of State in time for the 2005 county elections.

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

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

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the Borough Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also make recommendations on the electoral arrangements for parish and town councils in the borough.

5 We also have regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (third edition published in October 1999). This sets out our approach to the reviews.

6 In our *Guidance* we state that we wish wherever possible to build on schemes which have been prepared locally on the basis of careful and effective consultation. Local interests are normally in a better position to judge what council size and ward configuration are most likely to secure effective and convenient local government in their areas, while allowing proper reflection of the identities and interests of local communities.

7 The broad objective of PERs is then to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the district as a whole. For example, we will require particular justification for schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

8 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the general assumption that the existing council size already secures effective and convenient local government in that district but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified: in particular, we do not accept that an increase in a district’s electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, or that changes should be made to the size of a district council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other districts.

9 The review is in four stages (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Stages of the Review

| Stage | Description |
|-------|---|
| One | Submission of proposals to the Commission |
| Two | The Commission’s analysis and deliberation |
| Three | Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them |
| Four | Final deliberation and report to the Secretary of State |

10 In July 1998 the Government published a White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, i.e. in year one half of the district council would be elected, in year two half the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities.

11 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/2000 PER programme, including the Staffordshire districts, that until any direction is received from the Secretary of State the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the October 1999 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State’s intentions and legislative

proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas. The proposals are now being taken forward in a Local Government Bill published in December 1999 and are currently being considered by Parliament.

12 Stage One began on 28 September 1999, when we wrote to Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Staffordshire County Council, Staffordshire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association, parish and town councils in the borough, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough and the Members of the European Parliament for the West Midlands Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 10 January 2000.

13 At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

14 Stage Three began on 9 May 2000 and will end on 3 July 2000. This stage involves publishing the draft recommendations in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations.**

15 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to move away from them in any areas, and submit final recommendations to the Secretary of State. Interested parties will have a further six weeks to make representations to the Secretary of State. It will then be for him to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If the Secretary of State accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, he will make an order. The Secretary of State will determine when any changes come into effect.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

16 The area covered by Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council extends over some 21,000 hectares in the north-west of Staffordshire. The district centres on the two towns of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Kidsgrove, and also contains a number of smaller rural villages. The M6 motorway runs through the borough and provides good communication links to both Birmingham and Manchester. The borough is home to Keele University, which is based in Keele village.

17 The borough contains nine parishes, ranging in size of electorate from 329 in Chapel & Hill Chorlton to over 18,000 in Kidsgrove, although the town of Newcastle-under-Lyme itself is unparished. Newcastle-under-Lyme town comprises some 60 per cent of the borough's total electorate.

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

19 The electorate of the borough is 94,046 (February 1999). The Council presently has 56 members who are elected from 23 wards, six of which are relatively rural in the west of the borough, and the remainder are predominantly urban in Kidsgrove and Newcastle-under-Lyme towns. Eleven of the wards are each represented by three councillors, 11 by two councillors and one ward is represented by a single councillor. The Council is elected by thirds. Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Newcastle-under-Lyme borough, with around 4 per cent more electors than two decades ago.

20 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,679 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will decrease to 1,637 by the year 2004 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 10 of the 23 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, and in one ward by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Chesterton ward where each of the three councillors represents 24 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Newcastle-under-Lyme

Figure 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

| Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (1999) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2004) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Audley & Bignall End | 3 | 4,859 | 1,620 | -4 | 4,672 | 1,557 | -5 |
| 2 Bradwell | 3 | 4,992 | 1,664 | -1 | 4,947 | 1,649 | 1 |
| 3 Butt Lane | 3 | 4,231 | 1,410 | -16 | 4,164 | 1,388 | -15 |
| 4 Chesterton | 3 | 6,245 | 2,082 | 24 | 6,226 | 2,075 | 27 |
| 5 Clayton | 2 | 3,302 | 1,651 | -2 | 3,125 | 1,563 | -5 |
| 6 Cross Heath | 3 | 4,447 | 1,482 | -12 | 4,217 | 1,406 | -14 |
| 7 Halmerend | 2 | 2,677 | 1,339 | -20 | 2,710 | 1,355 | -17 |
| 8 Holditch | 2 | 3,032 | 1,516 | -10 | 2,813 | 1,407 | -14 |
| 9 Keele | 2 | 3,771 | 1,886 | 12 | 3,703 | 1,852 | 13 |
| 10 Kidsgrove | 3 | 5,604 | 1,868 | 11 | 5,380 | 1,793 | 10 |
| 11 Loggerheads | 2 | 3,388 | 1,694 | 1 | 3,295 | 1,648 | 1 |
| 12 Madeley | 2 | 3,416 | 1,708 | 2 | 3,321 | 1,661 | 1 |
| 13 May Bank | 3 | 4,402 | 1,467 | -13 | 4,188 | 1,396 | -15 |
| 14 Newchapel | 3 | 5,146 | 1,715 | 2 | 5,334 | 1,778 | 9 |
| 15 Porthill | 2 | 3,268 | 1,634 | -3 | 3,141 | 1,571 | -4 |
| 16 Seabridge | 3 | 6,024 | 2,008 | 20 | 5,848 | 1,949 | 19 |
| 17 Silverdale | 3 | 5,137 | 1,712 | 2 | 5,088 | 1,696 | 4 |
| 18 Talke | 2 | 3,211 | 1,606 | -4 | 3,077 | 1,539 | -6 |
| 19 Thistleberry | 3 | 4,645 | 1,548 | -8 | 4,466 | 1,489 | -9 |
| 20 Town | 2 | 3,440 | 1,720 | 2 | 3,324 | 1,662 | 2 |
| 21 Westlands | 2 | 3,195 | 1,598 | -5 | 2,992 | 1,496 | -9 |
| 22 Whitmore | 1 | 1,870 | 1,870 | 11 | 1,924 | 1,924 | 18 |
| 23 Wolstanton | 2 | 3,744 | 1,872 | 11 | 3,697 | 1,849 | 13 |
| Totals | 56 | 94,046 | - | - | 91,652 | - | - |
| Averages | - | - | 1,679 | - | - | 1,637 | - |

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Newcastle-under-Lyme 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 1999, electors in Halmerend ward were relatively over-represented by 20 per cent, while electors in Chesterton ward were relatively under-represented by 24 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

21 At the start of the review we invited members of the public and other interested parties to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

22 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met officers and members from the Borough Council. We are most grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received five representations during Stage One, including two borough-wide schemes, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the Borough Council and the Commission.

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council

23 The Borough Council proposed a council of 59 members, three more than at present, serving 23 wards, as at present. It proposed a mixed pattern of two- and three-member wards in the borough, with a predominance of two-member wards in the rural areas and three-member wards in Newcastle-under-Lyme town. Under the Council's proposals, all but seven of the current wards would experience changes to their existing boundaries.

24 Under the Borough Council's proposals, the Silverdale area would gain one councillor and be covered by two two-member wards and the Newcastle town area would experience a net increase in representation of two councillors. The current Loggerheads and Whitmore wards would be combined in a single ward, and the boundaries of Audley & Bignall End and Halmerend wards would also change. The boundaries of 16 wards would be amended in order to improve electoral equality.

25 The number of electors per councillor in only one of the Borough Council's proposed wards would vary by more than 10 per cent from the borough average initially, and two wards would have electoral variances of more than 10 per cent by 2004. No ward is forecast to vary by more than 12 per cent from the borough average by 2004. The Council's proposals are summarised at Appendix B.

Newcastle-under-Lyme Liberal Democrat Party

26 We received a further borough-wide scheme from the Newcastle-under-Lyme Liberal Democrat Party ('the Liberal Democrats') which was also based on a council size of 59. They proposed 19 three-member wards and one two-member ward. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, all of the 23 existing wards would experience some change to their boundaries, and Audley Rural, Madeley and Whitmore parishes would be warded.

27 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, the Newcastle town area would experience a net increase in representation of three councillors. The number of councillors representing Kidsgrove would increase by one, to 12, while the rural area in the west of the borough would experience a net loss of one councillor.

28 The number of electors per councillor in none of the Liberal Democrats' 20 proposed wards would vary from the borough average by more than 10 per cent, either now or by 2004.

Parish Councils

29 We received representations from two parish councils in Newcastle-under-Lyme. Audley Rural Parish Council requested that its parish councillors be redistributed in order to more accurately reflect the distribution of the electorate between the current three wards. Keele Parish Council supported the Borough Council's proposal to include the Parksite area in a revised Silverdale ward, and proposed expanding the current Keele ward to include parts of Madeley and Whitmore parishes and parts of the current Silverdale and Thistleberry wards.

Other Representations

30 We received a further representation from Staffordshire County Councillor Bill Hughes (Silverdale division). Cllr Hughes argued that, in relation to the Borough Council's proposals for Silverdale, the consultation process undertaken by the Commission and the Council had been inadequate, and requested that the Borough Council publish an information leaflet to explain the consultation process.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

31 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Newcastle-under-Lyme is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to the statutory criteria set out in the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the interests and identities of local communities – and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

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

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

34 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, the objective 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 start from the standpoint of electoral equality, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates. We will require particular justification for schemes which result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent and over should arise only in the most exceptional of circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

Electorate Forecasts

35 The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting a decrease in the electorate of some 3 per cent from 94,046 to 91,652 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. The Council stated that its electorate forecasts were based on population and household projections supplied by Staffordshire County Council, and that it has estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. It expects a gradual decline in the electorate in the majority of wards, although the electorate in a small number of wards is forecast to increase marginally.

36 We accept that forecasting electorates is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the Borough Council's figures, are content that they represent the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time. We welcome further evidence on electorate forecasts during Stage Three.

Council Size

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

38 Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council has 56 members at present. Both the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats proposed increasing the size of the council by three, to 59. The Borough Council stated that, in light of the Government's modernisation agenda, it had considered proposing a reduction in council size, but was reluctant to put forward proposals which might result in larger wards and an increased number of electors per councillor. It argued that while the current electoral arrangements reflect local communities well, a small increase in council size of three members would result in improved levels of electoral equality and would allow ward boundaries to remain relatively unchanged.

39 The Liberal Democrats argued that their proposal to create a pattern of largely three-member wards throughout the borough would require increasing the number of councillors from 56 to 59. In particular, they proposed increasing the number of councillors for the Kidsgrove area from 11 to 12 to provide for improved levels of electoral equality by 2004. The Liberal Democrats also argued that Keele ward would eventually require an additional councillor to account for the growth in the student population of Keele University.

40 While the Commission will not generally seek a substantial increase or decrease in council size, we are persuaded that a small increase in council size, as proposed by the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats, is necessary in Newcastle-under-Lyme in order to address levels of electoral inequality which have developed throughout the borough since the last electoral review. Electorate growth in the borough since the last review has tended to be localised, and we consider that a small change in council size is warranted in order to minimise disruption to community ties. However, we also concur with the Liberal Democrats' proposal to increase the total number of councillors representing the Kidsgrove area. We note that, under the Borough Council's proposed council size of 59, Kidsgrove would be entitled to 11.6 councillors by 2004. Under an increased council size of 60, this area would be entitled to 12 councillors, which would provide for improved levels of electoral equality in Kidsgrove currently and over the next five years. We propose, therefore, allocating an additional councillor to the Kidsgrove area, thereby increasing the size of the council by four, from 56 to 60.

41 Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we have concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 60 members.

Electoral Arrangements

42 We have carefully considered all the representations received, including the borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats. While the Liberal Democrats' proposals would result in improved levels of electoral equality, we are not persuaded that their proposed warding arrangements would best reflect the identities and interests of the various communities within Newcastle-under-Lyme. In particular, we are concerned that their proposals do not build on existing parish boundaries, resulting in the creation of additional parish wards. Furthermore, in areas where they have moved away from existing ward boundaries, we have not been persuaded that their proposed boundaries would better reflect existing community ties.

43 We have concluded, therefore, that we should base our recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme. We consider that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or the other scheme submitted at Stage One. Moreover, we consider that the Borough Council's proposals would achieve reasonable electoral equality, and by building on a principle of least change would reflect community ties reasonably well. However, to improve electoral equality further and having regard to local community identities and interests, we have decided to move away from the Borough Council's proposals in several areas. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Butt Lane and Talke wards;
- (b) Kidsgrove and Newchapel wards;
- (c) Audley & Bignall End and Halmerend wards;
- (d) Loggerheads, Madeley and Whitmore wards;
- (e) Keele and Silverdale wards;
- (f) Clayton, Seabridge and Westlands wards;
- (g) Thistleberry and Town wards;
- (h) Cross Heath, May Bank and Wolstanton wards;
- (i) Bradwell and Porthill wards;
- (j) Chesterton and Holditch wards.

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

Butt Lane and Talke wards

45 Butt Lane and Talke wards cover part of Kidsgrove town in the north-east of the borough, and are coterminous with Butt Lane and Talke wards of Kidsgrove Town Council respectively. Butt Lane ward is currently represented by three councillors and has 16 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (15 per cent fewer by 2004), while Talke ward is represented by two councillors and has 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average (6 per cent fewer by 2004).

46 The Borough Council proposed only minimal change in this area, retaining the existing electoral arrangements of Talke ward and enlarging Butt Lane ward to include the part of Kidsgrove ward to the south of the A50 Liverpool Road and west of Ravenscliffe Road. Under the Council's proposals, the three-member Butt Lane ward would have 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (7 per cent more by 2004), and the two-member Talke ward would have 1 per cent more than average (1 per cent fewer by 2004).

47 The Liberal Democrats proposed more extensive change, transferring the part of the current Butt Lane ward to the south of St Saviour's Street, Mitchell Drive, Higher Ash Road, Beech Drive and Park Avenue to a revised three-member Talke ward. Under their proposals, the remaining part of Butt Lane ward would be combined with the part of Kidsgrove ward to the north of William Road, Lamb Street, Heathcote Street and The Avenue and to the east of Boathorse Road in a new three-member West Kidsgrove ward. Based on a council size of 59, the Liberal Democrats' proposed Talke and West Kidsgrove wards would have 5 per cent and 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively, both now and in five years' time.

48 As discussed previously, we concur with the Liberal Democrats' proposal to increase the total number of councillors representing the Kidsgrove area from 11 to 12. However, we are not persuaded that Talke ward should be enlarged to include part of the current Butt Lane ward as proposed by the Liberal Democrats. We consider that Talke is a separate community with distinct identities and interests, and that Linley Road and the A5011 Newcastle Road form a clear and identifiable boundary which effectively separates the two distinct communities. We consider that the current Talke ward reflects community identities in the area well, and we propose retaining the existing electoral arrangements of the ward. Under a council size of 60, our proposed two-member Talke ward would have 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (1 per cent more by 2004).

49 We are not persuaded that either of the borough-wide schemes submitted to us at this stage would appropriately reflect the various communities in the Butt Lane area of Kidsgrove. The Kidsgrove to Stoke-on-Trent railway line forms a strong community boundary in the south-west of Kidsgrove, and we consider that areas to the east of the railway line share few community ties with the Butt Lane area. While we propose retaining the railway line as the eastern boundary of Butt Lane ward, in order to improve electoral equality we propose including the part of Kidsgrove ward to the west of the Macclesfield to Stoke-on-Trent railway line in Butt Lane ward. Under our proposals, the three-member Butt Lane ward would have 8 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (7 per cent fewer by 2004), based on a council size of 60. Our proposed Butt Lane ward is illustrated on Map 2 and Map A2 in Appendix A.

Kidsgrove and Newchapel wards

50 Kidsgrove and Newchapel wards lie to the north and east of the Crewe to Stoke-on-Trent railway line in Kidsgrove, and are coterminous with Kidsgrove and Newchapel wards of Kidsgrove Town Council. Each ward is currently represented by three councillors, with Kidsgrove ward having 11 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (10 per cent more by 2004), and Newchapel ward having 2 per cent more (9 per cent more by 2004).

51 The Borough Council proposed significant change in this area, transferring the part of Newchapel ward to the south of Whitehill Road and north of Mount Road to a revised three-member Kidsgrove ward, thereby uniting the Nabswood Road and Tawney Close area, and Winghay Road and Whitefield Road area within Kidsgrove ward. The remaining part of the existing Newchapel ward would form a revised three-member Newchapel ward. The Council also proposed transferring part of the current Kidsgrove ward to a revised Butt Lane ward, as discussed previously. Under a council size of 59, the Council's proposed three-member Kidsgrove and Newchapel wards would have 12 per cent more and 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (11 per cent and 1 per cent more by 2004).

52 The Liberal Democrats also proposed considerable change in this area. Under their proposals, the part of Newchapel ward to the south of Whitehill Road would be combined with the part of the current Kidsgrove ward to the south of William Road, Lamb Street, Heathcote Street and The Avenue and to the east of Boathorse Road in a new East Kidsgrove ward. The remaining part of Kidsgrove ward would be combined with Butt Lane ward in a new West Kidsgrove ward, as discussed previously. The Liberal Democrats' proposed Newchapel and East Kidsgrove wards would be represented by three councillors each, and would have 5 per cent and 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively, both now and in five years' time.

53 As discussed previously, we concur with the Liberal Democrats' proposal to increase the number of councillors serving the Kidsgrove area from 11 to 12. However, we consider that the existing Talke and Butt Lane wards reflect community identities and interests well and have proposed that they remain unchanged, with the exception of the area to the west of the Macclesfield to Stoke-on-Trent railway line as detailed above. In order to improve electoral equality we have therefore propose allocating an additional councillor to the area broadly covered by the existing Kidsgrove and Newchapel wards. We recognise that this proposal limits the extent to which we are able to consider the schemes submitted by the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats for this area, but consider that our proposals would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than either of the alternative borough-wide schemes submitted to us at this stage.

54 We consider that there is some merit in the proposal to unite the Nabswood Road and Tawney Close, and Winghay Road and Whitefield Road areas within Kidsgrove ward, as suggested by both the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats. However, we consider that the area to the north of Whitehill Road and east of Galleys Bank, incorporating The Rookery and Newchapel Road, also shares many significant ties with the Kidsgrove community and propose transferring this area from Newchapel ward to a revised three-member Kidsgrove ward. We also propose that the roads having sole access from Mount Road – Tern Avenue, Derwent Crescent and Dane Gardens, currently in Newchapel ward – should also form part of Kidsgrove ward. Under our proposals, the remaining part of Kidsgrove ward would form a revised two-member Newchapel ward. We propose creating a new two-member Ravenscliffe ward covering the area to the south of Liverpool Road and Atwood Street, and west of Whiteridge Road, incorporating Medina Way, Tilewright Close, Powy Drive, Wheelcock Way and Weir Grove. The boundary between our proposed Ravenscliffe and Kidsgrove wards would then follow the dismantled railway line to the borough boundary in the east. Based on a council size of 60, our proposed

Kidsgrove and Newchapel wards would have 4 per cent and 9 per cent fewer electors per councillor respectively, while Ravenscliffe ward would have 4 per cent more (2 per cent and 3 per cent fewer, and 3 per cent more by 2004). Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and Map A2 in Appendix A.

Audley & Bignall End and Halmerend wards

55 Audley & Bignall End and Halmerend wards lie in the north of the borough and include the settlements of Audley, Bignall End and Halmerend. Audley & Bignall End ward comprises Audley and Bignall End wards of Audley Rural parish and an unparished area to the east, and is represented by three councillors. The two-member Halmerend ward comprises Balterley and Betley parishes, Halmerend ward of Audley Rural parish and an unparished area to the east. Audley & Bignall End ward currently has 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (5 per cent fewer by 2004), while Halmerend ward has 20 per cent fewer (17 per cent fewer by 2004).

56 The Borough Council proposed minimal change in this area, enlarging the current Halmerend ward to include parts of Audley & Bignall End ward (containing 350 electors), and transferring the unparished part of Audley & Bignall End ward to a revised Chesterton ward, as discussed later. Under its proposals, the boundary between Audley & Bignall End and Halmerend wards would be amended to unite the Miles Green settlement within Halmerend ward, and the part of Audley & Bignall End ward to the south of Dean Brook and the B5500 Nantwich Road would also be transferred to Halmerend ward. The Council's proposed three-member Audley & Bignall End ward would have 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average, while the two-member Halmerend ward would have 7 per cent fewer (7 per cent and 4 per cent fewer respectively by 2004).

57 The Liberal Democrats proposed more extensive change in this area. Under their proposals, Halmerend ward would be divided, with the area to the east of the dismantled railway line which runs through Halmer End being combined with part of Silverdale ward to form a new Silverdale & Halmer End ward, as discussed later. The area to the west of the disused railway line would be transferred to a new Madeley, Wrinehill, Betley & Balterley ward, together with the part of the current Audley & Bignall End ward to the west of the M6 motorway, Barthomley Road, Peel Hollow and Limbrick Road, also discussed later. The Miles Green settlement to the north of Dean Brook would be transferred from Halmerend ward to a revised three-member Audley & Bignall End ward. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, the unparished area in the east of the current Audley & Bignall End ward would be transferred to a new Chesterton North ward, as discussed later. Based on a council size of 59, the Liberal Democrats' Audley & Bignall End ward would have 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, both now and in five years' time.

58 While the existing arrangements for this area reflect community ties well, it is necessary to address the significant level of electoral inequality which currently exists in Halmerend ward. While we recognise that the Liberal Democrats' proposal would provide reasonable electoral equality, we do not consider that their proposal to divide Halmerend ward is appropriate. In

particular, we consider that there is a close association of interests between Balterley, Betley and Halmerend parishes, and relatively few ties between the largely rural Halmer End and Alsagers Bank communities and the more urban Silverdale area.

59 We note that both borough-wide schemes submitted to us propose uniting the Miles Green area within a single ward and consider that the proposal has some merit. We consider that the Borough Council's proposal to include the Miles Green and Nantwich Road areas in a revised Halmerend ward would better reflect existing community ties than the current arrangements, and would also provide improved electoral equality in Halmerend ward. We therefore propose putting forward the Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations. Our proposed three-member Audley & Bignall End and two-member Halmerend wards would have 4 per cent and 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (5 per cent and 3 per cent fewer by 2004). The proposed boundary between Audley & Bignall End and Halmerend wards is illustrated on Map 2 and Maps A3 and A4 in Appendix A.

Loggerheads, Madeley and Whitmore wards

60 Loggerheads, Madeley and Whitmore wards lie in the south and west of the borough, and are largely rural in character. Loggerheads ward is coterminous with the parish of Loggerheads and Madeley ward is coterminous with the parish of Madeley, each being represented by two councillors. Whitmore ward comprises the parishes of Chapel & Hill Chorlton, Maer and Whitmore and is represented by a single councillor. At present, Loggerheads ward has 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, Madeley has 2 per cent more and Whitmore has 11 per cent more (1 per cent, 1 per cent and 18 per cent more by 2004 respectively).

61 The Borough Council proposed only minimal change in this area, combining the current Loggerheads and Whitmore wards in a new three-member Whitmore & Loggerheads ward, and retaining the existing electoral arrangements for Madeley ward. Under a council size of 59, its proposed Whitmore & Loggerheads and Madeley wards would have 10 per cent and 7 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (12 per cent and 7 per cent more by 2004).

62 The Liberal Democrats proposed a greater degree of change in this area. Under their proposals, Madeley ward would be divided, and the area to the east of Madeley Heath, including Madeley Heath Farm and Stoneylow Farm, would be transferred to a revised Keele ward, as discussed later. The remaining part of Madeley ward would be combined with the part of the current Halmerend ward to the west of the disused railway line and the part of the current Audley & Bignall End ward to the west of the M6 in a new three-member Madeley, Wrinehill, Betley & Balterley ward. The part of the current Whitmore ward to the west of the Crewe to Stafford railway line, incorporating the Manor Road and Whitehouse Wood areas, would also be included in the new Madeley, Wrinehill, Betley & Balterley ward, while the area to the north of Heath Road, Holbrook's Wood and Trentham Road would be transferred to a new Keele ward, as discussed later. The remaining part of Whitmore ward would be combined with the current Loggerheads ward to form a new three-member Loggerheads & Whitmore ward. The Liberal

Democrats' proposed Loggerheads & Whitmore and Madeley, Wrinehill, Betley & Balterley wards would have 2 per cent more and 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively, both now and in five years' time.

63 We received one further representation concerning this area. Keele Parish Council proposed enlarging Keele ward to include the part of Madeley parish to the east of Madeley Heath, and the part of Whitmore parish to the north-east of the A53 Whitmore Road.

64 We have considered the representations received at Stage One. We note that the boundary between the current Keele, Madeley and Whitmore wards is coterminous with existing parish boundaries, and we consider that it defines community identities in the area well. We are reluctant to create small parish wards in order to facilitate borough warding arrangements. Under both the Liberal Democrats' and Keele Parish Council's proposals several additional parish wards would need to be created in order to maintain coterminosity between parish ward boundaries and borough ward boundaries, as required under Schedule 11 to the 1972 Local Government Act. Furthermore, we are concerned that under Keele Parish Council's proposals the Madeley Heath Farm area and the Shutlanehead and The Lymes areas, currently in Madeley and Whitmore wards respectively, would be isolated from the other communities which form part of Keele ward. We are not persuaded that these communities would be better represented under either the Liberal Democrats' or Keele Parish Council's proposals.

65 We consider that, by building on existing parish structures, the Borough Council's proposals would have the advantage of achieving reasonable electoral equality while retaining clear and identifiable boundaries. While we note that under a council size of 60 the Council's proposed Whitmore & Loggerheads ward would have 14 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average by 2004, we consider that its proposals provide the best balance available between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, having regard to community interests and identities in the area. Accordingly, we propose putting forward the Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations. Our proposed two-member Madeley and three-member Whitmore & Loggerheads wards would have 9 per cent and 12 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (9 per cent and 14 per cent more by 2004).

Keele and Silverdale wards

66 Keele and Silverdale wards lie to the west of Newcastle-under-Lyme town and are represented by two and three councillors respectively. Keele ward comprises the parish of Keele, as well as an unparished area to its east and the Parksite area, which is also unparished. Silverdale ward includes the Silverdale and Knutton areas. Both wards are currently under-represented. Keele ward has 12 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, while Silverdale ward has 2 per cent more (13 per cent and 4 per cent more by 2004).

67 The Borough Council proposed dividing the current Silverdale ward to form a new two-member Silverdale & Knutton ward and a new two-member Silverdale & Parksite ward, which would also include the unparished Parksite area, currently in Keele ward. The boundary between the Council's proposed Silverdale & Knutton and Silverdale & Parksite wards would run eastwards along the centre of Church Street from St Luke's Church, to the rear of properties on

the west side of Chapel Street, and along the centre of the High Street and Mill Street. Properties to the north of Keele Road, including the municipal golf course, would be transferred from Silverdale ward to the Council's revised Keele ward. Under the Council's proposals, Keele ward would have 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average, while Silverdale & Knutton and Silverdale & Parksites wards would have 9 per cent and 8 per cent fewer respectively (3 per cent, 8 per cent and 7 per cent fewer by 2004).

68 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, both Keele and Silverdale wards would be enlarged to include parts of surrounding wards, and would retain two and three councillors respectively. The Liberal Democrats proposed including areas of Madeley and Whitmore parishes in a revised Keele ward as discussed previously, and also proposed incorporating the part of the current Silverdale ward to the south of Ashbourne Drive and the part of the current Thistleberry ward to the south of Hands Wood (containing no electors) in Keele ward. The Parksites area, currently in Keele ward, would be transferred to a revised Silverdale ward, which would also include parts of the current Halmerend and Madeley wards to the east of the dismantled railway line, as discussed previously. The Knutton area to the east of Cheviot Close, Oak Road and Church Lane, currently in Silverdale ward, would be transferred to a new Knutton & Holditch ward, as discussed later. Based on a council size of 59, the Liberal Democrats' proposed Keele and Silverdale & Halmer End wards would each have 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, both now and in five years' time.

69 We received two further representations concerning this area. Keele Parish Council argued that the existing Keele ward "comprises two wholly unrelated communities" and supported the Borough Council's proposal to transfer the Parksites area from Keele ward to a new Silverdale & Parksites ward. Under Keele Parish Council's proposals, parts of Madeley and Whitmore parishes would be included in a revised Keele ward, as discussed previously. Parts of Silverdale and Thistleberry wards, adjacent to the eastern boundary of the current Keele ward, would also be included in the proposed Keele ward. The Parish Council estimated that the enlarged Keele ward would contain an additional 100 to 150 electors as a result of its proposals. Staffordshire County Councillor Bill Hughes, member for Silverdale division, argued that the consultation process undertaken by the Borough Council in relation to the Periodic Electoral Review and its proposals for Silverdale had been inadequate.

70 We note that there is a degree of consensus regarding the proposal to include the Parksites area of Keele ward in a revised Silverdale ward, and consider that there is some merit in the proposal. Parksites is a relatively new urban settlement adjacent to Silverdale, and we are content that it shares more significant community ties and communication links with the Silverdale area than with Keele parish. We are also aware that there is significant local support for the creation of a parish council for Silverdale, which would include the Parksites area. However, we are not persuaded that the identities and interests of residents of the area would be appropriately reflected under the Liberal Democrats' proposal to combine Silverdale with part of Halmerend ward and Knutton with part of Holditch ward. As discussed previously, we consider that the largely rural Halmer End and Alsagers Bank areas have little in common with the more urban Silverdale, and are not persuaded that community identities and interests in these areas would be appropriately reflected under the Liberal Democrats' proposals. We are also content that the current Silverdale ward reflects the communities of Silverdale and Knutton well, and consider that Knutton should continue to be combined with Silverdale.

71 We are content to put forward the Borough Council's proposals for Silverdale as part of our draft recommendations, with some minor modifications. We propose uniting all the properties on Mill Street within Silverdale & Knutton ward, and amending the boundary between Silverdale & Knutton and Silverdale & Parkside wards to include properties to the north of Church Street and west of Chapel Street in Silverdale & Parkside ward. Based on a council size of 60, our proposed two-member Silverdale & Knutton and Silverdale & Parkside wards would each have 7 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (6 per cent fewer by 2004).

72 As discussed previously, we are not persuaded that the Liberal Democrats' and Keele Parish Council's proposals for Keele ward would appropriately reflect the identities and interests of surrounding areas. We consider that the M6 motorway forms a clearly identifiable and widely recognised boundary between Keele and Whitmore wards, and are content to retain it as the southern boundary of Keele ward. We recognise that Keele Parish Council would wish to amend the current parish boundary and that this could consequentially change borough ward boundaries. This is not, however, a matter for this review and should be addressed at a further parishing review. We consider that the area to the north of Keele Road, currently in Silverdale ward, shares few communication links with Silverdale and is more easily accessed from Keele, and concur with the Borough Council's proposal to transfer the area to Keele ward. Under our proposals, the two-member Keele ward would have 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (1 per cent fewer by 2004).

Clayton, Seabridge and Westlands wards

73 Clayton, Seabridge and Westlands wards lie in the south of the Newcastle town area, to the south and west of Lyme Brook and east of the A53 Whitmore Road. Clayton ward is situated to the east of the A519 Clayton Road, while Westlands and Seabridge wards lie to the north and south of Sutherland Drive and Dartmouth Avenue respectively. The two-member Clayton and Westlands wards have 2 per cent and 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively, while the three-member Seabridge ward has 20 per cent more (5 per cent and 9 per cent fewer, and 19 per cent more by 2004).

74 The Borough Council proposed only minimal change in this area. Under its proposals, the part of the current Seabridge ward to the north of Seabridge Lane would be transferred to a revised Westlands ward, which would be represented by three councillors, one more than at present. The Council proposed retaining the existing two-member Clayton ward. Based on a council size of 59, Clayton ward would have 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, while the revised Seabridge and Westlands wards would have 6 per cent and 1 per cent fewer respectively (1 per cent more, and 7 per cent and 4 per cent fewer by 2004).

75 The Liberal Democrats again proposed more extensive change in this area. They proposed combining the part of Clayton ward to the south of Clayton Lane and Cornwall Avenue with the part of the current Seabridge ward to the south of Seabridge Lane and east of Guernsey Drive in a new three-member Westbury ward. Under their proposals, the remaining part of Seabridge ward would be combined with the part of Clayton ward to the south of Buckmaster Avenue and the part of the current Westlands ward to the south of Dartmouth Avenue in a new three-member Seabridge & Clayton ward. The remaining parts of Westlands and Clayton wards would be combined with the part of the current Town ward to the east of Lower Street and Pool Dam, and

south of Ryecroft and King Street in a revised Westlands ward which would be represented by three councillors, one more than at present. Based on a council size of 59, the Liberal Democrats' proposed Seabridge & Clayton ward would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor for the borough as a whole, while Westbury and Westlands wards would have 3 per cent and 1 per cent more electors per councillor respectively, both now and in five years' time.

76 We consider that the A519 Clayton Road is a significant boundary, and are not persuaded that the Liberal Democrats' proposals would best reflect the interests of residents on both sides of Clayton Road. We are content that the existing Clayton ward reflects community ties well, and has strong and clearly identifiable boundaries. Furthermore, based on a council size of 60, Clayton ward would provide a reasonable level of electoral equality, and we are therefore content to put forward the Borough Council's proposal to retain the existing Clayton ward as part of our draft recommendations.

77 We also consider that Lyme Brook, which forms the northern boundary of the current Westlands ward, constitutes a significant boundary between the primarily residential Westlands area and the more commercial Town ward, and are not persuaded that sufficient community ties exist between the two areas to justify combining them, as under the Liberal Democrats' proposals. We concur with the Borough Council's proposal to allocate an additional member to an enlarged Westlands ward, and are content to put forward its proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations, with some amendments. We consider that the Guernsey Drive area shares more significant community ties with areas to the north of Seabridge Lane and propose including it in a revised Westlands ward. In order to further improve electoral equality in our proposed Seabridge and Westlands wards, we propose retaining the part of the current Seabridge ward to the east of Roe Lane Playing Fields, including the properties to the north side of Seabridge Lane (to the east of Roe Lane), in our proposed Seabridge ward. We recognise that these proposals depart from those proposed locally at Stage One, and would therefore welcome local views on them at Stage Three. Under our proposals, Clayton, Seabridge and Westlands wards would have 5 per cent more, 4 per cent fewer and equal to the average number of electors per councillor for the borough respectively (2 per cent more, 4 per cent fewer and 3 per cent fewer by 2004).

Thistleberry and Town wards

78 The three-member Thistleberry ward and two-member Town ward cover some of the central parts of Newcastle-under-Lyme town, including the commercial centre and the residential Thistleberry Avenue area. Thistleberry ward is bounded in the south by the A53 Whitmore Road and the M6 motorway, and in the north by the B5044 Silverdale Road. Town ward lies to the north of Thistleberry ward, and its northern boundary follows the dismantled railway line from Knutton Lane to King Street, running to the south of the Newcastle-under-Lyme College. Thistleberry ward has 8 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average at present, and Town ward has 2 per cent more (9 per cent fewer and 2 per cent more by 2004).

79 The Borough Council proposed no change to the existing electoral arrangements of Thistleberry and Town wards, and under a council size of 59 the wards would have 3 per cent fewer and 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (4 per cent fewer and 7 per cent more by 2004).

80 The Liberal Democrats also proposed minimal change to the current Thistleberry ward, transferring the area to the south of Hands Wood (containing no electors) to a revised Keele ward, as discussed previously. Under their proposals, part of the current Town ward would be transferred to an enlarged Westlands ward, as also discussed previously. The remaining part of Town ward to the north of Ryecroft and King Street would be combined with part of the current Cross Heath ward in a revised Cross Heath ward, as discussed later. The Liberal Democrats' proposed three-member Thistleberry ward would have 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average, both now and in five years' time.

81 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We note that there is a degree of consensus regarding the most appropriate warding arrangements for Thistleberry area, but do not consider that the southern area of the current Town ward shares significant community ties with the northern area of Westlands ward, as discussed previously. We consider that the existing electoral arrangements in Thistleberry and Town wards reflect community ties well, and note that under the Borough Council's proposals both wards would continue to have reasonable levels of electoral equality. We are not persuaded that the Liberal Democrats' proposals for this area would better represent community identities and interests than the existing arrangements, and we are therefore content to put forward the Council's proposal to retain the existing electoral arrangements for these wards as part of our draft recommendations.

82 We propose, however, some minor amendments to the northern boundary of Town ward in order to more accurately reflect existing ground detail, as illustrated on the large map inserted at the back of this report. These changes would affect no electors. Our proposed three-member Thistleberry ward would have 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average, while the two-member Town ward would have 10 per cent more (3 per cent fewer and 9 per cent more respectively by 2004).

Cross Heath, May Bank and Wolstanton wards

83 The three-member Cross Heath and May Bank wards and two-member Wolstanton ward cover a substantial residential area north of Newcastle-under-Lyme town centre. Cross Heath ward covers a large area directly to the north of the town's commercial centre, extending from Wilmot Drive in the west to Hoon Avenue, Wulstan Drive and Sandy Lane in the east, and is bounded in the north by Milehouse Lane and Lower Milehouse Lane. May Bank ward lies to the east of Hoon Avenue and Wulstan Drive, and is bounded in the north by Milehouse Lane and in the east by Southlands Avenue and Alexandra Road. Wolstanton ward is bounded in the west by Hassam Parade, in the south by Milehouse Lane and Alexandra Road, and in the north by Dimsdale Parade West, Park Avenue and Pitgreen Lane. Cross Heath and May Bank wards have 12 per cent and 13 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively, while Wolstanton ward has 11 per cent more (14 per cent fewer, 15 per cent fewer and 13 per cent more by 2004).

84 The Borough Council proposed more extensive change in this area. Under its proposals, the part of Holditch ward to the west of Liverpool Road, incorporating Meadow Avenue, Johnson Avenue, Thomas Avenue, Meadow Lane and Lovatt Avenue, would be transferred to a revised Cross Heath ward, and the part of the current Cross Heath ward to the east of Sandy Lane would

be transferred to a revised May Bank ward. Under its proposals, Wolstanton ward would be enlarged to include the part of Holditch ward to the east of Liverpool Road and properties to the south of Dimsdale Parade West, currently in Bradwell ward, and would be represented by three councillors, one more than at present. Based on a council size of 59, the Council's Cross Heath, May Bank and Wolstanton wards would have 2 per cent, 5 per cent and 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (4 per cent, 7 per cent and 4 per cent fewer by 2004).

85 The Liberal Democrats proposed transferring the Wilmot Drive area and the Whitehouse Road area, incorporating Reeves Avenue and Cloverdale Road, from Cross Heath ward to a new three-member Knutton & Holditch ward, as discussed later. They also proposed combining the remaining part of the current Cross Heath ward with the part of Town ward to the north of Ryecroft and King Street, in a revised Cross Heath ward. Under their proposals, the roads adjoining Stratford Avenue (Burleigh Grove, Eltham Gardens, Highfield Grange and Dorridge Grove), currently in Wolstanton ward, would be transferred to a revised May Bank ward, which would also include the part of the current Cross Heath ward to the east of Sandy Lane. The remaining part of Wolstanton ward would be combined with the part of the current Porthill ward to the south of Porthill and Watlands Avenue in a new three-member Wolstanton & Porthill ward. The Liberal Democrats' proposed Cross Heath, May Bank and Wolstanton & Porthill wards would contain 1 per cent more, 1 per cent fewer and 2 per cent more electors per councillor respectively, both now and in five years' time.

86 We note that the Borough Council's and Liberal Democrats' schemes differed with respect to their proposals for the eastern part of Holditch ward around Liverpool Road, and the adjoining areas of Cross Heath ward. While the Liberal Democrats proposed retaining the communities on either side of Liverpool Road within one ward, the Borough Council proposed transferring them into two separate wards, with Liverpool Road as a ward boundary. We consider that the communities on either side of Liverpool Road share significant communications and transport links, and have not been persuaded to put forward the Council's proposals for this area in their entirety. Nevertheless, we consider that there is some merit in both the Council's proposal to unite the areas either side of Lower Milehouse Lane, and the Liberal Democrats' proposal to unite the areas around Milehouse Lane. We consider that these roads are significant communication routes which link those areas to their north with Cross Heath ward to the south. We therefore propose transferring the part of Holditch ward to the east of Talke Road and Redmine Close to a revised three-member Cross Heath ward. This area of Holditch shares few communication links either with the Wolstanton area to its east or with the remaining part of Holditch ward in the north, and we are not persuaded that either of the borough-wide schemes submitted to us reflects the identities and interest of the communities around Milehouse Lane and Lower Milehouse Lane appropriately.

87 In order to further improve electoral equality in Cross Heath ward, we propose transferring the area to the east of the A527 Brampton Road to a revised May Bank ward. We note that the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats proposed transferring only the area to the east of Sandy Lane to May Bank ward, but consider that The Brampton is a well-defined and clearly identifiable geographic community centred on Sandy Lane and Brampton Road, which shares some affinity with May Bank ward and in our view should remain united within one ward. While

both the Council's and the Liberal Democrats' proposals would provide improved levels of electoral equality in May Bank ward, we are not persuaded that their proposals would adequately reflect community ties in this area. We concur with the Liberal Democrats' proposal to unite the area to the north of Stratford Avenue (currently in Wolstanton ward) within May Bank ward. We note that Dorridge Grove, Highfield Grange, Eltham Gardens and Burleigh Grove are currently isolated from the rest of Wolstanton ward, having their sole access from Stratford Avenue, and that they share good communication links with the adjoining part of May Bank ward. We are therefore content to adopt the Liberal Democrats' proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations.

88 We concur with the Borough Council's proposal to allocate an additional councillor to an enlarged Wolstanton ward. However, as discussed previously, we are not persuaded that the Hollinshead Avenue and Harper Avenue area to the west of Hassam Parade should be included in Wolstanton ward, as proposed by the Borough Council. In order to improve electoral equality in Wolstanton ward and more accurately reflect communities in the area, we propose uniting both sides of Dimsdale Parade West and Park Avenue within Wolstanton ward, and transferring the part of Porthill ward to the south of Oaklands Avenue to our revised three-member Wolstanton ward. This area shares common characteristics with the Wolstanton area to the south. In order to further improve electoral equality in both May Bank and Wolstanton wards, we also propose transferring the part of May Bank ward to the north of Sparch Hollow to our revised Wolstanton ward. We note that this area shares reasonably good communication links with the rest of Wolstanton ward, in addition to achieving improved electoral equality.

89 Under our proposals, Cross Heath and Wolstanton wards would have 1 per cent and 7 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively, while May Bank ward would have 9 per cent more (5 per cent fewer, 6 per cent fewer and 7 per cent more by 2004). In order to more accurately reflect existing ground detail we also propose some minor amendments to the western boundary of Cross Heath ward, affecting no electors, as illustrated on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Bradwell and Porthill wards

90 Bradwell and Porthill wards in the north of Newcastle-under-Lyme town lie to the east of the A34 Talke Road, and are represented by three and two councillors respectively. Bradwell ward is bounded in the south by Dimsdale Parade West, and in the south-east by Clare Avenue. Porthill ward lies to the north of Pitgreen Lane, Park Avenue and Dimsdale Parade West, and is bounded in the west by Clare Avenue. The boundary between the current Porthill and Bradwell wards runs to the north of Beaconsfield, The Limes and Melvyn Crescent and follows the A500 trunk road boundary to the borough boundary. Under the current electoral arrangements, Bradwell and Porthill wards have 1 per cent and 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1 per cent more and 4 per cent fewer by 2004).

91 The Borough Council proposed only minimal change in this area, retaining the existing electoral arrangements for Porthill ward, and transferring properties on the south side of Dimsdale Parade West from Bradwell ward to Wolstanton ward, as discussed previously. Under the Council's proposals, the three-member Bradwell and two-member Porthill wards would each have 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (4 per cent and 1 per cent more by 2004).

92 The Liberal Democrats proposed more extensive change to this area, transferring the part of Bradwell ward to the south of Bradwell Lane, including both sides Clare Avenue, to a revised Chesterton ward, as discussed later, and combining the remaining part of Bradwell ward with the part of Porthill ward to the north of Watlands Avenue and Porthill in a revised three-member Bradwell ward. The remaining part of the current Porthill ward would be transferred to a new Wolstanton & Porthill ward, as discussed previously. Based on a council size of 59, the Liberal Democrats' Bradwell ward would have 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, both now and in five years' time.

93 We consider that the A34 Talke Road continues to form a strong community boundary in the north of Newcastle-under-Lyme town, and that the Bradwell area shares few community ties with Chesterton and Holditch to its west. We are not persuaded that the Liberal Democrats' proposed Chesterton ward would adequately reflect the distinct identities and interests of the area of Bradwell ward to the south of Bradwell Lane. We note that the existing electoral arrangements of Bradwell and Porthill wards appear to reflect the identities and interests of communities in the area well, and would continue to have reasonable levels of electoral equality under a council size of 60. However, as a result of our proposals for Wolstanton ward, as discussed previously, Porthill ward would be over-represented, and in order to improve electoral equality we propose transferring part of Bradwell ward to a revised Porthill ward. Under our proposals, Bradwell Grange would be united with the eastern side of Clare Avenue in Porthill ward, and Doulton Drive and Jasper Close, which are accessed from Bradwell Lane, would also be included in Porthill ward. We also propose a further minor amendment to unite St Lucy's Drive, Beaconsfield and Second Avenue within Bradwell ward.

94 Based on a council size of 60, our proposed three-member Bradwell ward would have 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, while the two-member Porthill ward would have 5 per cent fewer (5 per cent more and 6 per cent fewer by 2004).

Chesterton and Holditch wards

95 Chesterton and Holditch wards in the north of Newcastle-under-Lyme town are currently represented by three and two councillors respectively. Chesterton ward lies to the west of the A34 Talke Road, and is bounded in the south by Apedale Road, Castle Street and Wolstanton Road. Located to the south of Wolstanton Road, Holditch ward includes the Broad Meadow and Church Fields areas and Wolstanton Golf Course, and is bounded in the east by Hassam Parade. Its southern boundary follows Milehouse Lane and Lower Milehouse Lane, and runs to the north of Wilmot Drive and to the west of Weston Close. Chesterton ward has 24 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, while Holditch ward has 10 per cent fewer (27 per cent more and 14 per cent fewer by 2004).

96 As discussed previously, the Borough Council proposed transferring parts of the current Holditch ward to its revised Cross Heath and Wolstanton wards. Under its proposals, the remaining part of Holditch ward would be combined with the part of Chesterton ward to the south of Albert Street, Brittain Avenue and Rowley Avenue in a revised Holditch ward. The Council's revised Chesterton ward would also include the unparished area currently in the eastern part of Audley & Bignall End ward. Under the Council's proposals, the two-member Holditch ward would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor for the borough as a whole, while the three-member Chesterton ward would have 5 per cent more than the average (2 per cent fewer and 8 per cent more by 2004).

97 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, the part of Chesterton ward to the north of Apedale Road, Victoria Street and Brick Kiln Lane would be combined with the unparished area in the east of Audley & Bignall ward in a new three-member Chesterton North ward. The remaining part of Chesterton ward would be combined with the part of Bradwell ward to the south of Bradwell Lane and west of Clare Avenue, and the part of Holditch ward to the north of Lomer Road, in a revised Chesterton ward. The remaining part of Holditch ward would be combined with parts of Cross Heath ward, as discussed previously, and the Knutton area of Silverdale ward to the east of Cheviot Close, Oak Road and Church Lane in a new three-member Knutton & Holditch ward. The Liberal Democrats' proposed Chesterton and Chesterton North wards would each have equal to the average number of electors per councillor for the borough as a whole, while Knutton & Holditch ward would have 3 per cent more, both now and in five years' time.

98 We recognise that the existing levels of electoral inequality in Chesterton and Holditch wards are such that maintaining the current electoral arrangements would be unacceptable. While the Liberal Democrats' proposals would achieve improved levels of electoral equality, we are not persuaded that they would adequately reflect the diverse identities and interests of the various communities in the northern part of Newcastle-under-Lyme town. Under their proposals, Broad Meadow and Church Fields and the Knutton and Lower Milehouse Lane areas would be combined in a new Knutton & Holditch ward. We note that these areas are physically separated by the Holditch Road and Byrmbro Road industrial sites and Wolstanton Golf Course, and we are not persuaded that they share significant community ties or substantial communication links. Similarly, as discussed previously, the Liberal Democrats' revised Chesterton ward would breach the A34 Talke Road, combining several diverse and geographically detached areas of the current Holditch, Chesterton and Bradwell wards.

99 We consider that the Borough Council's proposals for this area would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the Liberal Democrats' scheme, and are content to adopt their proposals as part of our draft recommendations. We note that the Beasley area shares good communication links with Holditch ward through London Road and Wolstanton Road, and consider that the Council's proposals would reflect community identities in this area well. In particular, its proposals would have the advantage of uniting Wolstanton Road and adjoining roads (Springfield Close, Haddon Grove, Farcroft Avenue, Dimsdale View, Bamber Place and Rosendale Avenue) within Holditch ward. We also concur with the proposal to transfer the unparished area in the east of Audley & Bignall End ward to Chesterton ward, as put forward by both the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats, thereby uniting those areas accessed from the B5500 Audley Road within Chesterton ward. Based on a council size of 60,

our proposed three-member Chesterton ward and two-member Holditch ward would have 7 per cent and 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (9 per cent more and equal to the average by 2004).

Electoral Cycle

100 At Stage One we received no proposals for change to the existing electoral cycle of the borough. The Liberal Democrats noted that their proposal, which would provide for a predominance of three-member wards, would allow for the continuation of elections by thirds. The Borough Council made no comment in relation to the electoral cycle of the borough. At present there appears to be no demand for a change to the current electoral cycle, and accordingly we do not propose recommending change to the present system of elections by thirds.

Conclusions

101 Having considered all the evidence and representations received during the initial stage of the review, we propose that:

- there should be an increase in council size from 56 to 60;
- there should be 24 wards, one more than at present;
- the boundaries of 20 of the existing wards should be modified;
- elections should continue to be held by thirds.

102 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the Borough Council's proposals, but propose to depart from them in the following areas:

- We propose that the boundaries between Butt Lane, Kidsgrove and Newchapel wards should be amended and a new two-member Ravenscliffe ward should be created in order to improve electoral equality in the Kidsgrove area.
- In Newcastle-under-Lyme town we propose amending the Borough Council's proposals in some areas to improve electoral equality and better reflect community identities.

103 Figure 5 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1999 electorate figures and with forecast electorates for the year 2004.

Figure 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

| | 1999 electorate | | 2004 forecast electorate | |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| | Current arrangements | Draft recommendations | Current arrangements | Draft recommendations |
| Number of councillors | 56 | 60 | 56 | 60 |
| Number of wards | 23 | 24 | 23 | 24 |
| Average number of electors per councillor | 1,679 | 1,567 | 1,637 | 1,528 |
| Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average | 10 | 1 | 10 | 1 |
| Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |

104 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from 10 to one. By 2004 only one ward is forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough.

Draft Recommendation

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council should comprise 60 councillors serving 24 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

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

106 The parish of Audley Rural is currently served by 15 councillors representing three wards: Audley, Bignall End and Halmerend. Each ward returns five councillors. We propose amending the boundary between Halmerend parish ward and Audley and Bignall End parish wards to reflect the proposed boundary between Audley & Bignall End and Halmerend borough wards. At Stage One, Audley Rural Parish Council requested that its parish councillors be redistributed in order to more accurately reflect the distribution of the electorate between the current three wards, and we are content to put this forward for the purposes of consultation.

Draft Recommendation

Audley Rural Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Audley (returning four councillors), Bignall End (six councillors) and Halmerend (five councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated on Maps A3 and A4 in Appendix A.

107 Kidsgrove Town Council is currently served by 23 councillors representing four wards. Butt Lane, Kidsgrove and Newchapel wards currently return six councillors each, and Talke ward returns five councillors. In our draft recommendations we proposed increasing the number of borough councillors representing Kidsgrove from 11 to 12. We also proposed revising the boundaries between the four existing borough wards and creating a new Ravenscliffe ward. As a consequence of our draft recommendations we propose increasing the number of councillors serving Kidsgrove Town Council by one to 24, and amending the boundaries between Butt Lane, Kidsgrove and Newchapel parish wards to reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries. The number of town councillors representing each parish ward would reflect the number of borough councillors to which it is entitled.

Draft Recommendation

Kidsgrove Town Council should comprise 24 councillors, one more than at present, representing five wards: Butt Lane (returning six councillors), Kidsgrove (six councillors), Newchapel (four councillors), Ravenscliffe (four councillors) and Talke (four councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated on Maps A3 and A4 in Appendix A.

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

Draft Recommendation

For parish and town councils, elections should continue to be held at the same time as elections for the principal authority.

109 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Newcastle-under-Lyme and welcome comments from the Borough Council and others relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, electoral cycle, ward names, and parish and town council electoral arrangements. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

Map 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Newcastle-under-Lyme

5 NEXT STEPS

110 We are putting forward draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Newcastle-under-Lyme. Now it is up to the people of the area. We will take fully into account all representations received by 3 July 2000. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment at the offices of the Commission and the Borough Council, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission after the end of the consultation period.

111 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

Review Manager
Newcastle-under-Lyme Review
Local Government Commission for England
Dolphyn Court
10/11 Great Turnstile
London WC1V 7JU

Fax: 020 7404 6142

E-mail: reviews@lgce.gov.uk

Website: www.lgce.gov.uk

112 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to the Secretary of State, who cannot make an order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after he receives them.

APPENDIX A

Draft Recommendations for Newcastle-under-Lyme: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for the Newcastle-under-Lyme area.

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the borough and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail in Maps A2 to A4 and the large map at the back of the report.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding arrangements in the Kidsgrove area.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed boundary between Audley & Bignall End and Halmerend wards (western part).

Map A4 illustrates the proposed boundary between Audley & Bignall End and Halmerend wards (eastern part).

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Newcastle-under-Lyme town.

Map A1: Draft Recommendations for Newcastle-under-Lyme: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Warding of Kidsgrove

Map A3: Proposed Boundary Between Audley & Bignall End and Halmerend Wards (Western Part)

Map A4: Proposed Boundary Between Audley & Bignall End and Halmerend Wards (Eastern Part)

APPENDIX B

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Our draft recommendations detailed in Figures 1 and 2 differ from those put forward by the Borough Council only in 12 wards, where the Council's proposals were as follows:

Figure B1: Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council's Proposal: Constituent Areas

| Ward name | Constituent areas |
|--|--|
| Bradwell (in Newcastle-under-Lyme) | Bradwell ward (part); Porthill ward (part) |
| Butt Lane | Butt Lane ward (Butt Lane ward of Kidsgrove parish); Kidsgrove ward (part – Kidsgrove ward of Kidsgrove parish (part)) |
| Cross Heath (in Newcastle-under-Lyme) | Cross Heath ward (part); Holditch ward (part) |
| Kidsgrove | Kidsgrove ward (part – Kidsgrove ward of Kidsgrove parish (part)); Newchapel ward (part – Newchapel ward of Kidsgrove parish (part)) |
| May Bank (in Newcastle-under-Lyme) | Cross Heath ward (part); May Bank ward (part); Wolstanton ward (part) |
| Newchapel | Newchapel ward (part – Newchapel ward of Kidsgrove parish (part)) |
| Porthill (in Newcastle-under-Lyme) | <i>Unchanged</i> |
| Seabridge (in Newcastle-under-Lyme) | Seabridge ward (part) |
| Silverdale & Knutton (in Newcastle-under-Lyme) | Silverdale ward (part) |
| Silverdale & Parksite (in Newcastle-under-Lyme) | Keele ward (part – unparished area); Silverdale ward (part) |
| Westlands (in Newcastle-under-Lyme) | Seabridge ward (part); Westlands ward (part) |
| Wolstanton (in Newcastle-under-Lyme) | Bradwell ward (part); Holditch ward (part); Wolstanton ward (part) |

Figure B2: Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council's Proposal: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

| Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (1999) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2004) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Bradwell | 3 | 4,905 | 1,635 | 3 | 4,861 | 1,620 | 4 |
| Butt Lane | 3 | 5,087 | 1,696 | 6 | 4,986 | 1,662 | 7 |
| Cross Heath | 3 | 4,710 | 1,570 | -2 | 4,458 | 1,486 | -4 |
| Kidsgrove | 3 | 5,341 | 1,780 | 12 | 5,173 | 1,724 | 11 |
| May Bank | 3 | 4,550 | 1,517 | -5 | 4,328 | 1,443 | -7 |
| Newchapel | 3 | 4,553 | 1,518 | -5 | 4,719 | 1,573 | 1 |
| Porthill | 2 | 3,268 | 1,634 | 3 | 3,141 | 1,571 | 1 |
| Seabridge | 3 | 4,487 | 1,496 | -6 | 4,356 | 1,452 | -7 |
| Silverdale & Knutton | 2 | 2,898 | 1,449 | -9 | 2,870 | 1,435 | -8 |
| Silverdale & Parksite | 2 | 2,928 | 1,464 | -8 | 2,895 | 1,448 | -7 |
| Westlands | 3 | 4,732 | 1,577 | -1 | 4,484 | 1,495 | -4 |
| Wolstanton | 3 | 4,555 | 1,518 | -5 | 4,455 | 1,485 | -4 |

Source: Electorate figures are based on Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council's submission.

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

Newcastle-under-Lyme Liberal Democrat Party's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Figure B3: Newcastle-under-Lyme Liberal Democrat Party's Proposal: Constituent Areas

| Ward name | Constituent areas |
|--|--|
| Audley & Bignall End | Audley & Bignall End ward (part – Audley ward of Audley Rural parish (part)); Bignall End ward of Audley Rural parish); Halmerend ward (part – Halmerend ward of Audley Rural parish (part)) |
| Bradwell | Bradwell ward (part); Porthill ward (part) |
| Chesterton | Bradwell ward (part); Chesterton ward (part); Holditch ward (part) |
| Chesterton North | Audley & Bignall End ward (part – unparished area); Chesterton ward (part) |
| Cross Heath | Cross Heath ward (part); Town ward (part) |
| East Kidsgrove | Butt Lane ward (part – Butt Lane ward of Kidsgrove parish (part)); Kidsgrove ward (part – Kidsgrove ward of Kidsgrove parish (part)); Newchapel ward (part – Newchapel ward of Kidsgrove parish (part)) |
| Keele | Halmerend ward (part – Halmerend ward of Audley Rural parish (part)); Keele ward (part – Keele parish (part)); Madeley ward (part – Madeley parish (part)); Silverdale ward (part); Thistleberry ward (part); Whitmore ward (part – Whitmore parish (part)) |
| Knutton & Holditch | Cross Heath ward (part); Holditch ward (part); Silverdale ward (part) |
| Loggerheads & Whitmore | Loggerheads ward (Loggerheads parish); Whitmore ward (part – Chapel & Hill Chorlton parish, Maer parish and Whitmore parish (part)) |
| Madeley, Wrinehill, Betley & Balterley | Audley & Bignall End ward (part – Audley ward of Audley Rural parish (part)); Halmerend ward (part – Balterley parish, Betley parish and Halmerend ward of Audley Rural parish (part)); Madeley ward (part – Madeley parish (part)); Whitmore ward (part – Whitmore parish (part)) |
| May Bank | Cross Heath ward (part); May Bank Ward (part); Wolstanton ward (part) |
| Newchapel | Newchapel ward (part – Newchapel ward of Kidsgrove parish (part)) |
| Seabridge & Clayton | Clayton ward (part); Seabridge ward (part); Westlands ward (part) |
| Silverdale & Halmer End | Halmerend ward (part – Halmerend ward of Audley Rural parish (part) and unparished area); Keele ward (part – unparished area (part)); Madeley ward (part – Madeley parish (part)); Silverdale ward (part) |
| Talke | Butt Lane ward (part – Butt Lane ward of Kidsgrove parish (part)); Talke ward (part – Talke ward of Kidsgrove parish (part)) |
| Thistleberry | Thistleberry ward (part) |
| West Kidsgrove | Butt Lane ward (part – Butt Lane ward of Kidsgrove parish (part)); Kidsgrove ward (part – Kidsgrove ward of Kidsgrove parish (part)) |
| Westbury | Clayton ward (part); Seabridge ward (part) |
| Westlands | Clayton ward (part); Westlands ward (part); Town ward (part) |
| Wolstanton & Porthill | Porthill ward (part); Wolstanton ward (part) |

Figure B4: Newcastle-under-Lyme Liberal Democrat Party's Proposal: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

| Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (1999) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2004) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|--|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Audley & Bignall End | 3 | 5,023 | 1,674 | 5 | 4,897 | 1,632 | 5 |
| Bradwell | 3 | 4,972 | 1,657 | 4 | 4,848 | 1,616 | 4 |
| Chesterton | 3 | 4,805 | 1,602 | 0 | 4,685 | 1,562 | 0 |
| Chesterton North | 3 | 4,772 | 1,591 | 0 | 4,653 | 1,551 | 0 |
| Cross Heath | 3 | 4,836 | 1,612 | 1 | 4,715 | 1,572 | 1 |
| East Kidsgrove | 3 | 4,498 | 1,499 | -6 | 4,386 | 1,462 | -6 |
| Keele | 2 | 3,286 | 1,643 | 3 | 3,204 | 1,602 | 3 |
| Knutton & Holditch | 3 | 4,907 | 1,636 | 3 | 4,784 | 1,595 | 3 |
| Loggerheads & Whitmore | 3 | 4,867 | 1,622 | 2 | 4,745 | 1,582 | 2 |
| Madeley, Wrinehill, Betley & Balterley | 3 | 4,694 | 1,565 | -2 | 4,577 | 1,526 | -2 |
| May Bank | 3 | 4,713 | 1,571 | -1 | 4,595 | 1,532 | -1 |
| Newchapel | 3 | 4,556 | 1,519 | -5 | 4,442 | 1,481 | -5 |
| Seabridge & Clayton | 3 | 4,779 | 1,593 | 0 | 4,659 | 1,553 | 0 |
| Silverdale & Halmer End | 3 | 4,924 | 1,641 | 3 | 4,801 | 1,600 | 3 |
| Talke | 3 | 4,566 | 1,522 | -5 | 4,452 | 1,484 | -5 |
| Thistleberry | 3 | 4,645 | 1,548 | -3 | 4,529 | 1,510 | -3 |
| West Kidsgrove | 3 | 4,572 | 1,524 | -4 | 4,458 | 1,486 | -4 |
| Westbury | 3 | 4,908 | 1,636 | 3 | 4,785 | 1,595 | 3 |
| Westlands | 3 | 4,837 | 1,612 | 1 | 4,716 | 1,572 | 1 |
| Wolstanton & Porthill | 3 | 4,884 | 1,628 | 2 | 4,762 | 1,587 | 2 |
| Totals | 59 | 94,044 | – | – | 91,693 | – | – |
| Averages | – | – | 1,594 | – | – | 1,554 | – |

Source: Electorate figures are based on Newcastle-under-Lyme Liberal Democrats Party's submission.

Notes: 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. Individual ward electorate figures for 2004 have been derived by applying the rate of change in electorate for the borough as a whole over five years to each individual current ward electorate figure.

APPENDIX C

The Statutory Provisions

Local Government Act 1992: the Commission's Role

1 Section 13(2) of the Local Government Act 1992 places a duty on the Commission to undertake periodic electoral reviews of each principal local authority area in England, and to make recommendations to the Secretary of State. Section 13(3) provides that, so far as reasonably practicable, the first such review of any area should be undertaken not less than 10 years, and not more than 15 years, after this Commission's predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), submitted an initial electoral review report on the county within which that area, or the larger part of the area, was located. This timetable applies to districts within shire and metropolitan counties, although not to South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear¹. Nor does the timetable apply to London boroughs; the 1992 Act is silent on the timing of periodic electoral reviews in Greater London. Nevertheless, these areas will be included in the Commission's review programme. The Commission has no power to review the electoral arrangements of the City of London.

2 Under section 13(5) of the 1992 Act, the Commission is required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State for any changes to the electoral arrangements within the areas of English principal authorities as appear desirable to it, having regard to the need to:

- (a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
- (b) secure effective and convenient local government.

3 In reporting to the Secretary of State, the Commission may make recommendations for such changes to electoral arrangements as are specified in section 14(4) of the 1992 Act. In relation to principal authorities, these are:

- the total number of councillors to be elected to the council;
- the number and boundaries of electoral areas (wards or divisions);
- the number of councillors to be elected for each electoral area, and the years in which they are to be elected; and
- the name of any electoral area.

¹ The Local Government Boundary Commission did not submit reports on the counties of South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear.

4 Unlike the LGBC, the Commission may also make recommendations for changes in respect of electoral arrangements within parish and town council areas. Accordingly, in relation to parish or town councils within a principal authority's area, the Commission may make recommendations relating to:

- the number of councillors;
- the need for parish wards;
- the number and boundaries of any such wards;
- the number of councillors to be elected for any such ward or, in the case of a common parish, for each parish; and
- the name of any such ward.

5 In conducting the review, section 27 of the 1992 Act requires the Commission to comply, so far as is practicable, with the rules given in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 for the conduct of electoral reviews.

Local Government Act 1972: Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements

6 By virtue of section 27 of the Local Government Act 1992, in undertaking a review of electoral arrangements the Commission is required to comply so far as is reasonably practicable with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. For ease of reference, those provisions of Schedule 11 which are relevant to this review are set out below.

7 In relation to shire districts:

Having regard to any changes in the number or distribution of the local government electors of the district likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration (by the Secretary of State or the Commission):

- (a) the ratio of the number of local government electors to the number of councillors to be elected shall be, as nearly as may be, the same in every ward in the district;
- (b) in a district every ward of a parish council shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district;
- (c) in a district every parish which is not divided into parish wards shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district.

8 The Schedule also provides that, subject to (a)–(c) above, regard should be had to:

- (d) the desirability of fixing ward boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (e) any local ties which would be broken by the fixing of any particular ward boundary.

9 The Schedule provides that, in considering whether a parish should be divided into wards, regard shall be had to whether:

- (f) the number or distribution of electors in the parish is such as to make a single election of parish councillors impracticable or inconvenient; and
- (g) it is desirable that any area or areas of the parish should be separately represented on the parish council.

10 Where it is decided to divide any such parish into parish wards, in considering the size and boundaries of the wards and fixing the number of parish councillors to be elected for each ward, regard shall be had to:

- (h) any change in the number or distribution of electors of the parish which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration;
- (i) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (j) any local ties which will be broken by the fixing of any particular boundaries.

10 Where it is decided not to divide the parish into parish wards, in fixing the number of councillors to be elected for each parish regard shall be had to the number and distribution of electors of the parish and any change which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the fixing of the number of parish councillors.