

LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND

FINAL
RECOMMENDATIONS
ON THE FUTURE
ELECTORAL
ARRANGEMENTS FOR
HAMBLETON
IN NORTH YORKSHIRE

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

November 1999

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Hambleton in North Yorkshire.

Members of the Commission are:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)

Professor Michael Clarke (Deputy Chairman)

Peter Brokenshire

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Robert Hughes CBE

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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CONTENTS

	page
LETTER TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE	<i>v</i>
SUMMARY	<i>vii</i>
1 INTRODUCTION	<i>1</i>
2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS	<i>3</i>
3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>9</i>
4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION	<i>11</i>
5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>13</i>
6 NEXT STEPS	<i>35</i>
APPENDIX	
A Final Recommendations for Hambleton: Detailed Mapping	<i>37</i>

A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Northallerton and Romanby is inserted inside the back cover of the report.



Local Government Commission for England

30 November 1999

Dear Secretary of State

On 3 November 1998 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Hambleton under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in May 1999 and undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation and have confirmed our draft recommendations in their entirety (see paragraphs 144-145). This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Hambleton.

We recommend that Hambleton District Council should be served by 44 councillors representing 30 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that the Council should continue to hold elections every four years.

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

I would like to thank members and officers of the District Council and other local people who have contributed to the review. Their co-operation and assistance have been very much appreciated by Commissioners and staff.

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Hambleton on 3 November 1998. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 25 May 1999, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

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

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

- **in 17 of the 34 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district, and six wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2003 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 18 wards and by more than 20 per cent in six wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 144-145) are that:

- **Hambleton District Council should have 44 councillors, three fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 30 wards, instead of 34 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 22 of the existing wards should be modified and 12 wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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

- **In 29 of the proposed 30 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**

- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in only two wards expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2003; Bedale and Great Ayton wards would each have an electoral variance of 11 per cent.**

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

- **revised warding for the parish of Northallerton and a redistribution of its town councillors;**
- **an increase in the number of councillors serving Appleton Wiske Parish Council.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 11 January 2000:

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

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

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1 Bedale	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Bedale parish and Aiskew parish ward of Aiskew parish)
2 Brompton	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Brompton parish)
3 Broughton & Greenhow	1	Broughton & Greenhow ward (part – the parishes of Great & Little Broughton, Ingleby Greenhow and Kirkby)
4 Cowtons	1	The Cowtons ward (part – the parishes of Birkby, Deighton, East Cowton, Girsby, Great Smeaton, Hornby, Little Smeaton, Over Dinsdale and South Cowton); Appleton Wiske ward (part – the parishes of High Worsall and Little Worsall)
5 Crakehall	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Ainderby Mires with Holtby, Burril with Cowling, Clifton-on-Yore, Crakehall, Firby, Hackforth, Langthorne, Rand Grange, Rookwith, Snape with Thorp, Thirn and Thornton Watlass)
6 Easingwold	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Easingwold parish)
7 Great Ayton	3	Great Ayton ward (the parishes of Great Ayton and Little Ayton); Broughton & Greenhow ward (part – the parishes of Easby and Kildale)
8 Helperby	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Birdforth, Brafferton, Fawdington, Helperby, Myton-on-Swale, Raskelf, Tholthorpe and Thormanby)
9 Huby & Sutton	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Huby and Sutton-on-the-Forest)
10 Leeming	1	Leeming ward (the parishes of Burneston, Exelby, Leeming & Newton, Gatenby, Swainby with Allerthorpe and Theakston); Tanfield ward (part – Carthorpe parish)
11 Leeming Bar	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Killerby, Kirkby Fleetham with Fencote and Scruton, and Leeming Bar parish ward of Aiskew parish)
12 Morton on Swale	1	Morton-on-Swale ward (the parishes of Ainderby Steeple, Danby Wiske, Great Langton, Kiplin, Lazenby, Little Langton, Morton-on-Swale, North Otterington, Thrintoft, Warlaby, Whitwell and Yafforth); The Cowtons ward (part – Hutton Bonville parish)
13 Northallerton Broomfield	2	Romanby Broomfield ward (Broomfield parish ward of Romanby parish); Northallerton West ward (part – part of West parish ward of Northallerton parish)

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

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
14	Northallerton Central	2	Northallerton South East ward (South East parish ward of Northallerton parish); Northallerton West ward (part – part of West parish ward of Northallerton parish)
15	Northallerton North	2	Northallerton North East ward (North East parish ward of Northallerton parish); Northallerton West ward (part – part of West parish ward of Northallerton parish)
16	Osmotherley	1	Osmotherley ward (the parishes of Ellerbeck, Kepwick, Kirby Sigston, Landmoth-cum-Catto, Nether Silton, Osmotherley, Over Silton, Sowerby-under-Cotcliffe, Thimbleby, West Harlsey and Winton, Stank & Hallikeld); Appleton Wiske ward (part – the parishes of East Harlsey and Welbury)
17	Romanby	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Romanby parish ward of Romanby parish)
18	Rudby	2	Rudby ward (the parishes of Crathorne, Hutton Rudby, Middleton-on-Leven, Picton, Potto, Rudby, Sexhow and Skutterskelfe); Appleton Wiske ward (part – the parishes of Appleton Wiske, East Rounton and West Rounton)
19	Shipton	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Beninbrough, Linton-on-Ouse, Newton-on-Ouse, Overton and Shipton)
20	Sowerby	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Sowerby parish)
21	Stillington	1	Stillington ward (the parishes of Brandsby-cum-Stearsby, Dalby-cum-Skewsby, Farlington, Marton-cum-Moxby, Stillington and Whenby); Crayke ward (part – the parishes of Crayke and Yearsley)
22	Stokesley	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Newby, Seamer and Stokesley)
23	Swainby	1	Swainby ward (the parishes of Carlton, Faceby, Great Busby, Ingleby Arncliffe, Little Busby and Whorlton); Broughton & Greenhow ward (part – Bilsdale Midcable parish)
24	Tanfield	1	Tanfield ward (part – the parishes of East Tanfield, Howgrave, Kirklington-cum-Upsland, Sutton with Howgrave, Well and West Tanfield); Carlton Miniott ward (part – the parishes of Ainderby Quernhow, Holme, Howe, Pickhill with Roxby and Sinderby)
25	Thirsk	3	Thirsk ward (Thirsk parish); Carlton Miniott ward (part – Carlton Miniott parish)

continued overleaf

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

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
26 Thorntons	1	The Thorntons ward (the parishes of Cotcliffe, Crosby, Kirby Wiske, Maunby, Newby Wiske, Newsham with Breckenbrough, South Otterington, Thornton le Beans, Thornton-le-Moor and Thornton-le-Street); Carlton Miniott ward (part – Sandhutton parish)
27 Tollerton	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Aldwark, Alne, Flawith, Tollerton and Youlton)
28 Topcliffe	1	Topcliffe ward (the parishes of Catton, Dalton, Eldmire with Crakehill, Hutton-Sessay, Sessay and Topcliffe); Carlton Miniott ward (part – Skipton-on-Swale parish)
29 White Horse	1	Whitestonecliffe ward (part – the parishes of Angram Grange, Bagby, Balk, Carlton Husthwaite, Kilburn High & Low, Thirkleby High & Low with Osgodby and Wildon Grange); Crayke ward (part – the parishes of Coxwold, Husthwaite, Newburgh, Oulston and Thornton-on-the-Hill)
30 Whitestonecliffe	1	Whitestonecliffe ward (part – the parishes of Hood Grange, Sutton-under-Whitestonecliffe and Thirlby); Hillside ward (the parishes of Boltby, Borrowby, Cowesby, Felixkirk, Kirby Knowle, Knayton with Brawith, Leake, North Kilvington, South Kilvington, Thornbrough and Upsall)

Notes: 1 The whole of Hambleton district is parished.

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

Figure 2:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Hambleton

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Bedale	2	3,257	1,629	8	3,470	1,735	11
2 Brompton	1	1,665	1,665	11	1,700	1,700	9
3 Broughton & Greenhow	1	1,396	1,396	-7	1,432	1,432	-9
4 Cowtons	1	1,506	1,506	0	1,558	1,558	-1
5 Crakehall	1	1,399	1,399	-7	1,451	1,451	-7
6 Easingwold	2	3,226	1,613	7	3,430	1,715	10
7 Great Ayton	3	4,055	1,352	-10	4,176	1,392	-11
8 Helperby	1	1,392	1,392	-7	1,416	1,416	-10
9 Huby & Sutton	1	1,534	1,534	2	1,588	1,588	1
10 Leeming	1	1,621	1,621	8	1,664	1,664	6
11 Leeming Bar	1	1,445	1,445	-4	1,521	1,521	-3
12 Morton on Swale	1	1,370	1,370	-9	1,415	1,415	-10
13 Northallerton Broomfield	2	3,284	1,642	9	3,436	1,718	10
14 Northallerton Central	2	3,298	1,649	10	3,446	1,723	10
15 Northallerton North	2	3,099	1,550	3	3,213	1,607	3
16 Osmotherley	1	1,504	1,504	0	1,549	1,549	-1
17 Romanby	2	2,842	1,421	-5	3,000	1,500	-4
18 Rudby	2	2,957	1,479	-2	3,031	1,516	-3
19 Shipton	1	1,581	1,581	5	1,650	1,650	5
20 Sowerby	2	2,996	1,498	0	3,250	1,625	4
21 Stillington	1	1,541	1,541	3	1,594	1,594	2
22 Stokesley	3	4,379	1,460	-3	4,583	1,528	-2

continued overleaf

Figure 2 (continued):
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Hambleton

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
23 Swainby	1	1,523	1,523	1	1,570	1,570	0
24 Tanfield	1	1,389	1,389	-7	1,427	1,427	-9
25 Thirsk	3	4,257	1,419	-5	4,500	1,500	-4
26 Thorntons	1	1,500	1,500	0	1,551	1,551	-1
27 Tollerton	1	1,346	1,346	-10	1,410	1,410	-10
28 Topcliffe	1	1,575	1,575	5	1,662	1,662	6
29 White Horse	1	1,558	1,558	4	1,601	1,601	2
30 Whitestonecliffe	1	1,558	1,558	4	1,612	1,612	3
Totals	44	66,053	—	—	68,906	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,501	—	—	1,566	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Hambleton District Council.

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

1. INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Hambleton in North Yorkshire. We have now reviewed the districts in North Yorkshire (excluding York) as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all principal local authority areas in England. (We expect to undertake a PER of York unitary authority in 2000/1.)

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Hambleton. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in September 1978 (Report No. 293). The electoral arrangements of North Yorkshire County Council were last reviewed in August 1984 (Report No. 477). We intend reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements in due course.

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

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

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

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

6 In our *Guidance* we state that we wish wherever possible to build on schemes which have been prepared locally on the basis of careful and effective consultation. Local interests are normally in a better position to judge what council size and ward configuration are most likely to secure effective and

convenient local government in their areas, while allowing proper reflection of the identities and interests of local communities.

7 Second, 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 arise only in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

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

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

¹⁰ Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1998/99 PER programme, including the North Yorkshire 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 March 1998 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State's intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas.

¹¹ This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 3 November 1998, when we wrote to Hambleton District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified North Yorkshire County Council, North Yorkshire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Yorkshire Local Councils Association, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament and the Members of the European Parliament for the Yorkshire & Humber region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 8 December 1998. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

¹² Stage Three began on 25 May 1999 with the publication of our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Hambleton in North Yorkshire*, and ended on 19 July 1999. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2. CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

13 The district of Hambleton lies between the North York Moors and the Yorkshire Dales and takes its name from the Hambleton Hills. The district covers some 500 square miles and has a population of approximately 85,000 (February 1998). It comprises the county town of Northallerton together with the other market towns of Bedale, Easingwold, Stokesley and Thirsk, and the large surrounding rural area with its numerous villages. The district contains 178 parishes, and is totally parished.

14 The district is served by two main trunk roads – the A1(M) and the A19 – which provide access to Scotland, Newcastle and York. The A19 runs the full length of Hambleton, providing access to all areas of the district. Northallerton has a direct rail link to London, and has major links to Manchester, Tyne & Wear, Durham and York.

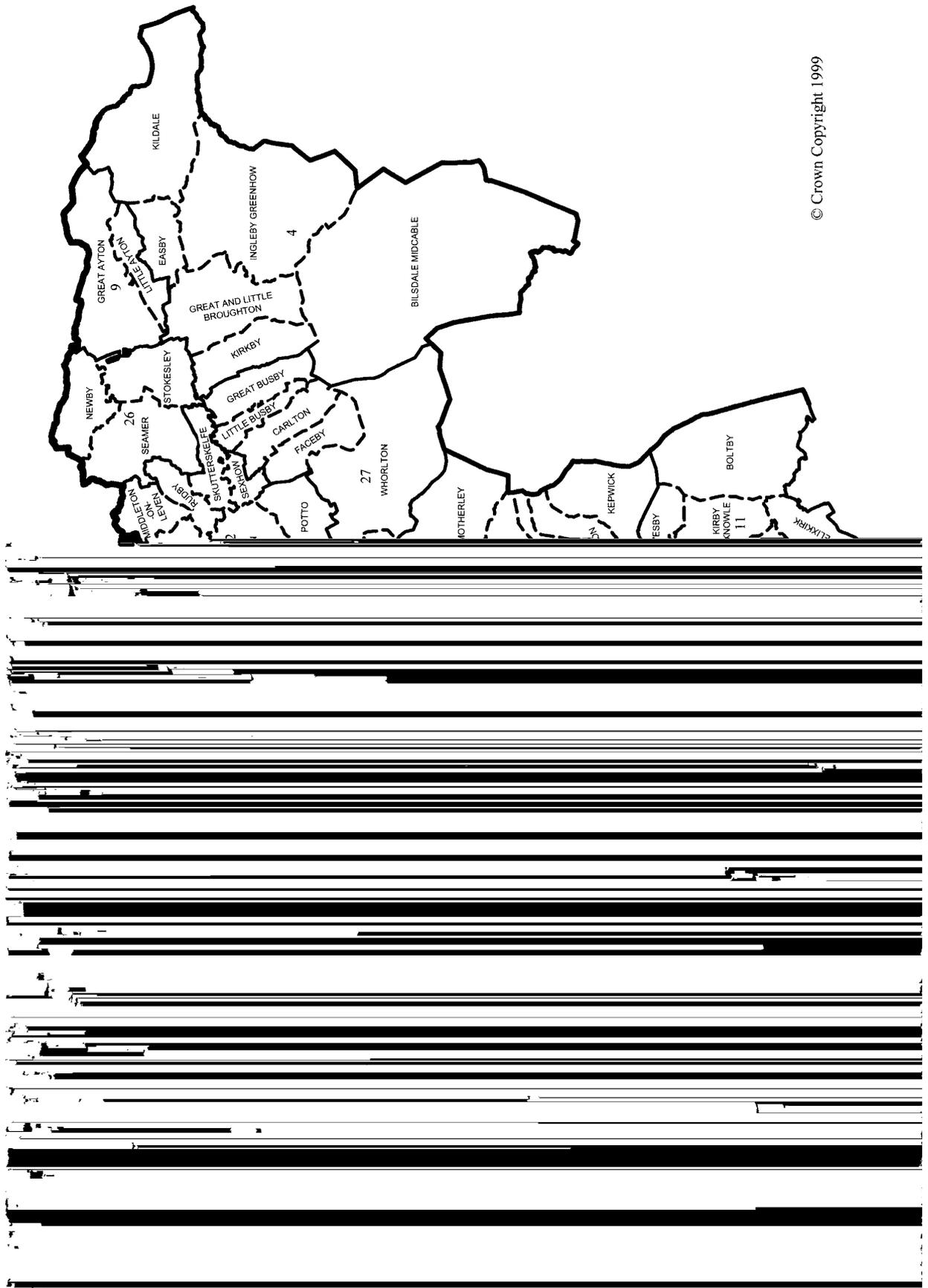
15 To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward (the councillor:elector ratio) varies from the district average in percentage terms. In the text which follows, this calculation may also be described using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

16 The electorate of the district is 66,053 (February 1998). The Council presently has 47 members who are elected from 34 wards. Two of the wards are each represented by three councillors, nine wards elect two councillors each, while the remaining 23 are single-member wards. The whole Council is elected together every four years.

17 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Hambleton district, with around 22 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Romanby, Thirsk and Bedale, each with over 1,000 more electors than 20 years ago.

18 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,405 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,466 by the year 2003 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 17 of the 34 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, in six wards by more than 20 per cent and in two wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Romanby Broomfield ward where the councillor represents 38 per cent more electors than the district average.

Map 1:
Existing Wards in Hambleton



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Figure 3:
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Appleton Wiske	1	1,338	1,338	-5	1,371	1,371	-6
2 Bedale	2	3,257	1,629	16	3,470	1,735	18
3 Brompton	1	1,665	1,665	18	1,700	1,700	16
4 Broughton & Greenhow	1	1,852	1,852	32	1,894	1,894	29
5 Carlton Miniott	1	1,533	1,533	9	1,569	1,569	7
6 Crakehall	1	1,399	1,399	0	1,450	1,450	-1
7 Crayke	1	1,053	1,053	-25	1,078	1,078	-26
8 Easingwold	2	3,226	1,613	15	3,430	1,715	17
9 Great Ayton	3	3,866	1,289	-8	3,984	1,328	-9
10 Helperby	1	1,392	1,392	-1	1,416	1,416	-3
11 Hillside	1	1,206	1,206	-14	1,248	1,248	-15
12 Huby-Sutton	1	1,534	1,534	9	1,588	1,588	8
13 Leeming	1	1,433	1,433	2	1,469	1,469	0
14 Leeming Bar	1	1,445	1,445	3	1,521	1,521	4
15 Morton-on-Swale	1	1,301	1,301	-7	1,345	1,345	-8
16 Northallerton North East	2	2,261	1,131	-20	2,340	1,170	-20
17 Northallerton South East	2	3,034	1,517	8	3,140	1,570	7
18 Northallerton West	2	2,449	1,225	-13	2,610	1,305	-11
19 Osmotherley	1	1,029	1,029	-27	1,065	1,065	-27
20 Romanby	2	2,842	1,421	1	3,000	1,500	2
21 Romanby Broomfield	1	1,937	1,937	38	2,005	2,005	37
22 Rudby	2	2,361	1,181	-16	2,421	1,211	-17

Figure 3 (continued):
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
23 Shipton	1	1,581	1,581	12	1,650	1,650	13
24 Sowerby	2	2,996	1,498	7	3,250	1,625	11
25 Stillington	1	1,144	1,144	-19	1,184	1,184	-19
26 Stokesley	3	4,379	1,460	4	4,583	1,528	4
27 Swainby	1	1,256	1,256	-11	1,300	1,300	-11
28 Tanfield	1	1,063	1,063	-24	1,101	1,101	-25
29 The Cowtons	1	1,308	1,308	-7	1,353	1,353	-8
30 The Thorntons	1	1,318	1,318	-6	1,363	1,363	-7
31 Thirsk	2	3,477	1,739	24	3,700	1,850	26
32 Tollerton	1	1,346	1,346	-4	1,410	1,410	-4
33 Topcliffe	1	1,518	1,518	8	1,602	1,602	9
34 Whitestonecliffe	1	1,254	1,254	-11	1,297	1,297	-12
Totals	47	66,053	—	—	68,907	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,405	—	—	1,466	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Hambleton District Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1998, electors in Osmotherley ward were relatively over-represented by 27 per cent, while electors in Romanby Broomfield ward were significantly under-represented by 38 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

19 During Stage One we received eight submissions: district-wide schemes from Hambleton District Council, Richmond Constituency Liberal Democrats and district councillors Smith, Weighell and Mrs Latter; and representations from two parish councils, a district and county councillor and two Northallerton residents. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Hambleton in North Yorkshire*.

20 Our draft recommendations were based on elements of the proposals from both the District Council and the three district councillors, but with some modifications which would improve electoral equality and, in our judgement, better reflect community ties where possible. We proposed that:

- (a) Hambleton District Council should be served by 44 councillors, compared with the current 47, representing 30 wards, four fewer than at present;
- (b) the boundaries of 22 of the existing wards should be modified, while 12 wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- (c) there should be revised warding arrangements for Northallerton parish and a redistribution of its town councillors;
- (d) Appleton Wiske Parish Council should be served by seven parish councillors, compared to the existing five.

21 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 29 of the 30 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to continue, with only two wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2003; both Bedale and Great Ayton wards would each have an electoral variance of 11 per cent.

Draft Recommendation

Hambleton District Council should comprise 44 councillors, serving 30 wards. The whole Council should continue to be elected together every four years.

4. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

²² During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 40 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Hambleton District Council and the Commission.

Hambleton District Council

²³ In its Stage Three submission the District Council voiced its preference for retaining warding arrangements as they exist at present, “particularly regarding the number of Councillors”. Furthermore, it stated that “after having considered your draft recommendations in detail this Council has concluded that it would still prefer its proposal (Option One in the formal submission) to be adopted for Hambleton”. The District Council opposed the draft recommendations and continued to support Option One as “the differences between the two sets of proposals are marginal”, when compared in the terms of electoral equality and the statutory criteria. The Council specifically objected to the proposals for Rudby, Tanfield and Thirsk wards.

North Yorkshire County Council

²⁴ The County Council objected to our draft recommendations on the grounds that “the review of electoral arrangements in each district has been carried out as a self-contained exercise, without regard for its implications for the electoral arrangements for the County Council”.

²⁵ It reiterated its view that “significant benefits” will flow to local electors from wards and divisions having shared boundaries, wherever practicable, as it believed that a high degree of coterminosity is a prerequisite for securing effective and convenient local government and to properly reflect the identities and interests of local communities. It argued that more enduring electoral arrangements would have been achieved if the implications for county electoral divisions had been recognised earlier in the review process, allowing district and county reviews to be carried out concurrently.

Local Labour Parties

²⁶ The Vale of York Labour Party (North Branch) objected to our draft recommendations for Thirsk, arguing that they “will not provide good government, will lead to poor representation, and diffuse a very specific community interest”. It also expressed concern that Pickhill parish had been included in the modified Tanfield ward and that electoral equality had taken precedence over community identity.

²⁷ Hambleton District Labour Party, while supporting the principle of electoral equality, expressed concern that it had taken precedence over community interests, particularly in Great Ayton, Stokesley and Thirsk wards. It supported the District Council’s proposal for no change to Thirsk ward, but did acknowledge the resulting electoral inequality. The Labour Party also proposed that both Great Ayton and Stokesley parishes should be covered by three single-member wards, and that the number of Great Ayton parish councillors be increased from seven to 11.

The Richmond Conservative Association

²⁸ The Richmond Conservative Association asserted that “insufficient weight has been given to issues of community identity which is of paramount concern in a rural district”. It also proposed two alternative solutions for electoral arrangements in Hambleton, which were in order of preference: the retention of the existing warding arrangements and the implementation of Hambleton District Council’s Option One.

Parish and Town Councils

²⁹ In response to the draft recommendations we received 22 representations from parish and town councils in Hambleton. Kirkby Fleetham with Fencotes Parish Council supported the Commission’s draft recommendations. Bedale Town Council, and Crakehall with Langthorne,

Newby, Scruton, Smeaton with Hornby, Sowerby and Stillington parish councils all supported the draft recommendations as they affected their areas.

30 Northallerton Town Council reaffirmed its Stage One submission that the existing arrangements for Northallerton be retained, although members agreed “that it would seem logical both geographically and physically that Broomfield be included in Northallerton”. Romanby Parish Council objected to our draft recommendations for Romanby and instead proposed alternative arrangements for both Romanby and Northallerton. Appleton Wiske, High & Low Worsall and Rountons parish councils objected to the proposed Rudby ward for reasons of community identity, arguing that the retention of the current warding arrangements in this area would be preferable. Both Bilsdale Midcable and Great Ayton parish councils opposed the draft recommendation to include Bilsdale Midcable parish in Swainby ward, also for reasons of community identity.

31 Carlton Miniott Parish Council and Thirsk Town Council opposed the draft recommendation to combine Carlton Miniott with Thirsk. East Harlsey and Hutton Bonville parish councils both objected to the proposed district warding arrangements covering their parishes, for community identity reasons. Thornton-le-Moor with Thornton-le-Street Parish Council were concerned about the balance between electoral equality and community interests in our draft recommendations, and Borrowby Parish Council opposed the ward name of Whitestonecliffe, suggesting instead Hillside as an alternative. Sutton under Whitestonecliffe Parish Council supported the ward name of Whitestonecliffe and expressed support for the District Council’s Option One.

Other Representations

32 A further 13 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations, from four local councillors and nine local residents.

33 Councillors Weighell and Mrs Latter, members for Bedale and Leeming Bar wards respectively, supported our draft recommendations. Councillor Dickins, member for Appleton Wiske ward, opposed the draft recommendation for the ward, for community identity and geographic reasons. He also attached a supporting petition from 98 local residents and suggested that the existing Appleton Wiske ward be combined with Picton parish, to improve electoral equality.

34 Councillor Mrs Seymour, member for Stokesley ward and division, emphasised the importance of community identity and the need to consider county council divisions when undertaking PERs. She specifically opposed the draft recommendations for the wards in the north of the district and proposed an alternative warding arrangement for the area.

35 Five residents expressed support for our proposal to retain the existing warding arrangements of Bedale, Crakehall and Leeming Bar. Three residents opposed our draft recommendation to include Hutton Bonville parish in a modified Morton on Swale ward, and another local resident opposed the draft recommendations for Northallerton, proposing instead that the existing warding arrangements be retained throughout the district.

5. ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

36 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Hambleton 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 being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

37 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.

38 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.

39 Our *Guidance* states that, while we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, such an objective should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of absolute electoral equality and only then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of change in electorates. We will require particular justification for schemes which result in, or retain, an imbalance of over 10 per cent in any

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

Electorate Forecasts

40 At Stage One the District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2003, which projected an increase in the electorate of 4 per cent from 66,053 to 68,907 over the five-year period from 1998 to 2003. It expects most of the growth to be in Northallerton town, although some is also expected in Thirsk and Bedale. The Council has estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the District Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

41 In our draft recommendations report we accepted that forecasting electorates is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

42 At Stage Three Hambleton District Labour Party, Appleton Wiske Parish Council and Northallerton Town Council expressed some general reservations regarding the 2003 electorate forecasts. However, in the absence of any detailed evidence and after consultation with the District Council we remain satisfied that the District Council's forecasts represent the best estimates presently available.

Council Size

43 As already explained, the Commission's starting point is to assume that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government.

44 Hambleton District Council is at present served by 47 members. At Stage One the District Council proposed a reduction in council size to 44, as it felt “that a small reduction in the number of councillors serving the district would not undermine representation for residents, working within the Council on policy and priorities and securing representation on a wide range of external bodies”. Richmond Constituency Liberal Democrats and Councillors Smith, Weighell and Mrs Latter (members for Crakehall, Bedale and Leeming Bar wards respectively) also supported a council of 44 members.

45 The Council also proposed a council size of 41 as its second preference, should it be “determined that the Commission would only accept a proposal that would be in line with the requirements of the White Paper”. It, however, expressed concern that the reduction in members to 41 would be at the expense of the communities of Great Ayton and Stokesley.

46 At Stage One we noted that there was general agreement among respondents to reduce the current council size from 47 to 44, and that the Council’s second preference would be for a council of 41 members, in line with the Government’s White Paper. We advised the North Yorkshire authorities that until any direction is received from the Secretary of State the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to periodic electoral reviews as set out in its *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 for their areas. In the light of this, we noted that the District Council’s preference for a council size of 44 and a pattern of single-, two- and three-member wards commanded local support and is compatible with the current legislation.

47 We considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, and concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 44 members.

48 At Stage Three a general acceptance of the proposed council of 44 members emerged. However, the District Council commented on the Commission’s approach to reductions in council size. It is important to note that the proposal for a

reduction in council size from 47 to 44 was drawn from the consensus among Stage One respondents, including the District Council, rather than from our *Guidance*, which states that “we will look to build on local consensus” and “will be prepared to consider the case for change where there is persuasive evidence”. We therefore confirm our draft recommendation for a council size of 44 as final.

Electoral Arrangements

49 In forming our draft recommendations we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including the four district-wide schemes, two from the District Council, one from Richmond Constituency Liberal Democrats and one from Councillors Smith, Weighell and Mrs Latter. We particularly welcomed the positive approach taken by each of the district-wide schemes to securing better electoral equality, although to varying degrees. For instance, the number of wards where the number of electors per councillor would vary by more than 10 per cent from the district average would reduce from 17 to four under the Council’s proposals (five under its second preference), to seven under the Richmond Constituency Liberal Democrats’ proposals and to one under the proposals from the three district councillors.

50 We noted that there was general agreement for a small reduction in council size. All representations which made a specific proposal preferred a council size of 44, three fewer than at present, although the District Council submitted a second preference for a scheme based on a council of 41 members (in line with the *White Paper*). As detailed earlier, we proposed a scheme based on a council of 44 members, representing the majority view among the respondents.

51 In considering the Stage One representations we noted a degree of consensus between the District Council’s Option One proposal and the proposal from the three district councillors: both were based on 44 members serving a pattern of single- and multi-member wards. They agreed on the proposed boundaries for 19 wards, most of which were in the south of the district and in the Northallerton area. Of these 19 wards, nine would be unchanged from the existing arrangements. However, in the remaining 11 wards of the district the proposals were for different warding patterns, with differences in the naming of wards in a number of areas.

52 In formulating our draft recommendations we sought to build on the consensus concerning those 19 wards but proposed our own ward configurations in areas where we felt that further improvements in electoral equality could be achieved. Inevitably we could not reflect the preferences of all respondents in our draft recommendations.

53 At Stage One the Richmond Constituency Liberal Democrats submitted a scheme based on a pattern of entirely two-member wards throughout the district. However, we noted that a pattern of entirely two-member wards would create some geographically very large wards, which we considered might not be conducive to convenient and effective local government. In some of these areas, single-member wards already exist under the current electoral arrangements and, we noted, would continue under the district-wide proposals from both the District Council and the three district councillors. In our draft recommendations report we expressed the view that single-member wards should continue under future electoral arrangements, particularly in the more sparsely populated areas, provided that good electoral equality could be achieved.

54 In analysing the Liberal Democrats' Stage One scheme we noted little similarity between its proposals and those of the District Council and the three district councillors. The only areas of consensus were where no change had been proposed by any respondent, for example in Easingwold and Sowerby wards. For this reason, we were unable to adopt the Liberal Democrats' proposals for wholly two-member wards as part of our draft recommendations.

55 Of the 40 representations received at Stage Three, over a third expressed support for our draft recommendations. There was a degree of support among respondents for a 44-member council, representing 30 wards, together with the majority of the proposed wards in the south of the district. We have, however, noted local concerns regarding the proposed warding arrangements for Broughton & Greenhow, Morton on Swale, Osmotherley, Rudby, Tanfield and Thirsk.

56 At Stage Three Hambleton District Council stated that "The Members of the Council would like you to be aware that from the outset of the Review process they would have liked the status quo to have prevailed." However, it added that its

Option One proposal would provide the next most appropriate alternative. The Council submitted no new or additional evidence in support of its Option One proposal, confining itself to comparing the levels of electoral equality achieved under that option with those provided by our draft recommendations.

57 We acknowledge that, on the basis of the current electorate, the Council's Option One proposal would result in improvements in electoral equality in some areas. Nevertheless, we remain concerned that, on the basis of its five-year forecast of changes in the electorate, a number of significant variances would emerge by 2003. Our objective in conducting PERs is to recommend electoral arrangements which reflect equality of representation throughout the review area and which endure over the next five years. In addition, the Council's Option One included a somewhat detached Osmotherley with Thorntons ward. As indicated in our *Guidance*, we take the view that the use of detached wards is undesirable since they do not usually reflect our statutory criteria and we will not normally recommend them to the Secretary of State.

58 In the absence of alternative warding arrangements from Stage Three respondents that provide good electoral equality across the district, and in an attempt to address local concerns regarding community identities in Hambleton, we have considered alternative warding configurations which might continue to achieve good levels of electoral equality for the district as a whole. However, boundary changes to single-member wards with relatively low councillor:elector ratios have a proportionately greater effect on electoral equality than would be the case in more densely populated areas. Single-member wards constitute the majority of Hambleton district's electoral wards, making it difficult to formulate alternative warding arrangements that provide a good level of electoral equality.

59 A number of respondents expressed concern that the scheme submitted by Councillors Smith, Weighell and Mrs Latter, on which we partly based our draft recommendations, had not been consulted on locally prior to its submission to us. We place considerable value on local consultation prior to the submission of all schemes, irrespective of the source. However, the absence of such consultation does not prevent us from considering a particular proposal. Indeed, we are statutorily required to take into account all representations

received, whether or not there has been prior local consultation. In any event, interested parties have now had the opportunity to make their views known on the proposals, as part of our draft recommendations.

60 As stated earlier, North Yorkshire County Council objected to our draft recommendations. It argued that the Commission's approach was likely to lead to "significant reductions" in the existing level of coterminosity, and urged us to change the review process so that district and county council reviews could be carried out concurrently during the Stage One consultation period.

61 The approach we have adopted in our PERs of two-tier county areas is the same as that taken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission. That is to first review the electoral arrangements of each of the district council areas in the county and then, once the necessary electoral change orders have been made for the districts, to review those of the county council. This ensures that, as required by Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act, our recommendations for electoral division boundaries have regard to district ward boundaries, and that these are fixed and not subject to change.

62 This is an issue which has arisen in a number of review areas. It is indicative of the tensions which can arise between the achievement of electoral equality within the individual districts of a county, each of whose electoral arrangements can vary significantly in terms of councillor:elector ratios and ward sizes, and across county council electoral divisions, while also seeking some measure of coterminosity between the two. These tensions are not readily reconciled.

63 In certain cases it has been put to us that in reviewing district electoral arrangements we should prescribe that ward patterns and sizes should be such that they would be compatible with county council divisions. We do not believe this to be an approach the Commission should take. As a Commission, we rely heavily on local authorities and others to put proposals to us on how the electoral arrangements within their individual areas might be improved. We believe that the interests of local democracy are best served by basing our recommendations on schemes which are generated locally, address the statutory criteria and achieve a high level of electoral equality.

64 Nevertheless, we recognise that coterminosity between county divisions and district wards is likely to be conducive to effective and convenient

local government, and we place a high value on its achievement as part of our reviews of county council electoral arrangements.

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

- (a) Northallerton (North East, South East and West), Romanby and Romanby Broomfield wards;
- (b) Broughton & Greenhow, Great Ayton, Stokesley and Swainby wards;
- (c) Appleton Wiske, Rudby and Osmotherley wards;
- (d) Brompton, Morton-on-Swale and The Cowtons wards;
- (e) Bedale, Crakehall, Leeming and Leeming Bar wards;
- (f) Crayke, Hillside, Stillington and Whitestonecliffe wards;
- (g) Tanfield, Carlton Miniott and The Thorntons wards;
- (h) Sowerby and Thirsk wards;
- (i) Topcliffe, Helperby and Easingwold wards;
- (j) Tollerton, Shipton and Huby-Sutton wards.

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

Northallerton (North East, South East and West), Romanby and Romanby Broomfield wards

67 Northallerton and Romanby parishes form a continuous urban area and are covered by five wards, currently represented by a total of nine district councillors. The county town of Northallerton is the largest town in Hambleton and is covered by the three two-member wards of Northallerton North East, Northallerton South East and Northallerton West. The average number of electors per councillor in the wards is 20 per cent below, 8 per cent above and 13 per cent below the district average respectively (with little or no change expected by 2003). Romanby parish comprises two district wards – Romanby, which elects two councillors and Romanby Broomfield, which is served by a single councillor. The number of electors represented by each councillor is 1 per cent above the district average in Romanby ward (2 per cent in 2003) and 38 per cent above in Romanby Broomfield ward (37 per cent in 2003).

68 Under a smaller council size of 44, the electorate of the combined area merits 8.3 councillors (8.4 in 2003). At Stage One the District Council proposed re-warding the area covered by Northallerton town and Romanby Broomfield into three two-member district wards – Northallerton Broomfield, Northallerton Central and Northallerton North. No change was proposed for the two-member Romanby ward. The combined Northallerton and Romanby area would therefore be served by a total of eight councillors, representing four two-member wards. The proposed boundary between Northallerton North and Northallerton Central wards would follow Willow Beck, Sun Beck and Friarage Street to the existing boundary; and the proposed boundary between Northallerton Central and Northallerton Broomfield wards would run along Springwell Lane, Romanby Road, part of High Street and East Road to the existing boundary of The Link and Crosby Road.

69 Under the Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in the wards would be 9 per cent above the district average in Northallerton Broomfield (10 per cent in 2003), 10 per cent above in Northallerton Central (unchanged in 2003), 3 per cent above in Northallerton North (unchanged in 2003) and 5 per cent below in Romanby (4 per cent in 2003). Councillors Smith, Weighell and Mrs Latter supported the Council's proposals for the wards in this area. Richmond Constituency Liberal Democrats also proposed that Romanby Broomfield ward, together with Northallerton town, should be re-warded into three two-member wards, without submitting any specific ward boundaries; and that there should be no change to Romanby ward.

70 In its Stage One submission the District Council appended a letter it had received from Romanby Parish Council for an alternative ward configuration in the Northallerton/Romanby area. The Parish Council proposed that the whole of Romanby parish should form a new three-member district ward and that Northallerton should be re-warded into two wards, one electing three councillors and the other electing two councillors, but did not submit any detailed ward boundaries. It further considered that the existing name of Romanby Broomfield should be retained as the area comprises the majority of electors in the new ward.

71 A Northallerton resident proposed that the

wards covering Northallerton, Romanby and Brompton parishes, together with the parishes of Yafforth, Ainderby Steeple and Morton on Swale, should be combined together and re-warded to form a new "Romalton" town. Another Northallerton resident proposed that the whole of Romanby should be included in Northallerton to rectify the present anomaly of a recently built estate straddling the Romanby/Northallerton parish boundary. However, we are unable to recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of this review.

72 We carefully considered the representations received and noted the degree of consensus behind the Council's proposals in this area. We considered making a minor modification to the Council's proposed boundary between Northallerton Central and Northallerton North wards to achieve a better balance of representation between the two. However, the electoral variances would improve only marginally and the boundary would not be as clear as the Council's. We therefore included the Council's proposals for the Northallerton and Romanby area as part of our draft recommendations. Additionally, we consulted on the Council's proposed ward name of Northallerton Broomfield, which we considered reflects the areas which would constitute the new ward.

73 At Stage Three we received three representations regarding the proposed warding arrangements for the Northallerton/Romanby area. Northallerton Town Council proposed a change to the parish boundary between Northallerton and Romanby and questioned the District Council's forecast electorate for the area. Romanby Parish Council objected to our draft recommendations affecting the parish, together with our proposed ward name, Northallerton Broomfield. It also opposed the recommendation to link Romanby Broomfield parish ward of Romanby parish with Northallerton, and proposed instead that the whole of Romanby be represented by three district councillors, and that an alternative warding arrangement be considered for Northallerton town. Additionally, a local resident expressed general opposition to warding arrangements in the Northallerton and Romanby area.

74 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three. We continue to note that our draft recommendations for Northallerton and Romanby reflected the Stage One proposals from Hambleton District Council, Richmond

Constituency Liberal Democrats and the three district councillors. We also considered Romanby Parish Council's objections to the draft recommendations in this area but, in attempting to achieve electoral equality across Northallerton and Romanby, it has been necessary to add part of Romanby parish to Northallerton Town.

75 We have not been persuaded by the evidence received at Stage Three that these proposals would have a significantly detrimental effect on the local communities involved, noting that the new Northallerton wards cover a continuous urban area. In the light of this, and in the absence of any further evidence received at Stage Three, we remain satisfied that our draft recommendations for Northallerton town provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and therefore confirm as final our draft recommendations for the wards of Northallerton Broomfield, Northallerton Central, Northallerton North and Romanby. We are also satisfied that the ward names included in the draft recommendations represent the communities covered by the proposed wards and confirm them as final. Under our final recommendations the electoral variances would remain unchanged from our draft recommendations.

Broughton & Greenhow, Great Ayton, Stokesley and Swainby wards

76 These four wards cover the north-east of the district. Two of the wards elect a single councillor each, while the other two are three-member wards. There are varying degrees of electoral inequality in the four wards, with the worst imbalance in Broughton & Greenhow ward, which is significantly under-represented by 32 per cent. The wards of Great Ayton and Swainby are both relatively over-represented, by 8 per cent and 11 per cent respectively. The electoral variance in Stokesley ward is 4 per cent. Little change in electorate is forecast for any of these wards by 2003.

77 The single-member wards are Broughton & Greenhow, which currently comprises the six parishes of Bilsdale Midcable, Easby, Great & Little Broughton, Ingleby Greenhow, Kildale and Kirkby, and Swainby, which comprises the six parishes of Carlton, Faceby, Great Busby, Ingleby Arncliffe, Little Busby and Whorlton. The three-member Great Ayton ward comprises Great Ayton and Little Ayton parishes, and the three-member Stokesley ward comprises the parishes of Newby,

Seamer and Stokesley.

78 At Stage One the District Council proposed reconfiguring these wards to achieve a better balance of representation in the area under a proposed council size of 44. The northern and southern boundaries of Broughton & Greenhow ward would be modified to exclude Easby and Kildale parishes, which would form part of a revised Great Ayton ward, and Bilsdale Midcable parish, which would form part of a revised Swainby ward. It also proposed no change to the existing Stokesley ward. The same number of councillors would be retained in the wards. Under the Council's Stage One proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent below the district average in Broughton & Greenhow ward, 10 per cent below in Great Ayton ward, 3 per cent below in Stokesley ward and 1 per cent above in Swainby ward, with minimal change forecast in 2003.

79 Councillors Smith, Weighell and Mrs Latter (members for Crakehall, Bedale and Leeming Bar wards respectively) supported the Council's proposals for this area. Councillor Mrs Seymour, member for Stokesley ward and division, favoured the District Council's Option Two for Stokesley ward, as under this proposal the ward would be coterminous with the parish of the same name.

80 We carefully considered the representations received for this area and noted that, of the various configurations received, the four wards proposed by the District Council would achieve much improved electoral equality together with a more balanced level of representation in the area than exists at present. Furthermore, the proposals built on the current ward pattern and were supported by the three district councillors. We therefore included the four modified wards of Broughton & Greenhow, Great Ayton, Stokesley and Swainby in our draft recommendations.

81 At Stage Three Hambleton District Labour Party opposed the addition of Easby and Kildale parishes to Great Ayton ward, arguing that this would significantly increase the geographical size of the existing ward and dilute democratic accountability. Instead, it suggested that Great Ayton parish be warded into three, with each parish ward represented by a single district councillor. The District Labour Party also opposed our recommendation for Stokesley ward, proposing instead that it be divided into three single-

member wards.

⁸² Newby Parish Council supported the draft recommendation for Stokesley ward. Councillor Mrs Seymour, member for Stokesley ward and division, also supported the Commission's proposals for Stokesley ward, but proposed modifications to Broughton & Greenhow and Great Ayton wards which would provide for a pattern of single- and multi-member wards that, she stated, would respect the natural boundaries of the Cleveland Hills and the A19. Both Great Ayton and Bilsdale Midcable parish councils opposed our draft recommendation to include Bilsdale Midcable parish in a modified Swainby ward, with Bilsdale Midcable Parish Council specifically proposing that it remain part of the existing Broughton & Greenhow ward.

⁸³ Having considered the representations received at Stage Three, we remain of the opinion that our draft recommendations would achieve a good level of electoral equality while reflecting the statutory criteria. Our draft recommendations for two three-member wards in this area (Great Ayton and Stokesley) also reflect the current arrangements and the District Council's Stage One submission. We do not consider that the proposals from Hambleton District Labour Party and Councillor Mrs Seymour, both of which represent significant departures from our draft recommendations in this area, were underpinned by sufficient evidence to support such changes. Moreover, we note that, if Bilsdale Midcable were to be retained in Broughton & Greenhow ward, Swainby ward would have an electoral variance of 16 per cent. We have not been persuaded that these modifications would provide improved electoral equality or better meet the statutory criteria and are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for Broughton & Greenhow, Great Ayton, Stokesley and Swainby wards as final. Under our final recommendations the electoral variances would remain unchanged from our draft recommendations.

Appleton Wiske, Rudby and Osmotherley wards

⁸⁴ These three wards are located in the north of the district, which as an area is over-represented. The single-member Appleton Wiske ward comprises the seven parishes of Appleton Wiske, East Harlsey, East Rounton, High Worsall, Low Worsall, Welbury and West Rounton. The number of electors represented by the councillor for the ward is 5 per cent below the district average. Rudby

ward elects two councillors and comprises the eight parishes of Crathorne, Hutton Rudby, Middleton-on-Leven, Picton, Potto, Rudby, Sexhow and Skutterskelfe. The number of electors represented by each councillor is 16 per cent below the average. Osmotherley ward elects a single councillor and comprises the 11 parishes of Ellerbeck, Kepwick, Kirby Sigston, Landmoth-cum-Catto, Nether Silton, Osmotherley, Over Silton, Sowerby-under-Cotcliffe, Thimbleby, West Harlsey and Winton, Stank & Hallikeld. The councillor for the ward represents 27 per cent fewer electors than the average.

⁸⁵ To address the current imbalances the District Council proposed modifications to the boundaries of all three wards at Stage One. It proposed that Appleton Wiske ward should continue to return one councillor, but be modified by transferring the parishes of High Worsall and Low Worsall to a modified two-member Rudby ward (with no further changes to Rudby ward) and by including in it the parishes of Deighton, Girsby, Great Smeaton, Hornby, Little Smeaton and Over Dinsdale (currently in The Cowtons ward). It also proposed that the existing Osmotherley ward, together with the parishes of Cotcliffe, Crosby, Thornton-le-Beans, Thornton-le-Moor and Thornton-le-Street (currently in The Thorntons ward) should form a new single-member Osmotherley with Thorntons ward. Under the Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent above the district average in Appleton Wiske (7 per cent in 2003), 12 per cent below in Rudby (14 per cent in 2003) and 7 per cent above in Osmotherley with Thorntons (6 per cent in 2003).

⁸⁶ Councillors Smith, Weighell and Mrs Latter proposed a different configuration in this area. They proposed that the Council's two-member Rudby ward should be extended to include the parishes of East Rounton and West Rounton (currently in Appleton Wiske ward), and that the parishes of East Harlsey and Welbury (also in Appleton Wiske ward) be added to the existing single-member Osmotherley ward. Appleton Wiske parish would form part of their proposed Great Smeaton ward, and Appleton Wiske ward would therefore cease to exist. Under their proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 6 per cent below the district average in Rudby ward (7 per cent in 2003) and equal to the average in Osmotherley ward (1 per cent below in 2003). Councillor Mrs Seymour, member for

Stokesley ward, considered that the proposal to include High Worsall and Low Worsall parishes in a modified Rudby ward “stretches the ward too far”, arguing that the parishes have nothing in common with Hutton Rudby parish (the principal settlement in that ward).

87 We gave careful consideration to the proposals for this area and acknowledged the attempts by the district-wide schemes to address the current electoral inequality. We concluded that the district councillors’ proposals would achieve greater electoral equality, while largely reflecting the current ward pattern. However, we considered that further improvements could be made to the district councillors’ proposals to achieve an even better balance of representation in the area, while reflecting the statutory criteria. We proposed that the parishes of High Worsall and Low Worsall (currently in Appleton Wiske ward) should form part of a modified Cowtons ward (detailed later), particularly as a number of respondents, including the member for Stokesley ward, were concerned that the two parishes have nothing in common with the other parishes in Rudby ward. We further proposed that Appleton Wiske, East Rounton and West Rounton parishes should form part of a revised Rudby ward.

88 In the neighbouring area, we noted that the Council’s proposed Osmotherley with Thorntons ward would be virtually detached, with little or no link between the existing Osmotherley ward and the additional five parishes from the existing ward of The Thorntons, and we therefore considered that this proposal would not have sufficient regard to the statutory criteria. We also considered that the proposals from the Richmond Constituency Liberal Democrats would not achieve as good electoral equality and did not include them in our draft recommendations. We therefore considered that the proposals from the three district councillors would achieve the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and included them as part of our draft recommendations. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be equal to the district average in Osmotherley ward (1 per cent below in 2003) and 2 per cent below the average in Rudby ward (3 per cent below in 2003).

89 In response to our draft recommendations the District Council opposed our recommendations for a modified Rudby ward, stating that “there is no community identity between Appleton Wiske Parish and the Parishes of Hutton Rudby and

Potto”. Appleton Wiske, East Harlsey, High and Low Worsall and Rountons parish councils also objected to our modified Rudby ward on the basis that Appleton Wiske parish has no community ties with the parish of Hutton Rudby (both to be included in Rudby ward under the draft recommendations). Both Appleton Wiske and Rountons parish councils pointed out that the modified Rudby ward would be split by the A19 and considered that a single-member ward in this area would provide better accountability. In addition, Appleton Wiske Parish Council opposed the inclusion of Welbury and East Harlsey parishes in a modified Osmotherley ward, for community identity reasons.

90 Councillor Dickins, member for Appleton Wiske ward, also objected to the Commission’s modified Rudby and Osmotherley wards for community identity reasons, adding that Rudby ward would be split by the A19. Instead he proposed adding Picton parish to the existing Appleton Wiske ward, but only if change to the existing arrangements was unavoidable. He also appended a petition signed by 98 local residents supporting the retention of Appleton Wiske ward.

91 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three and note the local concerns about community identity in this area. Accordingly, we have attempted to find alternative ward configurations for this area that would continue to provide a good level of electoral equality, while meeting the statutory criteria. Specifically, Councillor Dickins’s proposal to include Picton parish in the existing Appleton Wiske ward would entail the proposed Osmotherley ward losing the parishes of Welbury and East Harlsey, and Rudby ward losing the parishes of Appleton Wiske, East Rounton and West Rounton, resulting in Osmotherley and Rudby wards being over-represented by 31 per cent and 24 per cent respectively. We investigated the possibility of including Appleton Wiske parish in the proposed Cowtons ward, but this would result in Cowtons ward being under-represented by 25 per cent. We also conclude that the District Council’s proposals involving a detached Osmotherley with Thorntons ward would not meet the statutory criteria.

92 Accordingly, we have not been persuaded by the representations received at Stage Three regarding community ties that the consequent levels of electoral inequality are justified under the alternatives available, and conclude that our

proposals for Osmotherley and Rudby wards provide the best achievable balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Moreover, we are unable to consider the warding arrangements in this area in isolation, and must consider the impact of alternative arrangements on neighbouring wards. We noted that the surrounding ward configurations of Brompton and Cowtons and the Northallerton area all received some local support. Additionally, we considered the argument that Rudby ward would be split by the A19, but noted that the existing Rudby ward was already split by the same road and that there were a number of crossing points linking communities on either side of the road. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for the wards of Osmotherley and Rudby as final, with the electoral variances remaining unchanged from our draft recommendations.

Brompton, Morton-on-Swale and The Cowtons wards

⁹³ Brompton ward (and parish) elects a single councillor who represents 18 per cent more electors than the district average. Morton-on-Swale ward also elects a single councillor and comprises the 12 parishes of Ainderby Steeple, Danby Wiske, Great Langton, Kiplin, Lazenby, Little Langton, Morton-on-Swale, North Otterington, Thrintoft, Warlaby, Whitwell and Yafforth; the number of electors represented by the councillor for the ward is 7 per cent below the district average. The Cowtons ward comprises the 10 parishes of Birkby, East Cowton, Deighton, Girsby, Great Smeaton, Hornby, Hutton Bonville, Little Smeaton, Over Dinsdale and South Cowton, and the number of electors represented by the councillor for the ward is 7 per cent below the average. Little or no change is forecast to the electoral variances by 2003.

⁹⁴ At Stage One the District Council proposed no change to Brompton ward as, under a council of 44 members, the electoral variance would improve to 11 per cent (9 per cent in 2003). Moreover, the single settlement in the ward (and parish) restricts the options available to improve electoral equality without arbitrary warding of the parish, which would have an adverse effect on electoral equality in neighbouring wards and on community identities.

⁹⁵ The Council proposed that a modified Morton on Swale ward should include the constituent parishes of Ainderby Steeple, Morton-on-Swale, North Otterington and Warlaby, together with the

parishes of Kirby Wiske, Maunby, Newby Wiske, Newsham with Breckenbrough and South Otterington (all currently in The Thorntons ward, detailed later). The remaining eight parishes in the existing Morton-on-Swale ward would be merged with the four parishes of Birkby, East Cowton, Hutton Bonville and South Cowton (currently in The Cowtons ward) to form a new Cowtons ward. Under the Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent below the district average in Morton on Swale ward (8 per cent in 2003) and 8 per cent below the district average in Cowtons ward (9 per cent in 2003).

⁹⁶ Councillors Smith, Weighell and Mrs Latter also proposed no change to Brompton ward. However, they proposed the following minor changes to the existing Morton-on-Swale and The Cowtons wards: Morton-on-Swale ward would be extended in the north to include the parishes of Hutton Bonville and South Cowton (currently in The Cowtons ward); and The Cowtons ward would continue to elect a single councillor but be renamed Great Smeaton, and modified to include Appleton Wiske parish. Under their proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 11 per cent above the average in Brompton ward (9 per cent above in 2003), 3 per cent below in Morton-on-Swale ward (4 per cent below in 2003) and 2 per cent above in Great Smeaton ward (1 per cent above in 2003).

⁹⁷ We gave careful consideration to the proposals for this area, in particular to the proposal for no change to Brompton ward, and recognised the limited options available for this ward noting that the main body of electors are in the south of the ward (and parish), with large open spaces between the settlement and neighbouring wards. Although a degree of under-representation would exist in the ward, we concluded that any improvement to the electoral imbalance would be at the cost of community identity, convenient and effective local government and electoral equality in the surrounding area. We therefore included the proposal for no change to Brompton ward as part of our draft recommendations.

⁹⁸ We considered, however, that the proposals from the three district councillors for the remaining two wards would achieve greater electoral equality while reflecting the statutory criteria, and included them as part of our draft recommendations.

⁹⁹ However, we proposed a modification to the proposed Cowtons ward in response to local views.

High Worsall and Low Worsall parishes (which formed part of the councillors' proposed Rudby ward) and South Cowton parish (part of their proposed Morton-on-Swale ward) would be transferred to Cowtons ward. This modification would keep East Cowton and South Cowton parishes together in one ward, which we understand would have some local support. We acknowledged that our proposed Morton on Swale ward would have a worse electoral imbalance than the district councillors'. However, in our judgement community identity outweighs the slightly greater electoral imbalance in this area. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Morton on Swale ward would be 9 per cent below the district average (10 per cent in 2003) and equal to the average in Cowtons ward (1 per cent below in 2003).

¹⁰⁰ At Stage Three we received no representations regarding the proposed warding arrangements for Brompton ward and therefore confirm our draft recommendation for Brompton ward as final. Smeaton with Hornby Parish Council supported our draft recommendations, while Lovesome Hill Village Hall Committee made a representation on behalf of Hutton Bonville Parish Meeting, objecting to our proposal to include Hutton Bonville parish in a modified Morton on Swale ward, for community identity reasons. Three local residents also objected to the proposals for Hutton Bonville parish for reasons of community identity.

¹⁰¹ We have carefully considered the Stage Three representations and have re-examined our proposals for Cowtons and Morton on Swale wards, but note that to exclude Hutton Bonville parish from the modified Morton on Swale ward would result in it having an electoral variance of 14 per cent in 2003. We have not been persuaded by the evidence received at Stage Three, citing community identities, that such electoral inequality is justified in this instance. We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for the wards of Cowtons and Morton on Swale as final. Under our final recommendations the electoral variances would remain unchanged from our draft recommendations.

Bedale, Crakehall, Leeming and Leeming Bar wards

¹⁰² These four wards are located in the west of the district; three of them are served by a single councillor each, and one, Bedale, elects two councillors. Bedale ward comprises Bedale parish

and Aiskew parish ward of Aiskew parish, and the average number of electors per councillor is 16 per cent above the district average (18 per cent above in 2003). Crakehall ward comprises the 12 parishes of Ainderby Mires with Holtby, Burrill with Cowling, Clifton-on-Yore, Crakehall, Firby, Hackforth, Langthorne, Rand Grange, Rookwith, Snape with Thorp, Thirn and Thornton Watlass. The number of electors represented by the councillor is equal to the average (1 per cent below in 2003).

¹⁰³ Leeming ward comprises the five parishes of Burneston, Exelby, Leeming & Newton, Gatenby, Swainby with Allerthorpe and Theakston and has an electoral variance of 2 per cent (equal to the average in 2003). Leeming Bar ward comprises the three parishes of Killerby, Kirkby Fleetham with Fencote and Scruton, and Leeming Bar parish ward of Aiskew parish, and has an electoral variance of 3 per cent (4 per cent in 2003).

¹⁰⁴ Although there is currently good electoral equality in three of the four wards, the Council proposed modifications in line with its proposal for a reduction in council size from 47 to 44: Bedale ward would be extended southwards to include Firby parish and north-westwards to include Rand Grange parish (both currently in Crakehall ward), and in the north-east to include Leeming Bar parish ward of Aiskew parish (currently in Leeming Bar ward), thus including the whole of Aiskew parish in a single district ward; the parishes of Ainderby Mires with Holtby, Crakehall, Hackforth and Langthorne (currently in Crakehall ward) together with Leeming Bar ward (less Leeming Bar parish ward of Aiskew parish) would together form a new Crakehall with Fleetham ward; the remaining parishes in Crakehall ward, together with Tanfield ward (less Carthorpe parish) would form a modified Tanfield ward; and Leeming ward would be extended southwards to incorporate Carthorpe parish (currently in Tanfield ward, which is described in more detail later).

¹⁰⁵ Under the District Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in the wards would be 13 per cent below the district average in Bedale (11 per cent in 2003), 1 per cent below in Crakehall with Fleetham (2 per cent in 2003), 8 per cent above in Leeming (6 per cent in 2003) and 4 per cent above in Tanfield (unchanged in 2003).

¹⁰⁶ Councillors Smith, Weighell and Mrs Latter supported the Council's proposal for Leeming

ward but proposed no change to the existing wards of Bedale, Crakehall and Leeming Bar. Under their proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent above the district average in Bedale ward (11 per cent in 2003), 7 per cent below in Crakehall ward (unchanged in 2003), 8 per cent above in Leeming ward (6 per cent in 2003) and 4 per cent below in Leeming Bar ward (3 per cent in 2003). Additionally, a Northallerton resident proposed that Aiskew, Bedale, Leeming and Leeming Bar, together with the Leeming Airfield township and Exelby village, should together form a rural Bedale town for community identity reasons.

107 We gave careful consideration to the representations received for this area and included the Council's proposed Leeming ward as part of our draft recommendations. It was supported by the three district councillors and would achieve reasonable electoral equality. We were also aware that some respondents were concerned over the Council's proposal to create a new Crakehall with Fleetham ward which would be divided by the A1 in this part of the district, as they considered that there was no direct affinity between Crakehall parish and the other parishes east of the A1. We therefore proposed accepting the district councillors' proposals for the wards of Bedale, Crakehall and Leeming Bar, as we considered that they would have the advantage of largely reflecting the current ward pattern. Additionally, while the proposals for this area would have broadly similar electoral equality under both the Council's and the district councillors' scheme, we considered that the district councillors' would be less disruptive, keeping long-established communities together.

108 In its Stage Three submission Hambleton District Council made no comment on the majority of the draft recommendations in this area but objected to our proposal to retain the existing warding arrangements for Aiskew parish (to be split between two district wards), stating that "this is not desirable for effective and convenient Local Government". Bedale Town Council, and Crakehall with Langthorne, Kirkby Fleetham with Fencotes and Scruton parish councils all expressed support for our draft recommendations as they affect their areas. Councillors Weighell and Mrs Latter, members for Bedale and Leeming Bar wards respectively, and five local residents also supported our draft recommendations for these wards.

109 Having considered the Stage Three representations, we note that to include Aiskew

parish wholly in one district ward would result in significant electoral inequality and that our draft recommendation reflects the existing arrangements. We therefore conclude that our proposals provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria within a coherent district-wide scheme. Accordingly, and in light of the support we received at Stage Three for the proposed wards, we are confirming our draft recommendations for Bedale, Crakehall, Leeming and Leeming Bar wards as final, with the electoral variances remaining unchanged from our draft recommendations.

Crayke, Hillside, Stillington and Whitestonecliffe wards

110 These wards are situated along the eastern edge of the district, each served by a single councillor and comprising a large number of parishes. Crayke ward comprises the seven parishes of Coxwold, Crayke, Husthwaite, Newburgh, Oulston, Thornton-on-the-Hill and Yearsley. Hillside ward comprises the 11 parishes of Boltby, Borrowby, Cowesby, Felixkirk, Kirby Knowle, Knayton with Brawith, Leake, North Kilvington, South Kilvington, Thornbrough and Upsall. Stillington ward comprises the six parishes of Brandsby-cum-Stearsby, Dalby-cum-Skewsby, Farlington, Marton-cum-Moxby, Stillington and Whenby. Whitestonecliffe ward comprises the 10 parishes of Angram Grange, Bagby, Balk, Carlton Husthwaite, Hood Grange, Kilburn High & Low, Sutton-under-Whitestonecliffe, Thirkleby High & Low with Osgodby, Thirlby and Wildon Grange. The wards are all over-represented, with electoral variances of 25 per cent in Crayke, 14 per cent in Hillside, 19 per cent in Stillington and 11 per cent in Whitestonecliffe.

111 To address the significant over-representation in Crayke ward, the Council proposed a new single-member White Horse ward comprising much of the existing Crayke ward, excluding Crayke and Yearsley parishes, together with the existing Whitestonecliffe ward, excluding the parishes of Hood Grange, Sutton-under-Whitestonecliffe and Thirlby. The Council proposed that the existing Stillington ward should be extended in the north-west to include the parishes of Crayke and Yearsley (currently in Crayke ward), that Hillside ward should be extended southwards to include Hood Grange, Sutton-under-Whitestonecliffe and Thirlby parishes (currently in Whitestonecliffe ward), and that the latter ward be renamed Whitestonecliffe. Under the District Council's

proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent above the average in both White Horse and Whitestonecliffe wards (2 per cent and 3 per cent respectively in 2003) and 3 per cent above in Stillington ward (2 per cent in 2003).

112 Councillors Smith, Weighell and Mrs Latter supported the Council's proposed Stillington, White Horse and Whitestonecliffe wards, but proposed that the latter two wards be called Coxwold and Knayton respectively (the names of constituent parishes in the wards). Under their proposals the electoral variances would be the same as those under the District Council's proposals.

113 After due consideration of the representations received, we decided to include the Council's proposed Stillington, White Horse and Whitestonecliffe wards as part of our draft recommendations, as they would achieve improved electoral equality. We also consulted on the Council's proposed ward names as we judged that they would better reflect the communities in the area.

114 At Stage Three we received no representations regarding our draft recommendations for White Horse, Whitestonecliffe and Stillington wards and therefore confirm them as final. However, in response to our consultation on proposed ward names, Stillington Parish Council considered renaming Stillington ward as Stillington & Crayke, to better reflect the existing name. Sutton under Whitestonecliffe Parish Council supported our proposed ward name of Whitestonecliffe, while Borrowby Parish Council proposed that Whitestonecliffe ward be renamed Hillside, again to reflect the existing name. In the light of the lack of consensus on ward names in this area, we propose that they remain unchanged from those included in the draft recommendations. Under our final recommendations the electoral variances would remain unchanged from our draft recommendations.

Tanfield, Carlton Miniott and The Thorntons wards

115 Tanfield ward currently comprises the seven parishes of Carthorpe, East Tanfield, Howgrave, Kirklington-cum-Upsland, Sutton with Howgrave, Well and West Tanfield. The ward elects a single councillor who represents 24 per cent fewer electors than the district average (25 per cent in 2003). The single-member Carlton Miniott ward comprises the eight parishes of Ainderby Quernhow, Carlton

Miniott, Holme, Howe, Pickhill with Roxby, Sandhutton, Sinderby and Skipton-on-Swale. The number of electors represented by the councillor is 9 per cent above the average (7 per cent in 2003). The Thorntons ward comprises the 10 parishes of Cotcliffe, Crosby, Kirby Wiske, Maunby, Newby Wiske, Newsham with Breckenbrough, South Otterington, Thornton-le-Beans, Thornton-le-Moor and Thornton-le-Street. The number of electors represented by the councillor is 6 per cent below the average (7 per cent in 2003).

116 In order to address the considerable electoral imbalance across the area, at Stage One the Council proposed modifying Tanfield ward by transferring Carthorpe parish to the modified Leeming ward (detailed earlier), and including the parishes of Burrill with Cowling, Clifton-on-Yore, Rookwith, Snape with Thorp, Thirn and Thornton Watlass (all currently in Crakehall ward). It proposed no change to Carlton Miniott ward. The Council also proposed that Cotcliffe, Crosby, Thornton-le-Beans, Thornton-le-Moor and Thornton-le-Street parishes (currently in The Thorntons ward) together with the existing Osmotherley ward should form a new single-member Osmotherley with Thorntons ward (described earlier). The remaining parishes in The Thorntons ward would be included in a modified single-member Morton on Swale ward (also described earlier). Under the Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in the wards would be 4 per cent above the district average in Tanfield (unchanged in 2003), 2 per cent above the average in Carlton Miniott (equal to the average in 2003) and 7 per cent above the district average in Osmotherley with Thorntons ward (6 per cent in 2003).

117 Councillors Smith, Weighell and Mrs Latter proposed a different ward configuration in this area at Stage One. They proposed that Tanfield ward, excluding Carthorpe parish which would be included in a modified Leeming ward (as proposed by the Council) together with Carlton Miniott ward, excluding the parishes of Sandhutton (to be included in a new Thorntons ward), Skipton-on-Swale (to be included in a modified Topcliffe ward) and Carlton Miniott (to be included in a modified Thirsk ward), should together form a revised single-member Tanfield ward. Carlton Miniott ward would therefore cease to exist. Furthermore, they proposed that the existing The Thorntons ward should be modified only slightly in the south to include Sandhutton parish and be known simply as Thorntons. Under their proposals the number of

electors per councillor would be 7 per cent below the average in Tanfield ward (9 per cent below in 2003) and equal to the district average in Thorntons ward (1 per cent below in 2003).

118 A resident of Northallerton proposed that the parishes of Thirsk, Sowerby, Carlton Miniott and South Kilvington, together with the parishes of Dalton and Topcliffe, currently in Topcliffe ward, should be brought together to form an urban ward.

119 We carefully considered all of the representations received during Stage One. In view of our proposals for the surrounding areas, notably for a modified Thirsk ward (including Carlton Miniott parish) and no change to Crakehall ward, we adopted the proposals from the three district councillors for a revised single-member Tanfield ward which would achieve good electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We also adopted the councillors' proposed single-member Thorntons ward which would be based largely on the current ward and would achieve excellent electoral equality. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent below the district average in Tanfield ward (9 per cent in 2003) and equal to the district average in Thorntons ward (1 per cent below in 2003).

120 We noted that the electoral equality in Tanfield ward under our recommendations would not be as good as under the District Council's proposals. However, the Council proposed no change to Carlton Miniott ward, which is not compatible with the rest of our recommendations, since our revised Tanfield ward would incorporate parts of the existing Carlton Miniott ward.

121 At Stage Three Hambleton District Council opposed our draft recommendation to include Carlton Miniott parish in a modified Thirsk ward, stating that "the communities involved and the Parish Councils do not wish to see both parishes combined in a District ward". It also objected to the boundaries of the modified Tanfield ward, arguing that "to travel from Pickhill to Kirklington [two parishes in the proposed Tanfield ward] involves a fairly tortuous route and is certainly not a convenient one".

122 Hambleton District Labour Party and The Vale of York Labour Party (North Branch) both opposed the proposal to include Carlton Miniott parish in a modified Thirsk ward, for community identity reasons. The Vale of York Labour Party

also expressed opposition to the modified Tanfield ward, stating that the A1 would bisect the ward. Both Carlton Miniott Parish Council and Thirsk Town Council objected to the proposal to include Carlton Miniott parish in a modified Thirsk ward, with Carlton Miniott Parish Council specifically supporting the present arrangements. Councillor Weighell, member for Bedale ward, supported the modified Tanfield ward, arguing that the communities of Kirklington and Pickhill, although separated by the A1, are linked by an underpass. Councillor Mrs Latter, member for Leeming Bar ward, supported the proposal to include Carlton Miniott in a revised three-member Thirsk ward.

123 Thornton-le-Moor with Thornton-le-Street Parish Council was concerned about the Commission's approach to finding an appropriate balance between electoral equality and community identity, but it made no reference to any specific ward boundaries.

124 Having considered the representations received at Stage Three we have not been persuaded that the community identity of Carlton Miniott would be significantly undermined by our proposal to link it with Thirsk in one district ward. Moreover, in attempting to provide good electoral equality district-wide, it has been necessary to significantly modify existing ward configurations across the district. Our final recommendations for Thirsk ward are detailed overleaf.

125 We have noted the Stage Three respondents' concern that the modified Tanfield ward would be bisected by the A1. In reconfiguring wards to achieve electoral equality across the district it has become apparent that a breach of the A1 is unavoidable at some point. Moreover, we have been made aware at Stage Three of an underpass that links the constituent parishes of Tanfield ward. In the light of this and the absence of alternative proposals which would achieve as good electoral equality throughout the area, we are confirming our draft recommendation for Tanfield ward as final. We also remain satisfied that our draft recommendation for Thorntons ward achieves a good level of electoral equality and meets the statutory criteria, and therefore confirm it as final. Under our final recommendations the electoral variances for Tanfield and Thorntons wards would remain unchanged from our draft recommendations.

Sowerby and Thirsk wards

126 Sowerby and Thirsk wards elect two councillors each, and the number of electors per councillor is 7 per cent above and 24 per cent above the district average respectively (11 per cent and 26 per cent in 2003).

127 At Stage One the Council proposed no change to these wards. Under the Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in the wards would be equal to the average in Sowerby (4 per cent above in 2003) and 16 per cent above the average in Thirsk (18 per cent above in 2003). Councillors Smith, Weighell and Mrs Latter proposed a different ward configuration in this area. They supported the Council's proposal for no change to Sowerby ward, but proposed that Thirsk ward boundary should be extended to include Carlton Miniott parish. Under their proposals the number of electors per councillor would be equal to the average in Sowerby ward (4 per cent above in 2003) and 5 per cent below the average in Thirsk ward (4 per cent below in 2003). Additionally, a resident of Northallerton proposed that the parishes of Thirsk, Sowerby, Carlton Miniott, South Kilvington, Dalton and Topcliffe should form a new ward.

128 Having considered the representations received for this area, we decided to include the Council's proposal for no change to Sowerby ward as it would achieve good electoral equality, reflects community identity and is supported by a number of respondents. However, we remained concerned at the significant under-representation that would persist in the Council's proposed Thirsk ward. While we recognised the Council's preference to keep Thirsk parish as a separate district ward and thus retain the ward's existing boundaries, we concluded that this would be inconsistent with our aim of achieving electoral equality and a fair level of representation across the district as a whole. Therefore we adopted the proposal from the three district councillors for a modified three-member Thirsk ward, comprising the parishes of Thirsk and Carlton Miniott, as this would achieve a more equitable level of representation.

129 At Stage Three Sowerby Parish Council supported our draft recommendation for no change to Sowerby ward, and in the absence of any other representations we confirm our draft recommendation for Sowerby ward as final; the electoral variance would remain unchanged.

130 Hambleton District Council and The Vale of York Labour Party (North Branch) opposed our draft recommendation to include Carlton Miniott parish in a modified Thirsk ward on community identity grounds. Thirsk Town Council and Carlton Miniott Parish Council also opposed our draft recommendation, arguing that the proposal would be detrimental to both communities. Councillor Mrs Latter, member for Leeming Bar ward, supported our draft recommendation for Thirsk ward.

131 We have considered the opposition to our draft recommendation for Thirsk ward, but under a council size of 44 the ward, based upon its existing boundaries, would be over-represented by 18 per cent. We have not been persuaded by the Stage Three evidence regarding community identities in the area that such a level of electoral inequality is justified. In attempting to provide good electoral equality on a district-wide basis, it has been necessary to significantly modify existing ward configurations across the district. Furthermore, we do not consider that the communities of Thirsk or Carlton Miniott would be significantly undermined by our proposal, which would provide a good level of electoral equality for the ward and surrounding area. In the light of this and the evidence of some local support for our proposal, we are confirming our draft recommendation for Thirsk ward as final. Under our final recommendations the electoral variance in Thirsk ward would remain unchanged from the draft recommendation.

Topcliffe, Helperby and Easingwold wards

132 These three wards are situated in the southern half of the district, with Topcliffe and Helperby each electing a single councillor, and Easingwold electing two councillors. Topcliffe ward currently comprises the six parishes of Catton, Dalton, Eldmire with Crakehill, Hutton-Sessay, Sessay and Topcliffe; the number of electors represented by the councillor is 8 per cent above the district average. Helperby ward comprises the eight parishes of Birdforth, Brafferton, Fawdington, Helperby, Myton-on-Swale, Raskelf, Tholthorpe and Thormanby, and has an electoral variance of 1 per cent. The number of electors per councillor in Easingwold ward (and parish) is 15 per cent above the average. The electoral variances in all three wards would deteriorate in 2003.

133 Although under the current arrangements there are electoral imbalances in the area, at Stage One the District Council proposed no change to Topcliffe, Helperby and Easingwold wards, since under a council size of 44 there is some overall improvement in these imbalances. The number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent above the district average in Topcliffe ward (2 per cent in 2003), 7 per cent below in Helperby ward (10 per cent in 2003) and 7 per cent above in Easingwold ward (10 per cent in 2003).

134 Councillors Smith, Weighell and Mrs Latter supported the Council's proposals for no change to Easingwold and Helperby wards. However, they proposed changing the existing Topcliffe ward, extending it in the north-west to include Skipton-on-Swale parish (currently in Carlton Miniott ward). Under their proposals the number of electors per councillor in the revised Topcliffe ward would be 5 per cent above the district average (6 per cent in 2003). In addition a Northallerton resident proposed that the parishes of Dalton and Topcliffe (currently in Topcliffe ward) should be included in a new urban ward.

135 Having considered the representations received at Stage One for this area, we decided to adopt the proposal for no change to Helperby and Easingwold wards, submitted by the District Council and the three councillors, as this would retain reasonable electoral equality and respect existing community identities. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent below the district average in Helperby ward (10 per cent in 2003) and 7 per cent above in Easingwold ward (10 per cent in 2003).

136 In view of our proposed boundary changes for neighbouring wards, we proposed including Skipton-on-Swale parish in Topcliffe ward, as suggested by the three district councillors, thereby allowing the whole of the River Swale to be used as a ward boundary. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent above the average in Topcliffe ward (6 per cent in 2003). We noted that electoral equality in Topcliffe ward would not be as good as under the Council's scheme, but considered that it would still achieve reasonable electoral equality and would facilitate a warding pattern which provides a more equal level of representation throughout the district.

137 At Stage Three we received no representations regarding our draft recommendations for Easingwold, Helperby and Topcliffe wards and therefore confirm them as final.

Tollerton, Shipton and Huby-Sutton wards

138 These three wards are located in the extreme south of the district, each served by a single councillor. Tollerton ward is relatively over-represented, while Shipton and Huby-Sutton are relatively under-represented. Tollerton ward comprises the parishes of Aldwark, Alne, Flawith, Tollerton and Youlton, and has an electoral variance of 4 per cent (unchanged in 2003). Shipton ward comprises Beningbrough, Linton-on-Ouse, Newton-on-Ouse, Overton and Shipton parishes, and has an electoral variance of 12 per cent (13 per cent in 2003). Huby-Sutton ward comprises the parishes of Huby and Sutton-on-the-Forest, and has an electoral variance of 9 per cent (8 per cent in 2003).

139 At Stage One the District Council proposed no change to the boundaries of Tollerton, Shipton and Huby-Sutton wards, although it proposed that the latter ward should be renamed Huby & Sutton. Under a 44-member council the number of electors per councillor in the wards would be 10 per cent below the district average in Tollerton (unchanged in 2003), 5 per cent above in Shipton (unchanged in 2003) and 2 per cent above in Huby & Sutton (1 per cent in 2003). Councillors Smith, Weighell and Mrs Latter supported the Council's proposals for these three wards, but proposed that Huby & Sutton ward should be renamed Sutton-Huby.

140 We carefully considered the representations received, and concluded that the Council's proposed wards for this area would significantly improve electoral equality while largely reflecting the current ward pattern and had the support of the three councillors. We therefore included them as part of our draft recommendations. We also consulted on the Council's proposed ward name of Huby & Sutton, noting that Huby parish has the larger electorate.

141 At Stage Three we received no representations regarding the proposed warding arrangements or ward names in this area and therefore confirm our draft recommendations for Huby & Sutton, Shipton and Tollerton wards as final.

Electoral Cycle

142 At Stage One the District Council proposed that the present system of whole-council elections every four years in Hambleton be retained. Richmond Constituency Liberal Democrats proposed that elections should be by halves in alternate years, in line with the Government's White Paper. While we are aware of the Government's intentions as set out in the White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, we are governed by the current legislation which permits either whole-council elections or elections by thirds for shire district councils. We therefore proposed no change to the Council's present system of whole-council elections.

143 At Stage Three we received no representations regarding the electoral cycle of Hambleton District Council and therefore confirm our draft recommendation for the retention of whole-council elections every four years as final.

Conclusions

144 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided to endorse our draft recommendations in their entirety.

145 We conclude that, in Hambleton:

- (a) there should be a reduction in council size from 47 to 44;
- (b) there should be 30 wards, four less than at present;
- (c) the boundaries of 22 of the existing wards should be modified;
- (d) the Council should continue to hold elections every four years.

146 Figure 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1998 and 2003 electorate figures.

147 As shown in Figure 4, our final recommendations for Hambleton District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the district average from 17 to one. By 2003 only two wards are forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent (both 11 per cent) from the average for the district.

Final Recommendation

Hambleton District Council should comprise 44 councillors serving 30 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A. The whole Council should continue to be elected together every four years.

Figure 4 :
Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	1998 electorate		2003 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	47	44	47	44
Number of wards	34	30	34	30
Average number of electors per councillor	1,405	1,501	1,466	1,566
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	17	1	18	2
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	6	0	6	0

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

148 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, in our draft recommendations report we proposed consequential changes to the warding arrangements for Northallerton parish to reflect the proposed district wards.

149 The parish of Northallerton currently has three wards – North East, South East and West – coterminous with the three existing district wards and represented by four town councillors each. Our proposals for district wards in Northallerton reflected the District Council’s Stage One submission, which was not opposed by the Town Council. However, no proposals were submitted for consequential changes to the electoral arrangements of Northallerton Town Council. We therefore proposed the following consequential changes: Northallerton parish should comprise four parish wards, reflecting the proposed district ward boundaries in the town (see large map), and the existing 12 town councillors should be redistributed between the four wards. While there is not a requirement for electoral equality at parish level, our proposal for the distribution of councillors is based on the number of electors in each ward.

150 In response to our consultation report Northallerton Town Council proposed that the existing parish warding arrangements be retained. However, we must propose new parish ward boundaries as a consequence of the proposed changes in district warding arrangements and are therefore confirming our draft recommendation for the parish wards of Northallerton as final.

Final Recommendation

Northallerton Town Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing four new wards: Central (returning five councillors), North East (three), North West (two) and South (two). The boundaries of the parish wards should be modified to reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of this report.

151 The parish of Appleton Wiske is currently served by five councillors and is not warded. At Stage One Appleton Wiske Parish Council proposed that the number of councillors serving the parish should be increased to seven, as the smaller number sometimes results in “difficulty in achieving a quorum” and the Chairman’s vote being used too frequently, while the larger number would make the Parish Council more representative of organisations and groups within the parish.

152 We had no objection to this request and considered that this level of representation would be appropriate for the Parish Council, and included it as part of our draft recommendations. At Stage Three Appleton Wiske Parish Council supported this proposal and we therefore confirm our draft recommendation to increase the number of parish councillors from five to seven as final.

Final Recommendation

Appleton Wiske Parish Council should comprise seven councillors, two more than at present.

153 At Stage One East Cowton Parish Council proposed the amalgamation of East Cowton and South Cowton parish councils, as this would be “logically advantageous to both parishes”. However, as part of a periodic electoral review we can only recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish councils and cannot create joint parish councils. District councils have the power to make recommendations for changes to parish boundaries and parish councils under the Local Government and Rating Act 1997.

154 In response to Hambleton District Labour Party’s Stage Three proposal for an increase in Great Ayton parish councillors from seven to 11, we do not consider that such an increase would command local support and in particular has not been supported by the Parish Council. We therefore propose no change to the number of parish councillors representing Great Ayton parish.

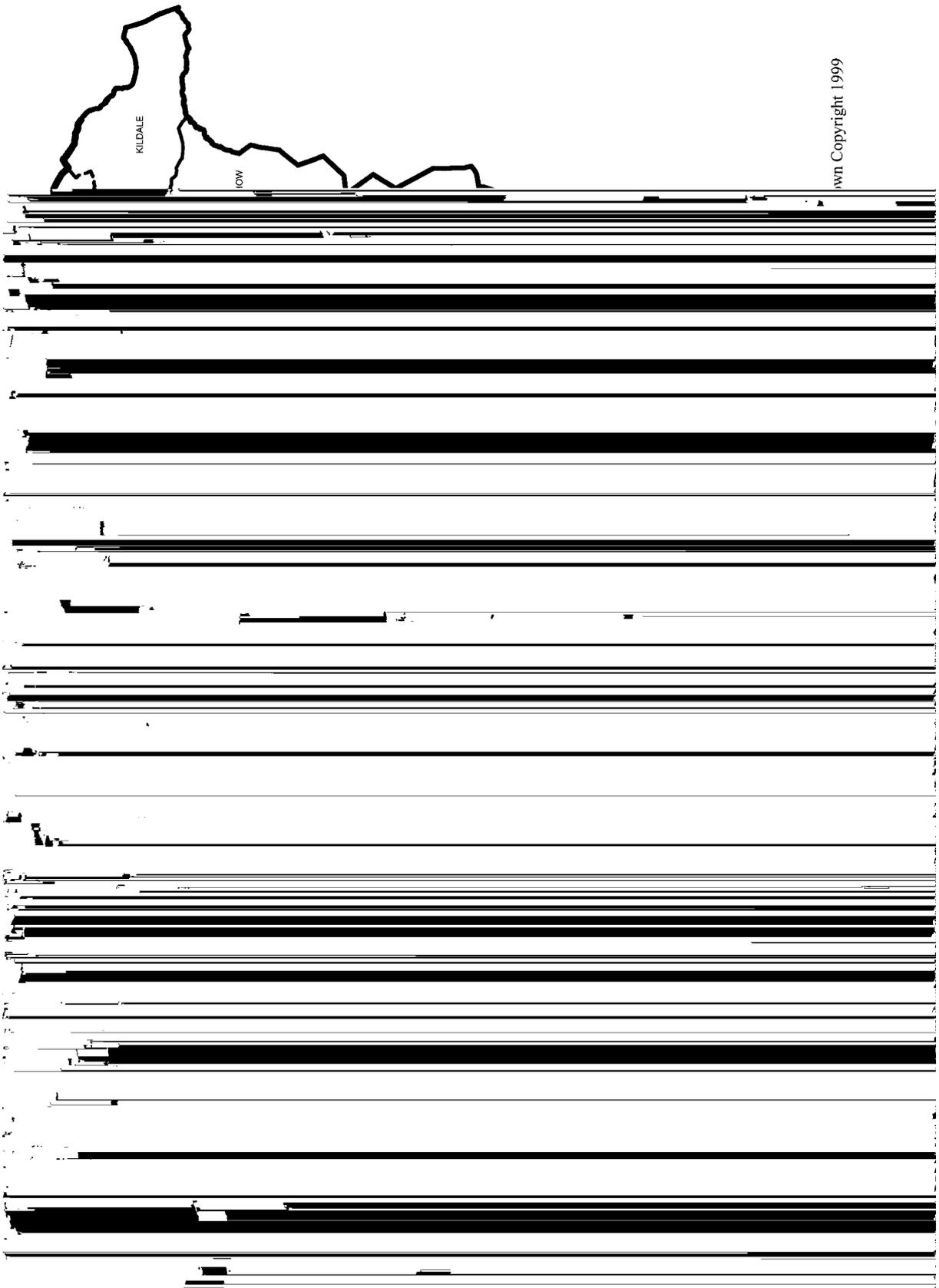
155 In our draft recommendations report we proposed that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of parish and town councils in the district, and are confirming this as final.

Final Recommendation

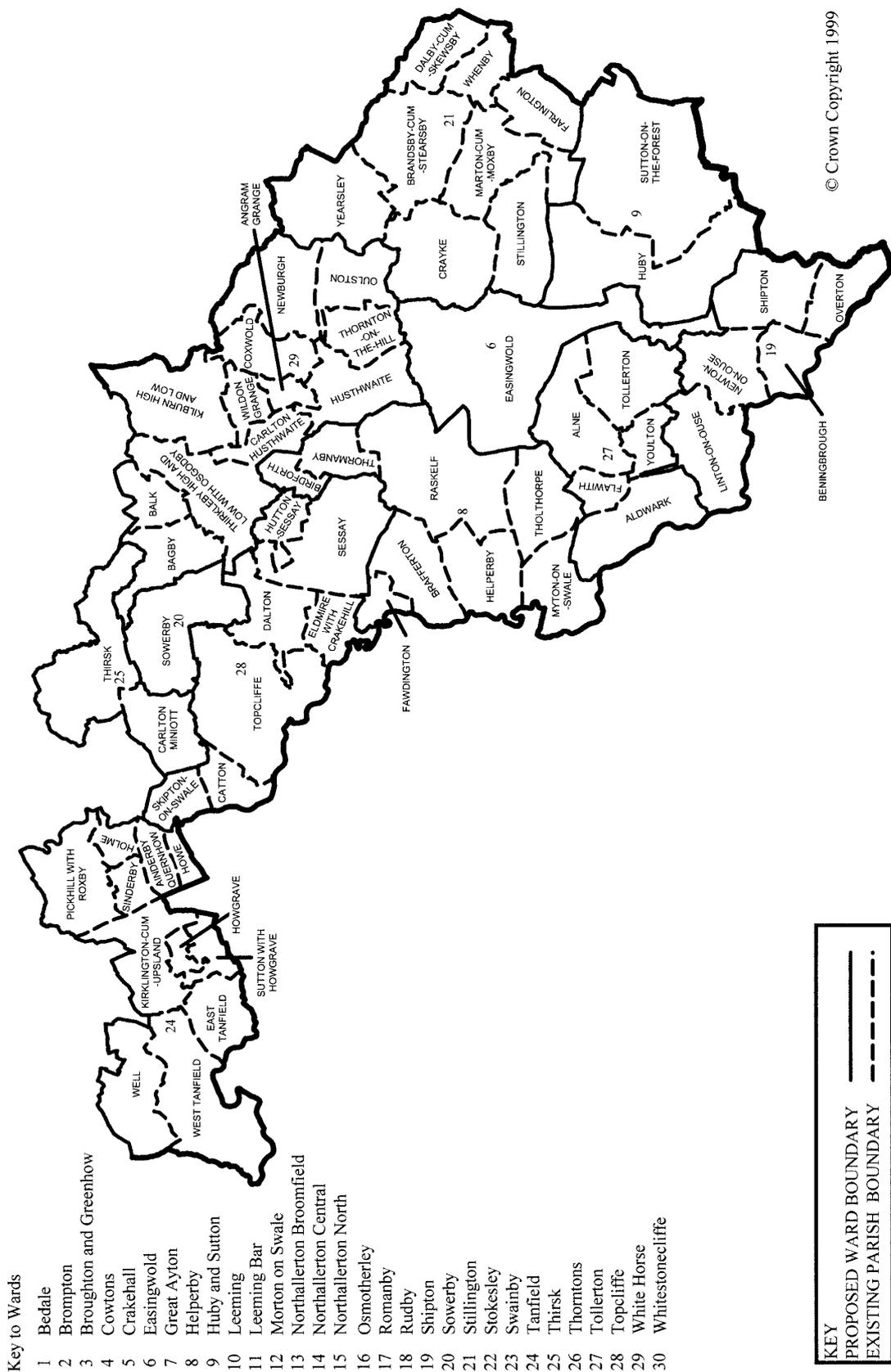
For parish and town councils, whole-council elections should continue to take place every four years, on the same cycle as that of the District Council.

¹⁵⁶ We noted that a number of respondents queried the timing of this PER with reference to the timing of a local parish review. Under the Local Government and Ratings Act 1997, the power to undertake parish reviews was returned to the district council. We therefore suggest that queries relating to a parish review in Hambleton are brought to the attention of Hambleton District Council.

Map 2:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Hambleton



Map 2 (continued):
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Hambleton



6. NEXT STEPS

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

158 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an order. Such an order will not be made earlier than six weeks from the date that our recommendations are submitted to the Secretary of State.

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

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

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for Hambleton: Detailed Mapping

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

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the district and indicates the area which is shown in more detail on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the proposed district warding arrangements for Northallerton and Romanby.

