

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
the City of York

December 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

The Local Government Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament. Our task is to review and make recommendations to the Government on whether there should be changes to local authorities' electoral arrangements.

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

We are statutorily required to review periodically the electoral arrangements – such as the number of councillors representing electors in each area and the number and boundaries of wards and electoral divisions – of every principal local authority in England. In broad terms our objective is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, and the number of councillors and ward names. We can also make recommendations for change to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils in the district.

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

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for the City of York on 16 May 2000.

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

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

- **in 15 of the 29 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the city, and three wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2005 this unequal representation is expected to continue, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 14 wards and by more than 20 per cent in four wards.**

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

- **City of York Council should have 47 councillors, six fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 21 wards, instead of 29 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 25 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of eight, and four wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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

- **In 16 of the proposed 21 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the city average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in 20 wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the city in 2005.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for Haxby Town Council.**

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

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for ten weeks from 12 December 2000. Because we take this consultation very seriously, we may move away from our draft recommendations in the light of Stage Three responses. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations and then make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.**
- **It will then be for the Secretary of State to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. He will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 19 February 2001:

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Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Acomb	3	Acomb ward; Beckfield ward (part); Westfield ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
2	Bishopthorpe	1	Copmanthorpe ward (part – the parishes of Acaster Malbis and Bishopthorpe)	Map 2
3	Clifton	3	Bootham ward; Clifton ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
4	Dunnington	1	Dunnington & Kexby ward (the parishes of Dunnington and Kexby); Strensall ward (part – the parish of Holtby)	Map 2
5	Fulford	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parish of Fulford)	Map 2 and large map
6	Guildhall	3	Clifton ward (part); Fishergate ward (part); Guildhall ward; Heworth ward (part); Walmgate ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
7	Haxby & Wigginton	3	Haxby ward (the parish of Haxby); Wigginton ward (the parish of Wigginton)	Maps 2 and A2
8	Heslington	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parish of Heslington)	Map 2 and large map
9	Heworth	3	Heworth ward (part); Monk ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
10	Heworth Without	1	Heworth Without ward (the parish of Heworth Without); Monk ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
11	Holgate	3	Beckfield ward (part); Bishophill ward (part); Holgate ward	Map 2 and large map
12	Huntington & New Earswick	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Huntington and New Earswick)	Map 2
13	Knavesmire	3	Bishophill ward (part); Knavesmire ward (part); Micklegate ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
14	Micklegate	3	Micklegate ward (part); Foxwood ward (part); Westfield ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
15	Osbalwick	1	Osbalwick ward (the parish of Osbalwick); Strensall ward (part – the parish of Murton)	Map 2 and large map
16	Rural West York	3	Upper Poppleton ward (the parishes of Askham Bryan, Askham Richard, Hessay, Nether Poppleton, Rufforth and Upper Poppleton); Copmanthorpe ward (part – the parish of Copmanthorpe)	Map 2

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
17	Skelton, Rawcliffe & Clifton Without	3	Clifton Without ward (the parish of Clifton Without); Rawcliffe & Skelton ward (the parishes of Rawcliffe and Skelton)	Map 2 and large map
18	Strensall	2	Strensall ward (part – the parishes of Earswick, Stockton-on-the-Forest, Strensall and Towthorpe)	Map 2
19	Walmgate	3	Fishergate ward (part); Walmgate ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
20	Westfield	2	Foxwood ward (part); Micklegate ward (part); Westfield ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
21	Wheldrake	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Deighton, Elvington, Naburn and Wheldrake)	Map 2

Notes: 1 The city of York itself is the only unparished area.

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

3 We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors.

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for the City of York

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Acomb	3	9,532	3,177	4	9,737	3,246	-1
2 Bishopthorpe	1	3,158	3,158	3	3,265	3,265	0
3 Clifton	3	9,223	3,074	0	9,848	3,283	0
4 Dunnington	1	2,971	2,971	-3	3,059	3,059	-6
5 Fulford	1	2,197	2,197	-28	3,284	3,284	0
6 Guildhall	3	9,185	3,062	0	9,968	3,323	2
7 Haxby & Wigginton	3	10,449	3,483	14	10,668	3,556	9
8 Heslington	1	3,448	3,448	13	3,538	3,538	8
9 Heworth	3	9,579	3,193	4	9,868	3,289	1
10 Heworth Without	1	3,165	3,165	3	3,206	3,206	-2
11 Holgate	3	8,839	2,946	-4	9,926	3,309	1
12 Huntington & New Earswick	3	9,615	3,205	5	10,044	3,348	2
13 Knavesmire	3	9,385	3,128	2	9,977	3,326	2
14 Micklegate	3	9,118	3,039	-1	9,505	3,168	-3
15 Osbaldwick	1	2,586	2,586	-15	3,378	3,378	3
16 Rural West York	3	8,186	2,729	-11	8,700	2,900	-11
17 Skelton, Rawcliffe & Clifton Without	3	8,947	2,982	-3	10,167	3,389	4
18 Strensall	2	5,568	2,784	-9	6,219	3,110	-5
19 Walmgate	3	9,351	3,117	2	9,773	3,258	0
20 Westfield	2	6,302	3,151	3	6,365	3,183	-3
21 Wheldrake	1	3,009	3,009	-2	3,254	3,254	-1
Totals	47	143,813	-	-	153,749	-	-
Averages	-	-	3,060	-	-	3,271	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on the City of York Council's submission.

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the City of York unitary authority on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the City of York as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. We completed reviews of the seven two-tier districts in North Yorkshire in November 1999. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 This is our first detailed review of the electoral arrangements of City of York unitary authority. The last such review of the former York City Council was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in July 1976 (Report No. 166). Since undertaking that review, City of York Council has become a unitary authority on revised boundaries (April 1996). The new unitary authority area comprises the previous York City area and parts of the former districts of Harrogate, Ryedale and Selby. Electoral arrangements were also considered as part of the Commission's reviews of local government structure, although given the constraints on the timetable for those reviews and the need to afford priority to structural concerns, a detailed review of electoral arrangements was not possible. The electoral arrangements of the new unitary authority were put in place as part of the Structural and Boundary Change Order which abolished the two-tier York City Council and the County Council electoral divisions covering the area of the new authority.

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, as far as possible, equality of representation across the district as a whole. Having regard to the statutory criteria, our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable. We will require particular justification for schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

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

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

Figure 3: Stages of the Review

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

10 In July 1998 the Government published a White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/2000 PER programme, including the City of York Council, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the October 1999 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State’s intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas. The proposals have been taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, provides that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities’ electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Order under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections, and our present *Guidance*.

11 Stage One began on 16 May 2000, when we wrote to City of York Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified North Yorkshire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Yorkshire Local Councils Association, parish and town councils in the city, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the city, the Members of the European Parliament for the Yorkshire & the 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 City Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 4 September 2000.

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

13 Stage Three began on 12 December 2000 and will end on 19 February 2001. This stage involves publishing the draft recommendations in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations.**

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

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

15 The City of York Council, which became a unitary authority in April 1996, is bounded by the district of Selby to the south, the borough of Harrogate to the west, the districts of Hambleton and Ryedale to the north-west and north-east respectively, and by East Riding of Yorkshire unitary authority to the east. Covering some 27,200 hectares, and with a population of some 177,350, York has a population density of just under 7 persons per hectare. The city council area contains 32 parishes, but the city of York itself is unparished and comprises almost 60 per cent of the council's total electorate.

16 York is famous for York Minster, the largest Gothic cathedral in Europe, and has a number of other attractions including the Castle Museum, the National Railway Museum, the Jorvik Viking Centre and the racecourse at the Knavesmire. Its main transport links include the GNER East Coast mainline railway, the A64 trunk road to Leeds and the A19 trunk road to Sunderland (and the North East) and the A1 motorway is in close proximity.

17 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'.

18 The electorate of the district is 143,813 (February 2000). The Council presently has 53 members who are elected from 29 wards, 15 of which are within the urban, unparished area of the city of York itself and the remainder are predominantly rural. Three of the wards are each represented by three councillors, 18 are each represented by two councillors and eight are single-member wards. The Council is elected as a whole every four years.

19 As outlined earlier, City of York Council became a unitary authority on revised boundaries in April 1996. The new unitary authority area comprises the previous York City area and parts of the former districts of Harrogate, Ryedale and Selby. There has been an increase in the electorate in the unparished city area of the council, with around 5 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing development. However, much of the recent electorate growth has been as a result of housing development in the parished areas on the outskirts of the former York City Council area, most notably in Clifton Without.

20 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,713 electors, which the City Council forecasts will increase to 2,901 by the year 2005 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 15 of the 29 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the city average, in three wards by more than 20 per cent and in one ward by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Clifton Without ward where the councillor represents 31 per cent more electors than the city average.

Figure 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Acomb	2	5,346	2,673	-1	5,484	2,742	-5
2 Beckfield	2	5,247	2,624	-3	5,965	2,983	3
3 Bishophill	2	5,144	2,572	-5	5,632	2,816	-3
4 Bootham	2	4,849	2,425	-11	5,301	2,651	-9
5 Clifton	2	4,940	2,470	-9	5,113	2,557	-12
6 Clifton Without	1	3,566	3,566	31	4,300	4,300	48
7 Copmanthorpe	2	6,502	3,251	20	6,750	3,375	16
8 Dunnington & Kexby	1	2,836	2,836	5	2,921	2,921	1
9 Fishergate	2	6,080	3,040	12	6,345	3,173	9
10 Foxwood	3	7,566	2,522	-7	7,725	2,575	-11
11 Fulford	1	2,197	2,197	-19	3,284	3,284	13
12 Guildhall	2	6,490	3,245	20	7,091	3,546	22
13 Haxby	3	7,383	2,461	-9	7,538	2,513	-13
14 Heslington	1	3,448	3,448	27	3,538	3,538	22
15 Heworth	2	5,234	2,617	-4	5,396	2,698	-7
16 Heworth Without	1	1,933	1,933	-29	1,974	1,974	-32
17 Holgate	2	5,030	2,515	-7	5,399	2,700	-7
18 Huntington & New Earswick	3	9,615	3,205	18	10,044	3,348	15
19 Knavesmire	2	5,019	2,510	-8	5,123	2,562	-12
20 Micklegate	2	5,293	2,647	-2	5,555	2,778	-4
21 Monk	2	5,577	2,789	3	5,704	2,852	-2
22 Osbaldwick	1	2,250	2,250	-17	3,035	3,035	5
23 Rawcliffe & Skelton	2	5,381	2,691	-1	5,867	2,934	1
24 Strensall	2	6,039	3,020	11	6,700	3,350	15
25 Upper Poppleton	2	4,796	2,398	-12	5,169	2,585	-11
26 Walmgate	2	5,400	2,700	0	5,739	2,870	-1

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
27 Westfield	2	4,577	2,289	-16	4,673	2,337	-19
28 Wheldrake	1	3,009	3,009	11	3,254	3,254	12
29 Wigginton	1	3,066	3,066	13	3,130	3,130	8
Totals	53	143,813	–	–	153,749	–	–
Averages	–	–	2,713	–	–	2,901	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by the City of York 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 2000, electors in Heworth Without ward are relatively over-represented by 29 per cent, while electors in Clifton Without ward are relatively under-represented by 31 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Map 1: Existing Wards in the City of York

3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

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

22 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met officers and members from the City Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 38 representations during Stage One, including four city-wide schemes from the City of York Council, the Liberal Democrat Council Group, York Labour Party and a local resident, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the City Council and the Commission.

City of York Council

23 In its Stage One submission the Council stated that it had consulted locally on six schemes which were based on three different council sizes and a mixture of ward patterns. It further stated that in formulating its final scheme it had “tried to identify and preserve community identity especially in the rural parished areas”. The scheme officially submitted by the Council proposed reducing council size by seven, from 53 to 46 members, and reducing the number of wards by five, from 29 to 24. It argued that this reduction in council size would “not impact negatively on the operation of the Council’s political management structures”, further contending that “the introduction of new political management arrangements in York has streamlined the decision making process leaving non Executive members freer to undertake their representative role ... in their wards and to get involved in the Scrutiny process” and that it had discovered that “there are more than enough members for the committees within the new structure”.

24 The Council’s scheme was based on a mix of single and multi-member wards (as at present), with predominantly three-member wards in the unparished city area. Three of its proposed wards would combine parished and unparished areas, but its proposals would not involve any parish warding. The Council did not submit any names for its proposed wards, stating that it hoped to be able to propose “suitable ward names” at Stage Three. It also proposed retaining the current system of whole-council elections every four years. Overall the Council’s scheme would improve the present level of electoral equality, although four wards would initially vary by more than 10 per cent from the city average. However, by 2005 no ward would vary by more than 8 per cent. The Council’s proposal is summarised at Appendix B.

Liberal Democrat Council Group

25 The Liberal Democrat Council Group (the Liberal Democrat Group) submitted a city-wide scheme based on 54 members (an increase of one), representing a mixture of single, two and three-member wards. It opposed the Council’s proposed 46-member council, arguing that it was “substantially reduced in size and hence offers less accountability”. The Liberal Democrat Group put forward changes to all of the existing wards, reducing the total number of wards by seven, to 22. Seven of its proposed wards would combine parished and unparished areas, and as a

consequence four parishes would be warded. It proposed 12 new ward names. Under the Liberal Democrat Group's scheme, three wards would initially vary by more than 10 per cent from the city average, but by 2005 no ward would vary by more than 7 per cent.

York Labour Party

26 York Labour Party submitted a city-wide scheme based on 54 members, stating that its submission contained "critical comments on" and was "a direct response to that [scheme] produced by the Liberal Democrats". It stated that it had "an open mind on the question of the number of elected members". It noted that "City of York Council has just introduced new managerial arrangements with an executive and scrutiny/representative division", arguing that "in the new system it might be desirable to reduce the number of councillors as in the City of York Council's submission".

27 The Labour Party's preferred scheme was based on a uniform pattern of 18 three-member wards which it believed would facilitate annual elections. However, it also submitted an 'Option B' which divided six of its proposed wards in the parished area into single and two-member wards. Under its preferred scheme, four wards would combine parished and unparished areas; however, both its schemes would result in the consequential warding of three parishes. It did not submit any proposed ward names for either option. Under the Labour Party's preferred scheme, one ward would initially vary by more than 10 per cent from the city average. However, by 2005, no ward would vary by more than 10 per cent.

Members of Parliament

28 Hugh Bayley MP supported the retention of "separate representation for York's urban core and for the outer suburbs and villages", arguing that "this is important because the suburbs and villages, and their parish councils, have always stressed their different needs and separate identities from the urban core". He expressed support for annual elections for the council as he was of the view that they were "good for democratic accountability and popular with the public", and as a consequence stated that he supported a uniform pattern of three-member wards (which would facilitate annual elections). He acknowledged that the Council's scheme had merit in that it retained separate representation for the urban core and the parished area, but stated that "it does not have the advantage of three-member wards for all parts of the city [council]".

29 John Grogan MP supported the City of York Council's proposed scheme, also stating that "it is crucial for democratic accountability that the wards in [his] constituency do not significantly increase in size geographically".

Parish and Town Councils

30 We received representations from 18 parish and town councils. Nether Poppleton Parish Council was of the view that a reduction in council size from 54 to 46 members would result in an increase in the councillor:elector ratio which would put "an even greater burden of duty on each of our elected members". It was of the view that a two-member ward combining the parishes of Upper Poppleton, Nether Poppleton and Rufforth "would be numerically correct and probably

acceptable”, but also expressed support for a ward covering all the parishes on the west side of the city area. Hessay Parish Council objected to the Council’s proposal to include the parish in a ward with part of the unparished, urban area, as it believed that this would “undermine [its] rural status”. It stated that it would prefer to retain its association with the current Upper Poppleton ward, but also suggested that the ward could be enlarged to include the parish of Skelton and be represented by two members.

31 Rufforth Parish Council wished to avoid combining rural and urban areas, contending that “the new ward boundaries should not cross the old city boundaries”. It supported the retention of the current two-member Upper Poppleton ward, but proposed that it be renamed Poppleton & Rufforth ward to “reflect the area of the ward better”. However, it also suggested a three-member Rural West York ward comprising the existing Upper Poppleton ward and Copmanthorpe parish. It supported the retention of whole-council elections every four years.

32 Askham Bryan Parish Council opposed the Council’s proposal to include it in a ward with part of the unparished, urban area. It stated that it wished to remain a rural ward. Askham Richard Parish Council also opposed this proposal, stating that it did not want to be included in a ward with part of the urban area. It stated that if the current Upper Poppleton ward were retained it would be “a more natural ward, keeping us wholly rural” .

33 Copmanthorpe Parish Council did not consider “that there needs to be any change to the present parish of Copmanthorpe”. Bishopthorpe Parish Council acknowledged that it “would be difficult to say [it] would object” to retaining the current Copmanthorpe ward, but expressed a preference for single-member wards in the parished area. It also commented on the local consultation undertaken by the City Council. Acaster Malbis Parish Council did not have any comments to make at this stage.

34 Heslington Parish Council wished to retain the existing arrangements affecting the parish. It argued that any changes would “divide the community ... and undermine our ability to act as an effective parish council”. Elvington Parish Council supported the Council’s proposal to retain the current single-member Wheldrake ward unchanged, arguing that this would be “in the best interests of representation of the people”. Stockton-on-the-Forest Parish Council did not have any comments to make at this stage.

35 Strensall & Towthorpe Parish Council opposed any proposal that would split the two parishes, stating that it would prefer the parishes of Strensall and Towthorpe to form a ward of their own. However, it also submitted two other alternative combinations of parishes to form new wards, with a further third, less favoured option. It also stated that it wished to amalgamate the parishes of Strensall and Towthorpe into one parish, “particularly as they are already administered as one”. Huntington Parish Council wished to retain the current parish council electoral arrangements unchanged. It was of the view that the current Huntington & New Earswick ward is “not ideal”, proposing that the parish should “be paired with Old Earswick [parish] instead of New Earswick [parish] whilst still retaining three member representation”. It also stated that it would “reject any notion of a divided Huntington”.

36 Haxby Town Council stated that it supported the creation of a new three-member ward comprising the parishes of Haxby and Wigginton. It argued that this proposal “preserves the existing community links ... and is the only realistic expression of the realities on the ground”. It also requested that the parish be divided into four new town council wards (two three-member wards and two four-member wards), but stated that it was “content to leave the delineation of these wards to the discretion of the Commission”. Wigginton Parish Council recognised that in order to address the under-representation in the current Wigginton ward it may need to be joined with other areas, stating that it felt that it had “more in common with wards, which like us, are [to] the north of the outer ring road”. It further contended that it “would be of more benefit to our residents” if the parish were linked “with our neighbours Haxby than those in the more urban communities such as Clifton or Rawcliffe”.

37 Skelton Parish Council supported the Council’s proposed three-member ward comprising the parishes of Skelton, Rawcliffe and Clifton Without. Rawcliffe Parish Council opposed the combination of urban and rural areas to form wards. It also expressed its support for the Council’s proposal for a three-member ward comprising the parishes of Skelton, Rawcliffe and Clifton Without. Clifton Without Parish Council argued that the population of its area has increased considerably since the last review, and that added to this “is the number of larger planning permissions given for housing development, some of which is already proceeding”. It suggested that “serious consideration be given to the increase in the representation of [the] parish” in order to address the under-representation that currently exists in the ward.

Other Representations

38 We received a further 15 representations from three local political party organisations, one city councillor, two parish councillors, three residents’ associations and six local residents.

39 A local resident submitted a city-wide scheme, proposing a 57-member council, an increase of four councillors. He was of the view that this increase was justified, arguing that since York became a unitary authority “anecdotal evidence suggests a huge increase in workload for many councillors”. He based his scheme on 28 two-member wards and one single-member ward, contending that this would “allow biennial elections across almost the whole city whilst retaining tolerably small wards in rural areas”. He also submitted alternative options for some of his proposed wards and commented on the six schemes that the Council had consulted on. Six of his proposed wards would combine parished and unparished areas, although only one parish would be warded. He proposed 10 new ward names. Under his scheme two wards would vary initially by more than 10 per cent, although by 2005, no ward would vary by more than 10 per cent. He further commented on how the revised electoral arrangements would affect the operation of the Council’s Ward Committees (Neighbourhood Forums).

40 York Liberal Democrat Federation broadly supported the Liberal Democrat Group’s scheme, particularly “its attempts to maintain the community identity of the parished areas while aiming for numerical equality” and “the avoidance of a reduction of the total number of councillors”. However, it opposed the proposal to split Huntington parish between three wards, arguing that it would be “socially divisive” and that such a split of the parish would result in it being divided between three parliamentary constituencies. Haxby & Wigginton Branch Liberal Democrats were

of the view that the creation of a new ward comprising the parishes of Haxby and Wigginton could be justified as “there is sufficient communal identity between the two parishes”. It also stated that there are well-established links between the two areas which have “clearly identifiable communities”.

41 York Green Party expressed the view that wider public consultation on the proposals should have been conducted by the City Council. It objected to the Council’s proposal to reduce the number of councillors, arguing that many members are already over worked. It contended that such a reduction would “make the council more remote and unaccountable to its electors” and would have a “knock-on impact on the operation of Neighbourhood Forums/Ward Committees”. It also stated that it opposed some of the “artificial boundaries” put forward by the Council. It further stated that it had considered the city-wide scheme submitted by a local resident, commenting that it preferred “the general approach” of the scheme which created “generally smaller wards which we feel are more likely to relate to natural communities”.

42 City Councillor Hopton opposed the Council’s proposal to combine part of the urban, unparished area with a number of parishes to the west of the city, arguing that their “interests, issues and concerns are very different”. She suggested that Upper Poppleton ward could be linked with Skelton parish and become a two-member ward to secure good electoral equality while being an entirely rural ward. She also stated that if alternative proposals were put forward she “would request that we remain a wholly rural ward”.

43 The Chairman of Nether Poppleton Parish Council proposed retaining the status quo. However, he also expressed a preference for a 51-member council, comprising all three-member wards, stating that a three-member ward in the western part of the rural area would reflect local community identities. He expressed opposition to combining urban and rural areas and also objected to proposals which would split parishes between wards. Poppleton Ward Residents’ Association proposed retaining the current Upper Poppleton ward, although it suggested that the ward should be named Poppleton & Rufforth ward. It opposed any combination of parished and unparished areas, suggesting that it would support a larger ward comprising all of the parishes to the west of the city, which would keep the rural area separate from the urban area. It proposed that this new ward could be named Rural West York. It also commented on the consultation process undertaken by City of York Council. A parish councillor for Rufforth Parish commented on the electoral and administrative arrangements of Rufforth Parish Council.

44 York Federation of Residents’ & Community Associations expressed dissatisfaction with the way in which the Council carried out its local consultation. It also supported the proposal that rural areas should not be combined with urban areas. Broadway Area Good Neighbour and Residents’ Association (BAGNARA) commented on the publicity of the review, requesting that more time should be allocated for consultation with local residents. It also wanted to know how the proposed ward boundary changes would affect the local Ward Committees [Neighbourhood Forums].

45 A local resident opposed the Council’s proposals for larger, three-member wards as he believed that “larger wards will have a damaging ... effect on the quality of local government” and any consequential effect on Ward Committees/Neighbourhood Forums would “damage proper

consultation”. He supported smaller wards, contending that “two councillors per ward would work better. A variable number of councillors [per ward] would work better still and allow greater flexibility.” He was of the view that a number of the Council’s proposed boundaries would “divide traditional communities”.

46 Two local residents from Heslington parish expressed concern that as a consequence of York University being situated within the parish there are no local villagers on the parish council, suggesting that the parish could be warded so that the university area comprises one parish ward and the village of Heslington forms another. A local resident commented on the community identities of number of areas within the city of York and suggested a number of boundary modifications in those areas. One other local resident commented on the current Osbaldwick and Heworth Without wards.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

47 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for the City of York is, so far as reasonably practicable and consistent with the statutory criteria, to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the identities and interests of local communities – and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

48 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 next five years. We must also have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

49 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.

50 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, the objective of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of electoral equality, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity and interests. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates.

Electorate Forecasts

51 The City Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of around 7 per cent from 143,813 to 153,749 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expects most of the growth to be in Fulford ward, although a significant amount is also expected in Osbaldwick and Clifton Without wards. The Council has estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the City Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

52 We accept that forecasting electorates is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the City Council’s figures, are content that they represent the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council Size

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

54 City of York Council presently has 53 members. During Stage One we received proposals based on a number of different council sizes. The City Council proposed reducing council size by seven, from 53 to 46 members. It argued that this reduction in council size would "not impact negatively on the operation of the Council's political management structures", arguing that it would "in no way impinge[s] upon the Council's ability to elect members onto the Executive, nor on the Executive's capacity to undertake their duties and responsibilities". It further contended that "the introduction of new political management arrangements in York has streamlined the decision making process leaving non Executive members freer to undertake their representative role ... in their wards and to get involved in the Scrutiny process" and that it had discovered that "there are more than enough members for the committees within the new structure". The Council's proposed scheme was endorsed by the Labour and Conservative Groups.

55 The Liberal Democrat Group submitted a city-wide scheme based on 54 members, an increase of one, which was broadly supported by the York Liberal Democrat Federation. It stated that "Local Government Reorganisation in 1995 saw a major reduction in the number of councillors in the area", contending that the councillor:elector ratio under its proposed council size "would not be too low in the context of an authority of the type and locality". It opposed the Council's proposed 46-member council, arguing that it was "substantially reduced in size and hence offers less accountability".

56 York Labour Party stated that it had "an open mind on the question of the number of elected members". It noted that "City of York Council has just introduced new managerial arrangements with an executive and scrutiny/representative division", arguing that "in the new system it might be desirable to reduce the number of councillors as in the City of York Council's submission". However, it submitted a city-wide scheme based on 54 members which it said contained "critical comments on" and was "a direct response to that produced by the Liberal Democrats".

57 A local resident submitted a city-wide scheme based on a 57-member council size, an increase of four members. He was of the view that an increase in the number of councillors was justified, arguing that since the creation of the new City of York unitary authority "anecdotal evidence suggests a huge increase in workload for many councillors". He opposed the Council's proposal to reduce council size to 46 members, contending that this would be "inherently undesirable".

58 York Green Party opposed a reduction in council size to 46 members as "many members are already 'worked off their feet'", arguing that a reduced council size "will make the council more remote and unaccountable to its electors".

59 We have also noted that, as part of the Council's consultation process, the majority of parishes expressed support for a reduced council size, the most favoured being a 46-member

council with the second most favoured being a 51-member council. We also noted that some individual parishes expressed support for more than one council size, but that the primary concern of almost all of the parishes was to express support for a scheme which would retain separate representation for the parished and unparished areas of the council, in order to secure the best reflection of the identities and interests of local communities. This view was also supported by Hugh Bayley MP, who supported the retention of “separate representation for York’s urban core and for the outer suburbs and villages” as he was of the view that this was important “because the suburbs and villages, and their parish councils, have always stressed their different needs and separate identities from the urban core”.

60 The Commission will not generally seek a substantial increase or decrease in council size but will be prepared to consider the case for change where there is persuasive evidence. Having considered all of the representations received at Stage One (including those received by the City of York Council which were included as an appendix to its submission), we have noted that there is significant opposition to the combination of unparished and parished areas of the council in the same ward. We have carefully considered all of the city-wide schemes submitted at Stage One and have noted that the Council’s scheme would secure the smallest number of mixed parished and unparished wards and, in our view, would therefore secure the best reflection of the identities and interests of local communities, while also securing good electoral equality. Furthermore, the Council’s scheme would not require any parish warding, whereas the other schemes submitted, while securing reasonable electoral equality, would result in higher levels of mixed parished/unparished wards (with differing levels of consequential parish warding), thereby, in our opinion, providing a poorer reflection of local community identity and less identifiable boundaries in a number of areas.

61 We acknowledge that the Council’s proposals would result in a notable reduction in council size, from 53 to 46 members, and have noted the concerns expressed by some local interested parties. However, we are of the view that the Council has submitted sufficient evidence to demonstrate that a reduced council size would not have a detrimental effect on the operation of the Council’s internal political management. In addition, we have noted that there is also some broad support locally for a reduced council size from a number of parishes, York Labour Party and John Grogan MP, as it would enable a better reflection of the identities and interests of the communities in the parished and unparished areas.

62 We have also noted that some respondents have questioned how the new electoral wards will affect the City Council’s current Ward Committee (Neighbourhood Forum) structure and operation. However, we are of the view that such local arrangements are a matter for the City Council to determine and are not an issue that we can take into consideration when formulating our proposals.

63 We therefore propose basing our draft recommendations on the Council’s scheme. However, in order to secure a slightly better reflection of local communities we are proposing modifications to its proposals in the western part of the city. The Council proposed combining the north-western part of the current Beckfield ward from the unparished urban area with four rural parishes to the west of it to form a single-member ward. Officers from the Commission having visited the area, we are of the view that this would not provide for a satisfactory reflection of local communities.

We therefore propose retaining the north-western part of the unparished Beckfield ward within a ward in the urban area of the city.

64 However, as a consequence of this modification, we have noted that the level of representation between the parished area, the unparished city area to the east of the River Ouse and the unparished city area to the west of the river would not be balanced. Under a 46-member council the parished area would be entitled to 20.3 councillors initially (20.6 by 2005), the unparished area to the east of the river would be entitled to 11.9 councillors (11.8 by 2005) and the unparished area to the west of the river would be entitled to 13.8 councillors (13.6 by 2005). However, under the Council's scheme the unparished area to the west of the river would only be allocated 13 councillors, which would mean that it would be slightly under-represented both initially and by 2005. In view of this imbalance of representation between the three areas of the council, and given that the area to the west of the river would be entitled to additional representation, we have considered alternative council sizes. We have concluded that if an additional councillor were allocated to the unparished area to the west of the river, providing for an overall council size of 47 members (a reduction of six from the existing council size), a better balance of representation across the City Council area would be achieved.

65 Under a 47-member council size the parished area would be entitled to 20.7 councillors (21 by 2005), the unparished area to the west of the river would merit 14.1 councillors (13.9 by 2005) and the unparished eastern area would merit 12.2 councillors (12.1 by 2005); under our modified 47-member scheme these areas would be allocated 21, 14, and 12 councillors respectively. Therefore, in view of the improvement to the balance of representation and the fact that each area of the council would be represented by the appropriate number of councillors, and having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we have concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 47 members.

Ward Names

66 In its Stage One submission the Council did not provide ward names for any of its proposed wards, which were simply numbered for identification. It further stated that "it is hoped that the Council will be given the opportunity in Stage Three to propose suitable ward names". The city-wide schemes submitted by the Liberal Democrat Group and a local resident included names for all of their proposed wards, and a number of respondents suggested names for individual wards.

67 As outlined above, we propose basing our draft recommendations on the City Council's scheme. However, given that it did not submit any proposed ward names, we have given careful consideration to all the representations received and we are putting forward our own proposed ward names for consultation which, in our view, reflect local community identities. We have sought to incorporate locally derived proposals where possible, while also having regard to existing ward names and the names of the parishes which have been grouped to form wards where relevant. However, we would welcome views on all our proposed ward names during Stage Three.

Parish Administrative Boundaries

68 During Stage One a number of parish councils and other respondents suggested slight modifications to parish boundaries, in order to address a number of minor boundary anomalies. The joint parish council of Strensall and Towthorpe parishes proposed that the two should be amalgamated into one parish (on the basis that they are currently administered as one).

69 We have no power to recommend changes to parish administrative boundaries as part of this PER. Nevertheless, given that, where they exist, parishes form the building blocks for district wards, we feel it appropriate to draw attention to the fact that, during the course of our review, a number of parish boundary anomalies have been identified.

70 Under the provisions of the Local Government and Rating Act 1997, two-tier district councils and unitary authorities may undertake reviews of the parish arrangements in their areas and make recommendations to the Secretary of State. When we have completed our PER of the City of York, we believe there would be considerable benefit in the City of York Council conducting such a review.

Electoral Arrangements

71 In view of the degree of consensus behind large elements of the City Council's proposals and the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, and given that our proposed increase to its proposed council size would not have too great an impact on the level of electoral equality that would be secured under its proposals in the unparished area to the east of the River Ouse and in the majority of the parished area, we have concluded that we should base our recommendations on the City Council's scheme. Even under a 47-member council size we consider that the majority of this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or other schemes submitted at Stage One.

72 However, in order to improve electoral equality further and having regard to local community identities and interests, we have decided to move away from the City Council's proposals in the western half of the city council area and in one area to the north of the city. For city warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) **The parished area**
 - Upper Poppleton and Copmanthorpe wards
 - Fulford, Heslington and Wheldrake wards
 - Dunnington & Kexby, Strensall, Osbaldwick and Heworth Without wards
 - Huntington & New Earswick, Haxby, Wigginton, Rawcliffe & Skelton and Clifton Without wards

- (b) **York city (the unparished area)**
 - Bishophill, Knavesmire, Micklegate and Foxwood wards
 - Westfield, Acomb, Beckfield and Holgate wards
 - Guildhall, Fishergate and Walmgate wards
 - Clifton, Bootham, Monk and Heworth wards

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

The parished area

Upper Poppleton and Copmanthorpe wards

74 These two two-member wards are situated in the parished area to the west and south-west of the city. Upper Poppleton ward comprises the parishes of Askham Bryan, Askham Richard, Hessay, Nether Poppleton, Rufforth and Upper Poppleton. The number of electors per councillor in Upper Poppleton ward is currently 12 per cent below the city average (11 per cent below by 2005). Copmanthorpe ward (comprising the parishes of Acaster Malbis, Bishopthorpe and Copmanthorpe) is currently under-represented by 20 per cent (16 per cent by 2005).

75 City of York Council proposed a new single-member Ward Ten comprising the parishes of Upper Poppleton and Nether Poppleton. It contended that “the two villages are very closely linked both demographically and by communities”. It also proposed a new single-member Ward Eleven comprising the parishes of Rufforth, Hessay, Askham Bryan, Askham Richard and the north-western part of the current Beckfield ward from the unparished city area. It argued that the parished area was “too small to stand alone in a single-member ward” and therefore proposed that “there needs to be an intake of voters from the city area” in order to secure good electoral equality. It stated that “whilst this [proposal] results in a mix of urban and rural communities, the number of voters in each is very similar, ensuring that the views of one part of the ward would not swamp the other”.

76 The Council further proposed a slight modification to the current Copmanthorpe ward. It proposed a two-member Ward Fourteen, comprising the current Copmanthorpe ward and the Middlethorpe area from the southern part of the current Knavesmire ward from the unparished city area. It argued that “Middlethorpe has a strong sense of community identity with Bishopthorpe using the facilities provided by the village”. Under a council size of 46, the number of electors per councillor in the Council’s proposed Wards Ten, Eleven and Fourteen would be 2 per cent above, equal to and 5 per cent above the city average initially (5 per cent above, 5 per cent below and 2 per cent above by 2005).

77 Nether Poppleton Parish Council was of the view that a two-member ward combining the parishes of Upper Poppleton, Nether Poppleton and Rufforth “would be numerically correct and probably acceptable”, but also expressed support for a ward covering all the parishes on the west side of the city area. Hessay Parish Council objected to the Council’s proposal to include the parish in a ward with part of the unparished, urban area, as it believed that this would “undermine [its] rural status”. It stated that it would prefer to retain its association with the current Upper Poppleton ward, but also suggested that the ward could be enlarged to include the parish of Skelton and be represented by two members, contending that this would maintain “the rural integrity of the villages”.

78 Rufforth Parish Council wished to avoid combining rural and urban areas, contending that “the new ward boundaries should not cross the old city boundaries”. It supported the retention

of the current two-member Upper Poppleton ward, but proposed that it be renamed Poppleton & Rufforth ward to “reflect the area of the ward better”. However, it also suggested, “should there be a need for change”, a three-member Rural West York ward comprising the existing Upper Poppleton ward and Copmanthorpe parish. Askham Bryan Parish Council opposed the Council’s proposal to include it in a ward with part of the unparished, urban area. It stated that it wished to remain a rural ward. Askham Richard Parish Council also opposed this proposal, stating that it did not want to be included in a ward with part of the urban area, contending that “it would difficult for one person to represent two widely differing views”. It stated that if the current Upper Poppleton ward were retained it would be “a more natural ward, keeping us wholly rural” .

79 Copmanthorpe Parish Council did not consider “that there needs to be any change to the present parish of Copmanthorpe”. Bishopthorpe Parish Council acknowledged that it “would be difficult to say [it] would object” to retaining the current Copmanthorpe ward, but expressed a preference for single-member wards in the parished area.

80 City Councillor Hopton opposed the Council’s proposal to combine part of the urban, unparished area with parishes to the west of the city, arguing that their “interests, issues and concerns are very different”. She suggested that Upper Poppleton ward could be linked with Skelton parish and become a two-member ward to secure good electoral equality while being an entirely rural ward. She also stated that if alternative proposals were put forward she “would request that we remain a wholly rural ward”.

81 The Chairman of Nether Poppleton Parish Council proposed retaining the status quo. However, he also expressed a preference for a 51-member council, comprising all three-member wards, stating that a three-member ward in the western part of the rural area would reflect local community identities. He expressed opposition to combining urban and rural areas and also objected to proposals which would split parishes between wards.

82 Poppleton Ward Residents’ Association proposed retaining the current Upper Poppleton ward, although it suggested that the ward should be named Poppleton & Rufforth ward. It opposed any combination of parished and unparished areas, suggesting that it would support a larger ward comprising all of the parishes to the west of the city, which would keep the rural area separate from the urban area. It proposed that this new ward could be named Rural West York.

83 As outlined earlier in this chapter, we have noted the local opposition to combining parts of the parished area with parts of the unparished city area. While we propose basing our draft recommendations on the Council’s scheme, we are proposing boundary modifications in this part of the city council area in order to secure a better reflection of the identities and interests of local communities while securing reasonable electoral equality.

84 We propose that the part of the current Beckfield ward that the Council proposed combining with the parished area to the west of it (in a new Ward Eleven) should be retained in a ward within the unparished city area. As a consequence of this modification, the unparished city area to the west of the River Ouse would be entitled to additional representation. We therefore propose that it should be represented by 14 councillors, rather than 13 as put forward by the City Council, which would result in an overall council size of 47 members.

85 As a consequence of this modification, under a council size of 47, the number of electors per councillor in the Council's proposed Wards Ten and Fourteen would be 4 per cent above and 7 per cent above the city average initially (8 per cent above and 4 per cent above by 2005). However, its proposed Ward Eleven would be over-represented by 48 per cent initially (50 per cent by 2005). We are of the view that this is an unacceptable level of electoral imbalance and have therefore considered alternative combinations of parishes to form new wards in order to secure better electoral equality across this area as a whole.

86 We noted the suggestion to retain the current two-member Upper Poppleton ward unchanged. However, under a council size of 47, it would be over-represented by 22 per cent initially (21 per cent by 2005), which we consider to be an unacceptable level of electoral imbalance. Similarly, if the parishes of Nether Poppleton, Upper Poppleton and Rufforth were grouped to form a two-member ward (as suggested by Nether Poppleton Parish Council), this ward would be over-represented by 35 per cent initially (34 per cent by 2005) under a council size of 47; if it were represented by only one councillor it would be under-represented by 29 per cent initially (32 per cent by 2005).

87 We also considered the proposal that the parishes of Upper and Nether Poppleton could be linked with Skelton parish to form a new ward. However, we have noted that while the parishes are geographically close they are separated by the River Ouse and there are no direct road links between the two areas.

88 Therefore, in the absence of any other viable alternatives, we propose putting forward for consultation a new three-member Rural West York ward, as suggested by Rufforth Parish Council and Poppleton Ward Residents' Association (and broadly supported by Nether Poppleton Parish Council and the Chair of Nether Poppleton Parish Council). Under a council size of 47, the number of electors per councillor in the new Rural West York ward (comprising the current Upper Poppleton ward and the parish of Copmanthorpe) would be 11 per cent below the city average both initially and by 2005. We are of the view that this proposal would secure the best balance currently available between securing electoral equality and reflecting the identities and interests of local communities. The electoral imbalance achieved, while higher than we would ideally seek, is acceptable given that the proposed ward would avoid the inclusion of the unparished city area in a predominantly rural, wholly parished ward, therefore providing for a better reflection of community identities and more identifiable boundaries than the Council's proposals.

89 As a consequence of our proposed Rural West York ward, we also propose modifying the Council's proposed Ward Fourteen. We are therefore putting forward a new single-member Bishopthorpe ward comprising the parishes of Bishopthorpe and Acaster Malbis with the Middlethorpe area from the current Knavesmire ward. We have noted that this proposal would include part of the unparished area in a ward with two parishes, however, we are of the view that this would not be detrimental to the community identity of the proposed ward, as Middlethorpe is separated from the majority of the urban area by the racecourse and the River Ouse and, in our view, shares more community links with Bishopthorpe. We propose that this ward should be named Bishopthorpe ward, given that the parish of Bishopthorpe contains the largest settlement in this area. Under a council size of 47 the number of electors per councillor in our proposed

single-member Bishopthorpe ward would be 3 per cent above the city average initially (equal to the average by 2005). Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 2 and the large map inserted in the back of this report. We would welcome views on our proposals for this area during Stage Three, particularly regarding ward names.

Fulford, Heslington and Wheldrake wards

90 These three single-member wards are situated in the parished area to the south-east of the city. Fulford ward (comprising the parish of Fulford) is currently over-represented by 19 per cent. However, by 2005 it is forecast to be under-represented by 13 per cent as a consequence of housing development. Heslington ward (comprising the parish of Heslington) is currently under-represented by 27 per cent (22 per cent by 2005). Wheldrake ward comprises the parishes of Deighton, Elvington, Naburn and Wheldrake. The number of electors per councillor in Wheldrake ward is currently 11 per cent above the city average (12 per cent above by 2005).

91 The City Council proposed retaining the existing single-member wards of Fulford, Heslington and Wheldrake unchanged, identifying the wards as Ward One, Ward Two and Ward Three respectively. Under a council size of 46 the Council's proposed Ward One would be over-represented by 30 per cent initially. However, this level of electoral imbalance is expected to improve to be only 2 per cent below the city average by 2005 as a consequence of housing development. The number of electors per councillor in the Council's proposed Wards Two and Three would be 10 per cent above and 4 per cent below the city average initially (6 per cent above and 3 per cent below by 2005).

92 Heslington Parish Council wished to retain the existing arrangements affecting the parish. It argued that any changes would "divide the community ... and undermine our ability to act as an effective parish council". A local resident was of the view that "there is no clear reason why the University should remain forever part of this essentially rural ward [Heslington]", suggesting that the University area should be linked with "adjoining urban areas" and that Heslington village should "join adjoining rural areas and/or the neighbouring Badger Hill district".

93 Elvington Parish Council supported the Council's proposal to retain the current single-member Wheldrake ward unchanged, arguing that this would be "in the best interests of representation of the people".

94 We have considered all the representations received and have noted that there is local support for retaining the three current single-member wards in this area unchanged, as proposed by the Council in its Stage One submission. Under the existing council size all three of these wards would be notably under-represented by 2005, however, under a council size of 47, the number of electors per councillor in the single-member wards of Fulford, Heslington and Wheldrake would be 28 per cent below, 13 per cent above and 2 per cent below the city average respectively (equal to, 8 per cent above and 1 per cent below the city average by 2005).

95 Given the good electoral equality, reflection of local communities and identifiable boundaries that would be secured, we therefore propose retaining the current single-member wards of Fulford, Heslington and Wheldrake unchanged, as shown on Map 2 and the large map inserted

at the back of this report. We propose retaining the existing Fulford and Heslington ward names as they reflect the names of the parishes that comprise the wards. With regard to Wheldrake ward we propose retaining the current name as it reflects the largest settlement contained within the ward; however, we would very much welcome all views on our proposals for this area during Stage Three.

Dunnington & Kexby, Strensall, Osbaldwick and Heworth Without wards

96 These four wards are situated in the parished area to the north-east and east of the city. The single-member Dunnington & Kexby ward comprises the parishes of Dunnington and Kexby. The two-member Strensall ward comprises the parishes of Earswick, Holtby, Murton, Stockton-on-the-Forest, Strensall and Towthorpe. The number of electors per councillor in the existing Dunnington & Kexby and Strensall wards is 5 per cent above and 11 per cent above the city average respectively (1 per cent above and 15 per cent above by 2005). The single-member Osbaldwick ward (comprising the parish of Osbaldwick) is currently over-represented by 17 per cent. However, by 2005 it is forecast to be under-represented by 5 per cent as a result of housing development. The single-member Heworth Without ward (comprising Heworth Without parish) is currently the most over-represented ward in the city council area with an electoral variance of 29 per cent (32 per cent by 2005).

97 In this area the Council proposed modifications to all four of the existing wards. It proposed a new single-member Ward Four comprising the parishes of Dunnington, Kexby and Holtby, arguing that Holtby has no community identity with the “far removed” villages in the remainder of Strensall ward. It also proposed a new single-member Ward Five comprising the parishes of Osbaldwick and Murton. It argued that Murton parish has “a stronger link to the village of Osbaldwick” than with the “far removed villages” in the remainder of the current Strensall ward. Under a council size of 46 the number of electors per councillor in the Council’s proposed Wards Four and Five would be 5 per cent below and 17 per cent below the city average initially (8 per cent below and 1 per cent above by 2005).

98 As a consequence of its proposed Wards Four and Five, the Council proposed a new two-member Ward Thirteen comprising the remainder of the current Strensall ward (the parishes of Strensall, Towthorpe, Earswick and Stockton-on-the-Forest). It argued that the ward would be “more compact and does not lose community identity”. Under a council size of 46 the number of electors per councillor in the Council’s proposed Ward Thirteen would be 11 per cent below the city average initially (7 per cent below by 2005).

99 The Council also proposed a new single-member Ward Six comprising the parish of Heworth Without and an area to the east of Malton Road and Hempland Drive, from the current Monk ward. It argued that such a proposal (which would include part of the unparished area in a ward with part of the parished area) was justified because, under a 46-member council, “without this adjustment there would be a voter deficit in the [current Heworth Without] ward of 38 per cent in 2000 rising to 41 per cent by 2005”. It further contended that “the urban area is continuous across the proposed adjustment and is acceptable from a community point of view”. Under a council size of 46 the number of electors per councillor in the Council’s proposed Ward Six would be 1 per cent above the city average initially (4 per cent below by 2005).

100 Strensall & Towthorpe Parish Council was of the view that “the present Strensall ward is geographically too large”. It opposed any proposal that would split the two parishes, stating that it would prefer the parishes of Strensall and Towthorpe to form a ward of their own. However, it also proposed that the two parishes could be linked to Earswick parish or New Earswick parish and Haxby North East parish ward to create a new ward, with a third, less favoured option, which would incorporate Stockton-on-the-Forest parish. It also suggested that the “name of Strensall is somewhat misleading when it in fact covers six distinct and widely separated parish areas”.

101 A local resident commented on the current Osbaldwick and Heworth Without wards and the boundary between the two parishes. He stated that the Meadlands (and adjoining roads) have no direct road connection with the centre of Osbaldwick and that residents in that area do not use facilities in Osbaldwick village. He contended that his area should be “absorbed somehow into the City of York” but not into Heworth Without ward “which has no village centre and is just a collection of houses”.

102 We have carefully considered the representations received, and are of the view that the Council’s proposals would secure an improved level of electoral equality and a slightly better reflection of local community identities. We have noted the local residents’ comments regarding the current parish of Osbaldwick and whether the Meadlands area should be included within a different ward to the remainder of the parish. While we are aware that it is not directly linked to the rest of the residential area in the parish, we are aware that a significant amount of new housing development is forecast for the parish over the five years to 2005. In this case, we are of the view that any proposed parish warding at this time may not facilitate, or may even be detrimental to, the appropriate reflection of the parish’s electorate in the future and therefore we do not propose any parish warding at this time.

103 Under our proposed council size of 47 the number of electors per councillor in the Council’s proposed Wards Four, Five and Thirteen would be 3 per cent below, 15 per cent below and 9 per cent below the city average respectively (6 per cent below, 3 per cent above and 5 per cent below by 2005). We propose adopting the Council’s proposed Wards Four, Five and Thirteen as part of our draft recommendations, as shown on Map 2; however, we propose that the three wards should be named Dunnington, Osbaldwick and Strensall respectively, after the largest settlements contained within each ward. We would very much welcome views from all local interested parties during Stage Three, particularly with regard to ward names.

104 We have noted that the Council’s proposed Ward Six would combine Heworth Without parish with part of the unparished area to its west. While we acknowledge that this combination goes against our over arching proposal not to combine the parished and unparished areas, we are of the view that in this case it would not have such an adverse effect on community identity. Officers from the Commission having visited the area, we are of the view that the residential area in the western part of Heworth Without parish is very similar in nature to those properties in the eastern part of the current Monk ward and form part of the same community; there are also currently some roads (including Whitby Avenue and Algarth Road) which are split between the unparished and parished areas.

105 Therefore, given the good electoral equality that would be secured, we propose adopting the Council's proposed Ward Six, albeit with one minor modification to secure a more identifiable boundary (which would not affect any electors). We propose that the proposed ward's western boundary should be moved slightly further westwards to follow the centre of Malton Road and Stockton Lane. We also propose that the ward should be named Heworth Without as the parish of that name forms the majority of the ward. Under a council size of 47, the number of electors per councillor in our proposed single-member Heworth Without ward would be 3 per cent above the city average initially (2 per cent below by 2005). We would very much welcome views on our proposals in this area, as shown on Map 2 and on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Huntington & New Earswick, Haxby, Wigginton, Rawcliffe & Skelton and Clifton Without wards

106 These five wards are situated in the parished area to the north of the city. The three-member Huntington & New Earswick ward (comprising the parishes of Huntington and New Earswick) is currently under-represented by 18 per cent (15 per cent by 2005). The three-member Haxby ward (comprising the parish of Haxby) is currently over-represented by 9 per cent (13 per cent by 2005). The single-member Wigginton ward (comprising the parish of Wigginton) is currently under-represented by 13 per cent (8 per cent by 2005). The two-member Rawcliffe & Skelton ward comprises the parishes of Rawcliffe and Skelton. The number of electors per councillor in Rawcliffe & Skelton ward is 1 per cent below the city average (1 per cent above by 2005). The single-member Clifton Without ward comprises the parish of Clifton Without and is currently the most under-represented ward in the city council area, with the number of electors per councillor being 31 per cent above the city average (48 per cent above by 2005).

107 The City Council proposed dividing the current three-member Huntington & New Earswick ward into three single-member wards. It proposed a Ward Seven comprising that part of Huntington parish to the south of the dismantled railway/Stratford Way and to the east of Huntington Road (less an area around Brockfield Road). It further proposed a Ward Eight, comprising the northern part of Huntington parish (to the north of the dismantled railway), and a Ward Nine comprising that part of Huntington parish around Brockfield Road and New Earswick parish. Under a council size of 46 the number of electors per councillor in the Council's proposed Wards Seven, Eight and Nine would be 3 per cent below, 8 per cent above and 3 per cent above the city average respectively (2 per cent below, 2 per cent above and equal to the city average by 2005).

108 The Council proposed a three-member Ward Fifteen which would combine the parishes of Wigginton and Haxby in one ward. It argued that "the two parishes have a strong sense of community and merge into each other forming one large urban mass in the north of the council's area". Under a council size of 46 the number of electors per councillor in the Council's proposed Ward Fifteen would be 11 per cent above the city average initially (6 per cent above by 2005). The Council put forward a new three-member Ward Sixteen, comprising the parishes of Skelton, Rawcliffe and Clifton Without. Under a council size of 46 the number of electors per councillor in the Council's proposed Ward Sixteen would be 5 per cent below the city average initially (1 per cent above by 2005).

109 Huntington Parish Council was of the view that the current Huntington & New Earswick ward “was not ideal”, proposing that the parish should “be paired with Old Earswick [parish] instead of New Earswick [parish] whilst still retaining three member representation”. It also stated that it would “reject any notion of a divided Huntington”.

110 Haxby Town Council stated that it supported the creation of a new three-member ward comprising the parishes of Haxby and Wigginton. It argued that this proposal “preserves the existing community links ... and is the only realistic expression of the realities on the ground”. It contended that “Haxby & Wigginton form a discrete and geographically distinct community which needs separate representation within the unitary authority to preserve and enhance its community spirit”. It also requested that the parish be divided in four new town council wards (two three-member wards and two four-member wards), but stated that it was “content to leave the delineation of these wards to the discretion of the Commission”. Wigginton Parish Council recognised that in order to address the under-representation in the current Wigginton ward it may need to be joined with other areas, stating that it felt that it had “more in common with wards, which like us, are [to] the north of the outer ring road”. It further contended that it “would be of more benefit to our residents” if the parish were linked “with our neighbours Haxby than those in the more urban communities such as Clifton or Rawcliffe”.

111 Skelton Parish Council supported the Council’s proposed three-member ward comprising the parishes of Skelton, Rawcliffe and Clifton Without. Rawcliffe Parish Council opposed the combination of urban and rural areas to form wards. It also expressed its support for the Council’s proposal for a three-member ward comprising the parishes of Skelton, Rawcliffe and Clifton Without. Clifton Without Parish Council argued that the population of its area has increased considerably since the last review, and that added to this “is the number of larger planning permissions given for housing development, some of which is already proceeding”. It suggested that “serious consideration be given to the increase in the representation of [the] parish” in order to address the under-representation that currently exists in the ward.

112 York Liberal Democrat Federation opposed the proposal to split Huntington parish between three wards, arguing that it would be “socially divisive” and that such a split of the parish would result in it being divided between three parliamentary constituencies. Haxby & Wigginton Branch Liberal Democrats were of the view that the creation of a new ward comprising the parishes of Haxby and Wigginton could be justified as “there is sufficient communal identity between the two parishes”. They also stated that there are well-established links between the two areas which have “clearly identifiable communities”.

113 We have considered all the representations received in this area. While we acknowledge that the Council’s proposal to divide the current Huntington & New Earswick ward into three single-member wards would secure good electoral equality, we are of the view that it would not provide for a better reflection of the identities and interests of local communities than the current arrangements, nor would it secure more identifiable boundaries. We have also noted the opposition to the Council’s proposals in this area, particularly from Huntington Parish Council, which do not wish the parish to be split between three wards. Therefore we propose retaining the existing three-member Huntington & New Earswick ward unchanged, as it would secure good

electoral equality under a council size of 47, with the number of electors per councillor being 5 per cent above the city average initially (2 per cent above by 2005).

114 We have also considered the Council's proposed Wards Fifteen and Sixteen and we are of the view that they would provide for the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, while also receiving support from local interested parties. In order to reflect the parishes which comprise the proposed new wards, we are putting forward two new ward names for consultation. We propose that the Council's proposed Ward Fifteen should be named Haxby & Wigginton ward, and that its proposed Ward Sixteen should be named Skelton, Rawcliffe & Clifton Without ward. Under a council size of 47 the number of electors per councillor in the proposed three-member Haxby & Wigginton and Skelton, Rawcliffe & Clifton Without wards, as shown on Map 2 and on the large map inserted at the back of this report, would be 14 per cent above and 3 per cent below the city average initially (9 per cent above and 4 per cent above by 2005).

York city (the unparished area)

Bishophill, Knavesmire, Micklegate and Foxwood wards

115 These four wards are situated to the west of the River Ouse, in the central and south-western parts of the unparished York city area. The number of electors per councillor in the two-member Bishophill and Knavesmire wards is 5 per cent below and 8 per cent below the city average respectively (3 per cent below and 12 per cent below by 2005). The number of electors per councillor in the two-member Micklegate ward and the three-member Foxwood ward is 2 per cent below and 7 per cent below the city average respectively (4 per cent below and 11 per cent below by 2005).

116 The Council proposed a new three-member Ward Twenty Four, comprising all of the current Knavesmire ward and the majority of the current Bishophill ward, less an area on the western side of the railway line, to the west of St Paul's Terrace, which would be included in its proposed Ward Twenty One (discussed later in this chapter). It also proposed a new three-member Ward Twenty Three, comprising the current Micklegate ward and the southern half of the current Foxwood ward, to the south of Otterwood Lane/Bellhouse Way. It argued that "the main community of Micklegate is in the south and immediately adjacent to Foxwood", and that "the two wards are strongly linked by residential roads". It further proposed that the remainder of the current Foxwood ward should form a new single-member Ward Twelve. Under a council size of 46 the number of electors per councillor in the Council's proposed Wards Twenty Four, Twenty Three and Twelve would be 1 per cent above, 2 per cent above and 6 per cent above the city average respectively (1 per cent above, 1 per cent below and equal to the city average by 2005).

117 A local resident suggested that the area to the north of Holgate Road and to the west of the railway line identifies with and should be transferred to Holgate ward. He also suggested that the area to the south of Dalton Terrace/Albermarle Road "identify as much with parts of Knavesmire and Micklegate wards as they do with Bishophill".

118 As detailed earlier in this report, we propose basing our draft recommendations on the Council's scheme. However, in order to secure the best balance of representation across the city council area as a whole, we propose that the unparished area to the west of the River Ouse should be allocated an additional councillor. In this area we have noted that even under a council size of 47 the majority of the Council's proposals would secure the best balance between good electoral equality and reflecting local community identities. However, we are of the view that a number of minor amendments can be made to secure slightly more logical and more identifiable boundaries, some of which have been suggested by Stage One respondents.

119 We propose adopting the Council's proposed Ward Twenty Four, however in order to secure a more logical western boundary we propose modifying it in two places. In the northern part of the ward, we propose that the boundary should follow the railway line so that area around St Paul's Terrace is not included in the new ward and remains in a ward to the west of the railway line, as suggested by a local resident (to be discussed later). In the central and southern parts of the ward we propose that the boundary should follow the southern boundaries of the properties on the south side of Pulleyn Drive and that the remainder of the boundary should subsequently follow the centre of Tadcaster Road before broadly following the western boundary of the racecourse (which is currently split between two wards). We further propose that the ward should be named Knavesmire (around which the ward is focused). Under a council size of 47 the number of electors per councillor in our proposed three-member Knavesmire ward, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report, would be 2 per cent above the city average both initially and by 2005.

120 We further propose adopting the Council's proposed Ward Twenty Three, albeit with the two boundary modifications mentioned above and two further amendments in order to secure slightly better boundaries. We propose modifying the northern boundary of the Council's proposed ward so that Wenham Road, Teal Drive and the area to the north of the western end of Foxwood Lane are transferred into a revised two-member Westfield ward (to be discussed later). We propose naming this ward Micklegate, given that the majority of the ward comprises the current Micklegate ward. Under a council size of 47, the number of electors per councillor in our proposed three-member Micklegate ward, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report, would be 1 per cent below the city average initially (3 per cent below by 2005). We would very much welcome views on our proposal during Stage Three.

121 As discussed earlier in this report, we are proposing that the unparished area to the west of the River Ouse should be represented by one additional councillor. In the light of this, and having considered the most appropriate area in which to accommodate this extra councillor, we propose that the Council's proposed single-member Ward Twelve should be enlarged and be represented by two councillors. We are of the view that this would facilitate the creation of a revised ward pattern to the north of this area (as a consequence of our proposal to retain part of the current Beckfield ward within a ward in the unparished area), while also securing a slightly better reflection of local communities and good electoral equality.

122 We are therefore proposing a revised two-member Westfield ward, comprising the remainder of the current Foxwood ward (to the north of our proposed Micklegate ward), and the southern part of the current Westfield ward to the south of Grange Lane/Gale Lane and Tudor

Road/Kingsthorpe. Under a council size of 47 the number of electors per councillor in our proposed two-member Westfield ward would be 3 per cent above the city average initially (3 per cent below by 2005). We propose retaining the current Westfield ward name as we are of the view that it would best reflect the area covered by our revised ward, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report; however, we would very much welcome views during Stage Three.

Westfield, Acomb, Beckfield and Holgate wards

123 These four two-member wards are situated to the west of the River Ouse, in the north-western part of the unparished area. The number of electors per councillor in the wards of Westfield and Acomb is currently 16 per cent below and 1 per cent below the city average respectively (19 per cent below and 5 per cent below by 2005). The number of electors per councillor in the wards of Beckfield and Holgate is currently 3 per cent below and 7 per cent below respectively (3 per cent above and 7 per cent below by 2005).

124 The Council proposed a new three-member Ward Twenty Two comprising the current Westfield and Acomb wards. It also proposed a new Ward Twenty One, comprising the current Holgate ward, the area to the west of St Paul's Terrace from the current Bishophill ward and the south-eastern part of Beckfield ward (to the south-east of Plantation Drive and to the south of Boroughbridge Road). Under a council size of 46 the number of electors per councillor in Council's proposed Wards Twenty Two and Twenty One would be 6 per cent above and equal to the city average initially (1 per cent above and 4 per cent above by 2005).

125 The Council proposed that the remainder of the current Beckfield ward should be included in its proposed Ward Eleven with the parished area to the west (as outlined earlier). However, as discussed earlier, a number of parishes opposed this proposal to include part of the unparished city area in a ward with part of the parished area to the west.

126 A local resident stated that the Leeman Road area "probably has more in common with Holgate than any other ward, especially as railway land on both sides of the tracks has started to be developed".

127 As a consequence of our proposal to retain all of the current Beckfield ward within a ward in the unparished area, and our proposed Westfield ward, we are proposing modifications to the Council's scheme in this area in order to secure the best balance currently available between good electoral equality, the reflection of local communities and the provision of identifiable boundaries. We are proposing a new three-member Acomb ward comprising the remainder of the current Westfield ward, all of the current Acomb ward and an area from the north-western part of the current Beckfield ward (to the west of Carr Lane, to the south of Boroughbridge Road and to the north-west of Millgates). Under a council size of 47 the number of electors per councillor in our proposed three-member Acomb ward, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report, would be 4 per cent above the city average initially (1 per cent below by 2005).

128 We are further proposing a modified three-member Holgate ward which is broadly based on the Council's proposed Ward Twenty One. We propose that the revised ward should comprise

all of the current Holgate ward, that part of the current Bishophill ward to the west of the railway line (around St Paul's Terrace, as detailed earlier) and the remainder of the current Beckfield ward (to the east of Carr Lane, the north of Boroughbridge Road and to the south-east of Millgates). While we acknowledge that this ward covers quite a wide area we are of the view that there are number of significant roads which link it together, including Boroughbridge Road/Poppleton Road, Acomb Road/Holgate Road and Hamilton Drive. We propose retaining the existing ward name of Holgate as the majority of the ward comprises the current ward of the same name. Under a council size of 47 the number of electors per councillor in our proposed three-member Holgate ward would be 4 per cent below the city average initially (1 per cent below by 2005).

Guildhall, Fishergate and Walmgate wards

129 These three two-member wards are situated to the east of the River Ouse, in the central and south-eastern parts of the unparished York city area. The wards of Guildhall and Fishergate are currently under-represented by 20 per cent and 12 per cent respectively (22 per cent and 9 per cent by 2005). The number of electors per councillor in Walmgate ward currently equals the city average, however by 2005 it is forecast to be 1 per cent below the city average.

130 The Council proposed creating a new three-member Ward Nineteen, comprising the current Guildhall ward, the FB polling district from Fishergate ward, an area to the south of Grosvenor Road, to the east of Burton Stone Lane and to the north of A19 road from Clifton ward and an area around the Foss Island Industrial Estate from Walmgate ward. As a consequence of this proposal, it proposed that the remainder of the current Fishergate ward should be combined with the remainder of the current Walmgate ward (less the area around the Foss Islands Industrial Estate) to form a new three-member Ward Seventeen. Under a council size of 46 the number of electors per councillor in the Council's proposed Wards Nineteen and Seventeen would be 2 per cent below and equal to the city average initially (1 per cent below and 3 per cent below by 2005).

131 A local resident suggested that "if it is decided that the ... terraced part of Fishergate should be separated off, the natural boundary of this neighbourhood ... would either be Hospital Fields Road or Maple Grove". He also contended that the area to the east of Green Dykes Lane in the north-eastern part of the current Fishergate ward is "part of the Tang Hall area".

132 We have considered the Council's proposals in this part of the city area and have concluded that they would secure the best balance between securing an improved level of electoral equality, reflecting the identities and interests of local communities and providing for identifiable boundaries. We propose adopting the Council's proposed Ward Nineteen, however given that the ward is centred around the Guildhall area we propose that the new ward should be named Guildhall. Under a council size of 47 the number of electors per councillor in our proposed three-member Guildhall ward would be equal to the city average initially (2 per cent above by 2005).

133 We have noted the comments put forward from a local resident regarding the Council's proposed Ward Seventeen. However, while we acknowledge that the ward covers quite a varied area, we are of the view that it secures the best balance between the competing requirements of the statutory criteria, and in the absence of any other viable alternative we propose adopting it as

part of our draft recommendations. Given that the majority of the ward covers the Walmgate area we propose retaining the existing name of Walmgate. Under a council size of 47 the number of electors per councillor in our proposed three-member Walmgate ward would be 2 per cent above the city average initially (equal to the city average by 2005). We would welcome views on our proposals for this area, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report, during Stage Three.

Clifton, Bootham, Monk and Heworth wards

134 These four two-member wards are situated to the east of the River Ouse in the northern and eastern parts of the city. The number of electors per councillor in the wards of Clifton and Bootham is 9 per cent below and 11 per cent below the city average respectively (12 per cent below and 9 per cent below by 2005). The number of electors per councillor in the wards of Monk and Heworth is 3 per cent above and 4 per cent below the city average respectively (2 per cent below and 7 per cent below by 2005).

135 As a consequence of its proposed Ward Nineteen, the Council proposed a new three-member Ward Eighteen, comprising the remainder of the current Clifton ward and all of the current Bootham ward. It also proposed a new three-member Ward Twenty, comprising the current Heworth ward and the western part of the current Monk ward (predominantly to the west of Malton Road). It further proposed that the eastern part of Monk ward should be included in a new single-member Ward Six with Heworth Without parish, as outlined earlier in this chapter.

136 A local resident commented that the western part of the current Monk ward, the area to the west of the River Foss and to the east of Park Grove, “identifies with the rest of the Groves district, most of which currently lies within Guildhall ward”, suggesting that the Groves area should be unified in one ward.

137 As outlined earlier in this report, we propose adopting the Council’s proposals in this area as our draft recommendations. We are of the view that they would secure the best balance between securing electoral equality, reflecting local communities and securing good boundaries. We have noted the comment regarding the Groves area and acknowledge that the retention of the existing boundary in that area would mean that the Groves area remains divided between two wards. We have considered modifying the Council’s proposed boundary in this area to include all of the Groves area in the proposed Guildhall ward but have noted that this would result in a poorer level of electoral equality. However, we would welcome views from local interested parties regarding this issue during Stage Three.

138 We propose that the Council’s proposed Ward Eighteen should be named Clifton ward, as that area comprises the majority of the ward. Furthermore, we propose that the Council’s proposed Ward Twenty should be named Heworth ward as the ward is focused upon the Heworth area (including Heworth Green/Heworth Road and Heworth Golf Course). Under a council size of 47 the number of electors per councillor in our proposed three-member Clifton and Heworth wards would be equal to and 4 per cent above the city average initially (equal to and 1 per cent above the city average by 2005). We would very much welcome views on our draft recommendations for this area, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report, during Stage Three.

Electoral Cycle

139 We received five representations regarding the City Council’s electoral cycle. The City Council proposed retaining whole-council elections every four years, a proposal which was supported by Rufforth Parish Council.

140 York Labour Party referred to the Government’s 1998 White Paper *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, expressing the view that “even though there is no legislation as yet to implement elections by thirds there almost certainly will be during the life of the city’s new electoral arrangement”. Hugh Bayley MP stated that “the old City of York Council had annual elections which was good for democratic accountability and popular with the public, I hope this can be reinstated”.

141 A local resident, who submitted a 57-member city-wide scheme based mainly on two-member wards, argued that this pattern would facilitate “the holding of elections on a ‘cycle’ as opposed to once every four years”. He further stated that it “would allow biennial elections across almost the whole city”.

142 We have carefully considered all representations received and have noted that there is a mixture of views, expressing support for whole-council elections, elections by thirds and biennial elections. In the first instance, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Order under the Local Government Act 2000, we can only continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections. Statutorily, we have no power to recommend a change to biennial elections.

143 We have considered the Council’s proposal to retain whole-council elections and have noted that it was endorsed by both the Labour and Conservative Groups and supported by a parish council. The proposal to introduce annual elections received less support locally. Given that there appears to be a majority view that the present electoral cycle should be retained, we therefore propose no change to the current electoral cycle of whole-council elections for the City Council.

Conclusions

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

- there should be a reduction in council size from 53 to 47;
- there should be 21 wards;
- the boundaries of 25 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of eight wards;
- elections should continue to be held for the whole council.

145 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the City Council’s proposals, but propose departing from them in the following areas:

- we propose that the council should comprise 47 councillors, rather than 46 as proposed by the Council;
- we have put forward ward names for all of the proposed wards;
- there should be a revised warding pattern in the unparished city area to the west of the River Ouse;
- in the western and southern parts of the parished area we propose new Rural West York and Bishopthorpe wards;
- there should be no change to the current Huntington & New Earswick ward.

146 Figure 5 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2000 electorate figures and with forecast electorates for the year 2005.

Figure 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	53	47	53	47
Number of wards	29	21	29	21
Average number of electors per councillor	2,713	3,060	2,901	3,271
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	15	5	14	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	3	1	4	0

147 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for the City of York Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the city average from 15 to five. By 2005 only one ward is forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the city.

Draft Recommendation

City of York Council should comprise 47 councillors serving 21 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

148 The parish of Heslington is currently served by nine councillors and is unwarded. During Stage One, two local residents expressed concern that as a consequence of York University being situated within Heslington parish there are no local villagers on the parish council, suggesting that the parish could be warded so that the university area comprises one parish ward and the village of Heslington forms another. However, Heslington Parish Council wished to retain the existing arrangements affecting the parish, arguing that any changes would “divide the community ... and undermine our ability to act as an effective parish council”.

149 We have considered both the options put forward and given that there is only limited support for the proposal to ward the parish, and in view of the fact that the parish council itself does not wish to be warded, we do not propose making any changes to Heslington Parish Council’s electoral arrangements. However, we would very much welcome views from local interested parties regarding this issue during Stage Three.

150 The parish of Haxby is currently served by 14 councillors representing two wards: Haxby North East and Haxby West (both represented by seven councillors). At Stage One, Haxby Town Council contended that “having wards with numerous councillors causes confusion”, requesting that the parish “should be divided into four parish wards. Two wards should return three councillors each and the other two wards should return four councillors each.” It further stated that “the [Town] Council is content to leave the delineation of these wards to the discretion of the Commission”.

151 Our city warding proposals would not result in a need to divide the parish, therefore we propose putting forward revised parish wards based on the existing parish wards. We propose that the current North East ward should be divided into two new wards with a new parish ward boundary following the centre of the railway line, the northern boundary of the properties in Usher Park Road and the centre of Usher Lane and Station Road to the parish boundary. That part of the current Haxby North East parish ward to south and east of the proposed boundary should form a new Haxby East parish ward (represented by four councillors) with that part to the north and west of the boundary forming a new Haxby North parish ward (represented by three councillors).

152 We also propose that the current Haxby West parish ward be divided into two new wards, with the new parish ward boundary following the centre of Holly Tree Lane and Oak Tree Lane, before following behind the properties on the eastern side of Eastfield Avenue. That part of the

current Haxby West ward to the south and west of the proposed boundary should form a new Haxby South West ward (represented by three councillors) with that part to the north and east of the proposed boundary forming a new Haxby Central parish ward (represented by four councillors). We would very much welcome views on our draft proposals, as shown on Map A2, particularly from Haxby Town Council and the City Council.

Draft Recommendation
Haxby Parish Council should comprise 14 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Haxby East (returning four councillors), Haxby North (returning three councillors), Haxby South West (returning three councillors) and Haxby Central (returning four councillors). The parish ward boundaries are as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

153 We are not proposing any change to the electoral cycle of parish and town councils in the City Council area.

Draft 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 City Council.

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

Map 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for the City of York

5 NEXT STEPS

155 We are putting forward draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for consultation. We will take fully into account all representations received by 19 February 2001. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment at the offices of the Commission and the City Council, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission after the end of the consultation period.

156 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

Review Manager
City of York Review
Local Government Commission for England
Dolphyn Court
10/11 Great Turnstile
London WC1V 7JU

Fax: 020 7404 6142
E-mail: reviews@lgce.gov.uk
www.lgce.gov.uk

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

APPENDIX A

Draft Recommendations for the City of York: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for the City of York area.

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

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Haxby parish.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for York.

Map A1: Draft Recommendations for the City of York: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Warding of Haxby Parish

APPENDIX B

City of York Council's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Our draft recommendations detailed in Figures 1 and 2 differ from those put forward by the City Council only in 11 wards, where the Council's proposals were as follows:

Figure B1: City of York Council's Proposal: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Ward Seven	Huntington & New Earswick ward (part)
Ward Eight	Huntington & New Earswick ward (part)
Ward Nine	Huntington & New Earswick ward (part)
Ward Ten	Upper Poppleton ward (part – the parishes of Nether Poppleton and Upper Poppleton)
Ward Eleven	Beckfield ward (part); Upper Poppleton ward (part – the parishes of Askham Bryan, Askham Richard, Hessay and Rufforth)
Ward Twelve	Foxwood ward (part)
Ward Fourteen	Copmanthorpe ward; Knavesmire ward (part)
Ward Twenty One	Beckfield ward (part); Bishophill ward (part); Holgate ward
Ward Twenty Two	Acomb ward; Westfield ward
Ward Twenty Three	Micklegate ward; Foxwood ward (part)
Ward Twenty Four	Bishophill ward (part); Knavesmire ward (part)

Figure B2: City of York Council's Proposals: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Ward Seven	1	3,024	3,024	-3	3,262	3,262	-2
Ward Eight	1	3,368	3,368	8	3,424	3,424	2
Ward Nine	1	3,223	3,223	3	3,358	3,358	0
Ward Ten	1	3,192	3,192	2	3,526	3,526	5
Ward Eleven	1	3,142	3,142	0	3,181	3,181	-5
Ward Twelve	1	3,306	3,306	6	3,340	3,340	0

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Ward Fourteen	2	6,548	3,274	5	6,796	3,398	2
Ward Twenty One	3	9,363	3,121	0	10,450	3,483	4
Ward Twenty Two	3	9,923	3,308	6	10,157	3,386	1
Ward Twenty Three	3	9,553	3,184	2	9,940	3,313	-1
Ward Twenty Four	3	9,493	3,164	1	10,085	3,362	1

Source: Electorate figures are based on the City of York Council's submission.

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

APPENDIX C

The Statutory Provisions

Local Government Act 1992: the Commission's Role

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 In relation to shire districts:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

