

LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND

FINAL
RECOMMENDATIONS
ON THE FUTURE
ELECTORAL
ARRANGEMENTS FOR
CHESTER-LE-STREET
IN COUNTY DURHAM

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

October 1998

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for Chester-le-Street in County Durham.

Members of the Commission are:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)

Helena Shovelton (Deputy Chairman)

Peter Brokenshire

Professor Michael Clarke

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Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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Local Government Commission for England

20 October 1998

Dear Secretary of State

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

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have confirmed our draft recommendations, subject to a modification to the boundary between Bournmoor and Lumley wards (see paragraphs 84-85) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Chester-le-Street.

We recommend that Chester-le-Street District Council should be served by 34 councillors representing 16 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that the Council should continue to be elected together every four years.

We note that you have now set out in the White Paper *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People* (Cm4014, HMSO), legislative proposals for a number of changes to local authority electoral arrangements. However, until such time as that new legislation is in place we are obliged to conduct our work in accordance with current legislation, and to continue our current approach to periodic electoral reviews.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Malcolm Grant'.

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Chester-le-Street on 14 October 1997. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 2 June 1998, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

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

We found that the existing electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Chester-le-Street:

- **in 11 of the 17 wards, the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district, and six wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2002 there is expected to be little improvement in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 10 wards, and by more than 20 per cent in six wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figure 1 and paragraphs 84-85) are that:

- **Chester-le-Street District Council should be served by 34 councillors, one more than at present;**
- **there should be 16 wards, one less than at present;**
- **changes should be made to the boundaries of 14 of the existing wards, resulting in the net loss of one ward, while three wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections for the whole council should continue to take place every four years.**

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

- **The number of electors per councillor would vary by less than 10 per cent from the district average in all but one of the proposed 16 wards; Lumley ward would have 12 per cent fewer electors than the average.**
- **Electoral equality is forecast to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in all 16 wards expected to vary by less than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2002.**

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

- **new warding arrangements and a redistribution of the number of councillors for the parishes of Edmondsley, Kimblesworth & Plawsworth, Little Lumley, Pelton and Urpeth.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 30 November 1998:

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

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

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Bournmoor	2	Bournmoor ward (Bournmoor parish); Lumley ward (part – part of Little Lumley parish)	Large map
2	Chester Central (Chester town)	2	Chester Central ward (part); Chester West ward (part)	Large map
3	Chester East (Chester town)	2	Holmlands Park ward (part); Chester Central ward (part); Chester South ward (part)	Large map
4	Chester North (Chester town)	3	Chester North ward (part); Holmlands Park ward (part)	Large map
5	Chester South (Chester town)	2	Chester South ward (part)	Large map
6	Chester West (Chester town)	2	Chester West ward (part); Pelton Fell ward (part)	Large map
7	Edmondsley & Waldridge (Chester town, part)	3	Edmondsley ward (part – part of Edmondsley parish); Waldridge ward (Waldridge parish); Chester South ward (part)	Large map
8	Grange Villa & West Pelton	1	Grange Villa ward (Grange Villa parish ward of Pelton parish); Edmondsley ward (part – part of Edmondsley parish); Urpeth ward (part – part of Urpeth parish)	Map A3 and Large map
9	Kimbleworth & Plawsworth	1	<i>Unchanged</i> Plawsworth ward (Kimbleworth & Plawsworth parish)	Map A2 and Large map
10	Lumley	3	Lumley ward (part – Great Lumley parish and part of Little Lumley parish)	Large map
11	North Lodge (Chester town, part)	2	North Lodge ward (North Lodge parish); Holmlands Park ward (part)	Large map
12	Ouston	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Ouston parish)	Large map
13	Pelton (Chester town, part)	3	Pelton ward (part – part of Pelton parish ward of Pelton parish); Pelton Fell ward (part); Urpeth ward (part – part of Urpeth parish); Chester North ward (part)	Map A3 and Large map
14	Pelton Fell	1	Pelton Fell ward (part)	Large map

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

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
15	Sacriston	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Sacriston parish)	Large map
16	Urpeth	2	Urpeth ward (part – part of Urpeth parish); Pelton ward (part – part of Pelton parish ward of Pelton parish)	Map A3 and Large map

Notes: 1 Chester town and Pelton Fell ward are the only unparished areas in the district.
 2 Map 2 and the maps in Appendix A illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.

1. INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Chester-le-Street in County Durham. We have now reviewed all the districts in County Durham (except Darlington) as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews of all principal local authority areas in England.

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

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

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

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

5 Stage Three began on 2 June 1998 with the publication of our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Chester-le-Street in County Durham*, and ended on 27 July 1998. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2. CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

6 Chester-le-Street district is the smallest in area of the districts within County Durham and has a population of approximately 54,000 (mid-1996). Covering around 6,800 hectares, it has a population density of 8 persons per hectare. The district borders the city of Durham and is close to Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Sunderland. The main service centre for the district is Chester town which is surrounded by a number of former colliery villages, including Great Lumley and Sacriston. Chester-le-Street is a commuter district with relatively few sources of employment. The growth in private housing has attracted many people to the area, with most settling in the areas of Urpeth and Waldrige. There are around 20,000 people living in the unparished areas of Chester town and Pelton Fell. The remaining 33,000 live in the 11 wards containing the former coal mining settlements in the rural areas east and west of the town.

7 The main A1(M) motorway and the east coast railway line run through the district. In addition, the A167 trunk road (which forms part of the Great North Road) links Chester with the city of Durham. The A693 connects Chester with Pelton and the other settlements along the Twizell Burn. The district contains the Lambton and Lumley estates, and Riverside Park which houses the new Durham county cricket ground. The valley of the River Wear runs north to south through the district. To the south-west of the town is Waldrige Fell which is one of the last remaining areas of lowland heath in the North and to the north-west is the Beamish estate which houses the North of England Open Air Museum.

8 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'.

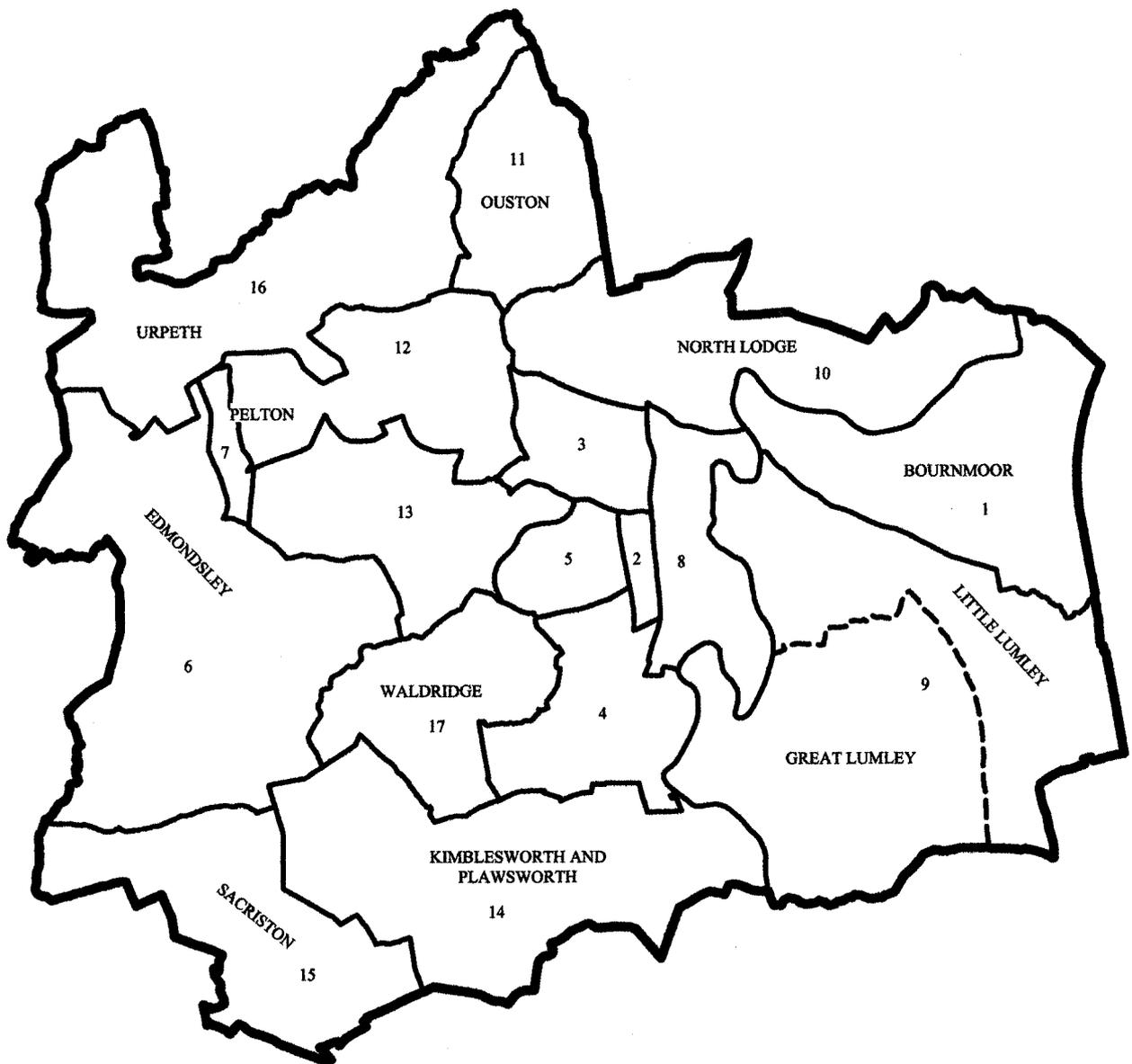
9 The electorate of the district (February 1997) is 43,231. The Council presently has 33 councillors who are elected from 17 wards, six of which are urban and 11 predominantly rural. Six of the 17 wards are each represented by three councillors,

four wards elect two councillors each, and the remaining seven are single-member wards. The whole Council is elected together every four years.

10 Since the last electoral review over 20 years ago, there has been an increase in electorate in the district, with around 17 per cent more electors than two decades ago. It has been one of the fastest growing districts in the north-east, with most of the growth occurring in Chester town, Urpeth and Waldrige.

11 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,310 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,352 by the year 2002 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 11 of the 17 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average and in six wards by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Waldrige ward where the councillor represents 132 per cent more electors than the district average.

Map 1:
Existing Wards in Chester-le-Street



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

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Key to Wards

1 Bournmoor	5 Chester West	9 Lumley	13 Pelton Fell
2 Chester Central	6 Edmondsley	10 North Lodge	14 Plawsworth
3 Chester North	7 Grange Villa	11 Ouston	15 Sacriston
4 Chester South	8 Holmlands Park	12 Pelton	16 Urpeth
			17 Waldrige

Figure 2:
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1997)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Bournmoor	2	1,799	900	-31	1,801	901	-33
2 Chester Central (Chester town)	1	1,299	1,299	-1	1,299	1,299	-4
3 Chester North (Chester town)	3	3,267	1,089	-17	3,267	1,089	-19
4 Chester South (Chester town)	3	3,296	1,099	-16	3,396	1,132	-16
5 Chester West (Chester town)	3	3,490	1,163	-11	3,705	1,235	-9
6 Edmondsley	1	472	472	-64	472	472	-65
7 Grange Villa	1	899	899	-31	935	935	-31
8 Holmlands Park (Chester town)	2	2,976	1,488	14	3,044	1,522	13
9 Lumley	3	3,983	1,328	1	4,284	1,428	6
10 North Lodge	1	2,003	2,003	53	2,003	2,003	48
11 Ouston	2	2,493	1,247	-5	2,493	1,247	-8
12 Pelton	3	3,957	1,319	1	4,070	1,357	0
13 Pelton Fell	2	2,257	1,129	-14	2,266	1,133	-16
14 Plawsworth	1	1,320	1,320	1	1,322	1,322	-2
15 Sacriston	3	3,724	1,241	-5	3,977	1,326	-2
16 Urpeth	1	2,955	2,955	126	2,977	2,977	120

continued overleaf

Figure 2: (continued)
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1997)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
17 Waldridge	1	3,041	3,041	132	3,310	3,310	145
Totals	33	43,231	—	—	44,621	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,310	—	—	1,352	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Chester-le-Street District Council's submission.

Notes: 1 The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1997, electors in Edmondsley ward were relatively over-represented by 64 per cent, while electors in Waldridge ward were significantly under-represented by 132 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

2 At Stage Three, the District Council submitted revised electorate forecasts, as three areas identified for development (totalling 384 electors) had been removed from its Draft Local Plan. The total electorate figure in 2002 is therefore different from that proposed at Stage One, and subsequently the variance from average would vary slightly in most of the wards.

3. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

12 During Stage One we received representations from Chester-le-Street District Council, Chester-le-Street Liberal Democrats, two local Labour parties, four parish councils, one local group and a former parish councillor. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Chester-le-Street in County Durham*.

13 Our draft recommendations were largely based on the District Council's scheme, which achieved considerably improved electoral equality and provided good boundaries while having regard to the statutory criteria, and maintained the present mix of single- and multi-member wards. We moved away from the Council's proposals in two main areas. We recommended merging the Council's proposed Edmondsley & Waldrige and Waldrige Park & Chester Moor wards, together with the whole of Chester Moor village, to form a new three-member ward; and we recommended dividing the Council's proposed three-member Urpeth & Grange Villa ward into two wards: a single-member Grange Villa ward, comprising the existing Grange Villa ward, together with West Pelton village and Twizell Woods; and a modified two-member Urpeth ward. We proposed that:

- (a) Chester-le-Street District Council should be served by 34 councillors representing 16 wards;
- (b) the boundaries of 14 of the existing wards should be modified, while three wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- (c) there should be new warding arrangements and a re-distribution of the number of councillors for the parishes of Edmondsley, Kimblesworth & Plawsworth, Little Lumley, Pelton and Urpeth.

Draft Recommendation

Chester-le-Street District Council should comprise 34 councillors, serving 16 wards. The whole Council should continue to be elected together every four years.

14 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in all 16 wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to continue to 2002.

4. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

15 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 32 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Chester-le-Street District Council and the Commission.

Chester-le-Street District Council

16 The District Council supported in total the draft recommendations which reflected the majority of its Stage One proposals, subject to a revision to its proposed boundary between Bournmoor and Lumley wards as a result of changes to the Draft Local Plan which affected the electorate forecast figures for 2002. The Council stated that “the proposal put forward by the Council was based on a projection which took into account details contained in the Local Plan at that time. Since the Council’s submission was made, three areas projected for a population growth have been removed in the Local Plan deposit draft”. These areas are Kimblesworth (36 electors), Great Lumley (24 electors) and Bournmoor (324 electors).

Parish Councils

17 Durham Association of Parish & Town Councils and two parish councils submitted representations during Stage Three. The Association stated that it would support any recommendations which provide a sensible approach to the electoral arrangements for each district in the county. Waldrige Parish Council supported the draft recommendations.

18 Urpeth Parish Council opposed the draft recommendation to incorporate West Pelton village in an enlarged Grange Villa ward, arguing that the village is inextricably linked with the villages of Beamish and High Handenhold for social, economic, environmental, cultural and recreational purposes. The Parish Council reiterated its Stage One support for retaining the three villages, together with Grange Villa, in an enlarged three-member Urpeth ward, as it would enable the district councillors to represent the interests of all

four communities in an integrated manner. The Parish Council argued that the A693 should not be used as a “natural” boundary in the Urpeth area, as it is not used in this way between Pelton and Perkinsville. It also enclosed a petition signed by some 200 local residents, in support of the Parish Council’s views.

Other Representations

19 A further 28 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from local political groups, local organisations and residents.

20 Both Grange Villa Labour Party and Grange Villa Action Group supported the Commission’s draft recommendations for Urpeth and Grange Villa wards and hoped that they would be reflected in the final recommendations. One resident from Beamish supported the draft recommendations for the district, and particularly for Urpeth ward.

21 Urpeth Labour Party, Mr Potts, member for Urpeth ward, High Handenhold Allotment Association (with a petition signed by 44 local residents), and 22 residents in the West Pelton and High Handenhold areas objected to the proposal to incorporate West Pelton in Grange Villa ward, arguing that long-established local ties and links would be broken. Some of these respondents stated that the A693 is not a dividing line in the area.

5. ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

²² As indicated previously, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Chester-le-Street is to achieve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria set out in the Local Government Act 1992 and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the ratio of electors to councillors being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

²³ However, our function is not merely arithmetical. First, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on assumptions as to changes in the number and distribution of local government electors likely to take place within the ensuing five years. Second, we must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries, and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken. Third, we must consider the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the interests and identities of local communities.

²⁴ 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.

²⁵ Our *Guidance* states that, while we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, such an objective should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of absolute electoral equality and only then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of change in electorates. We will require particular justification for schemes which result in, or retain, an imbalance of over 10 per cent in any

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

Electorate Forecasts

²⁶ At Stage One Chester-le-Street District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2002, projecting an increase in the electorate of 4 per cent from 43,231 to 45,005 over the five-year period from 1997 to 2002. It expected most of the growth to be in the south and west of Chester town, Bournmoor and Lumley, as well as in Waldrige, Sacriston and Pelton. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

²⁷ At Stage Three, the District Council stated that since its Stage One submission had been made, three areas identified for development had been removed from the Draft Local Plan: Kimblesworth (36 electors), Great Lumley (24) and Bournmoor (324). It therefore submitted a revised electorate forecast of 44,621 for the district, which would have a minor impact on the electoral variances in 2002 previously cited in the draft recommendations report (see also Appendix B).

²⁸ The Council submitted an extract from its Draft Local Plan which confirms that “as a result of the speed at which houses have been developed since the late 1980s ... a reassessment has been made of the proposed allocations and it is therefore proposed to delete the aforementioned sites from the local plan”, in order to maintain a population estimate of 54,000. We accept that forecasting electorates is an inexact science, but having given consideration to the Council’s revised forecast

electorates, are content that they represent the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council Size

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

30 Chester-le-Street District Council is at present served by 33 councillors. At Stage One the District Council proposed a council size of 34 to reflect the substantial increase in the electorate since the last review, the further increase forecast over the five-year period and to achieve a good electoral scheme across the district. In our draft recommendations report we considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received. We concluded that the statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would best be met by a council of 34 members.

31 At Stage Three no further comments were received regarding council size and we are confirming our draft recommendation for a council of 34 members as final.

Electoral Arrangements

32 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received during the initial stage of the review, including the district-wide scheme from the District Council. The Council's proposals would result in an increase in council size from 33 to 34, and retain a mix of single- and multi-member wards, although it proposed a reduction in the total number of single-member wards from seven to three. The proposals would significantly improve electoral equality, with the number of wards where the number of electors per councillor would vary by more than 10 per cent from the district average reducing from 11 to two. In 2002 all wards are expected to have a variance within 10 per cent of the district average.

33 The Council identified some anomalies in the boundaries of parishes, due partly to the new A693 road which, it argued, splits up well-established communities, and partly to new development which straddles existing parish boundaries. However, it recognised that the Commission is

unable to review parish boundaries as part of the current review, and therefore indicated that it intends to undertake a parish review in the future under the Local Government & Rating Act 1997.

34 We recognised the substantial improvement in electoral equality achieved by the District Council's scheme. However, to improve electoral equality further, while having regard to local community identities and interests, we departed from the Council's scheme in four wards: Chester East, Edmondsley & Waldrige, Urpeth & Grange Villa and Waldrige Park & Chester Moor.

35 In response to our consultation report, the Council supported in full the draft recommendations, subject to one boundary amendment. It submitted a modified ward boundary in the Bournmoor/Lumley area as a result of changes in its Draft Local Plan resulting in a reduced level of growth forecast in the area, and in the district as a whole. These changes would have a minor effect on the electoral variances cited in the draft recommendations report.

36 We have reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. The following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Chester town (five wards);
- (b) North Lodge ward;
- (c) Pelton Fell and Pelton wards;
- (d) Ouston ward;
- (e) Grange Villa and Urpeth wards;
- (f) Edmondsley and Waldrige wards;
- (g) Plawsworth and Sacriston wards;
- (h) Bournmoor and Lumley wards.

37 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Figures 1 and 4, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large map at the back of this report.

Chester town (five wards)

38 Chester town accounts for approximately 35 per cent of the district's electorate. The area is unparished and currently served by 12 councillors, elected from five wards: Chester Central has one councillor; Holmlands Park two councillors; and Chester North, Chester South and Chester West

three councillors each. Based on a council size of 33 or 34, the town is relatively over-represented and merits only 11 councillors. At Stage One, the District Council recognised this over-representation and allocated 11 councillors to the town in its proposals, with modifications to the boundaries of all five wards.

39 Chester Central, Chester North, Chester South and Chester West wards are all currently over-represented, although to varying degrees, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the district average by 1 per cent, 17 per cent, 16 per cent and 11 per cent respectively. No overall improvement is expected in 2002. Holmlands Park ward is relatively under-represented, with the number of electors represented by each councillor being 14 per cent more than the district average. To address these imbalances, at Stage One the Council proposed five modified wards, four served by two councillors each and one served by three councillors.

40 Chester North ward would retain three councillors and its boundary would be extended eastwards to include 786 electors from the existing Holmlands Park ward, while five electors in the High Flatts area of Chester North ward would be transferred to Pelton ward (detailed later).

41 Chester Central ward would lose 558 electors in the south to the proposed new Chester East ward, and gain 1,793 electors from the existing Chester West ward. The proposed southern boundary of Chester Central with Chester East would run along West Lane to the junction of Ropery Lane, as far as Front Street (the existing ward boundary). The western boundary of Chester Central ward would follow the Orbital Road, as at present, then continue in a southerly direction along the east side of Delaval, and east along Bullion Lane.

42 In addition to losing 1,793 electors in the east to Chester Central ward, Chester West ward would be modified to include 746 electors from Pelton Fell ward in the west. The boundary between Chester West and Pelton Fell wards would follow the Cong Burn.

43 The eastern boundary of the Council's proposed Chester South ward would be modified by transferring polling district I, comprising 414 electors, and part of polling district J (79 electors in Chester Moor village, east of the A167) to the new Chester East ward (detailed below). The remainder of polling district J (that part of Chester Moor

village, including The Crescent, west of the A167) would be transferred to a new Waldrige Park & Chester Moor ward. The new boundaries of Chester South ward would be the east coast main railway line in the east and the Black Burn along South Burn Dene in the south.

44 Holmlands Park ward would be renamed Chester East and reconfigured. Its northern boundary would follow the Cong Burn, transferring 786 electors to Chester North ward and 560 electors to North Lodge ward. As stated earlier, Chester East ward would also include 558 electors from the southern part of the existing Chester Central ward.

45 No other proposals were received in relation to these five wards at Stage One. In view of the improved electoral equality which would be achieved and the well-defined boundaries proposed, we included the Council's proposals for the wards of Chester Central, Chester North, Chester South and Chester West as part of our draft recommendations. The number of electors per councillor in the four wards would be equal to the district average, 5 per cent above, 4 per cent above and 4 per cent below the average respectively (4 per cent below, 2 per cent above, 4 per cent above and equal to the average in 2002).

46 Our draft recommendations, however, moved away from the Council's proposed Chester East ward (which would have a variance of 8 per cent). The Council proposed that the south-western boundary of Chester East ward should follow the A167, which appeared to split the village of Chester Moor between two wards. The village itself is separated from the rest of Chester East ward by the east coast main railway line. We therefore proposed that the ward boundary should follow the railway line, instead of the A167, thereby including the whole of Chester Moor village in a new Edmondsley & Waldrige ward (detailed later). Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Chester East ward would be 4 per cent above the district average (1 per cent in 2002). This proposal would improve electoral equality in the ward, while reflecting community identity in the area.

47 The only comment received in response to our proposal for this area was from the District Council, which endorsed in full the draft recommendations for Chester town, including the

modification to Chester East ward. We therefore confirm our draft recommendations as final for Chester town. As a result of the slightly modified electorate forecasts from the District Council, the electoral variances would be 4 per cent each in Chester East, Chester South and Chester West wards, zero in Chester Central ward and 5 per cent in Chester North ward (5 per cent or less in all five wards in 2002).

North Lodge ward

48 North Lodge ward (and parish) is served by a single councillor, who represents 53 per cent more electors than the district average (48 per cent in 2002). To address the significant level of under-representation, at Stage One the District Council proposed an additional (second) councillor to represent the ward, and that the ward boundary should be extended in the south as far as Broadway and Park Road North, to include 560 electors from the existing Holmlands Park ward.

49 We acknowledged the significant improvement in electoral equality which would result from the District Council's proposal and included it as part of our draft recommendations.

50 At Stage Three, the District Council supported the draft recommendation which endorsed its Stage One proposal. No other comments were received and we confirm our draft recommendation for North Lodge ward as final. The number of electors represented by the councillor for the ward would be 1 per cent above the average (2 per cent below in 2002).

Pelton Fell and Pelton wards

51 Pelton Fell ward is unparished and situated to the west of Chester town. The ward elects two councillors, each of whom represents 14 per cent fewer electors than the district average (16 per cent in 2002). To address the electoral imbalance, the District Council proposed modifications to the ward's eastern and northern boundaries at Stage One. The modified eastern boundary would follow the Cong Burn, resulting in the loss of 746 electors to the modified Chester West ward (detailed earlier). The modified northern boundary would follow part of the C2C national cycleway, transferring an additional 181 electors in the Newfield area to Pelton ward.

52 The existing three-member Pelton ward is

coterminous with Pelton parish ward of Pelton parish, and the number of electors represented by each councillor is 1 per cent above the district average (equal to the average in 2002). Although there is currently good electoral equality in the ward, the District Council proposed modifications to the ward boundaries to improve the balance of representation across a wider area.

53 As detailed earlier, the Council proposed that Pelton ward should include 181 electors in the Newfield area from Pelton Fell ward. It further proposed that the northern boundary of Pelton ward should follow the A693 as far as Pelton Lane Ends. This would transfer part of polling district AJ (88 electors in the High Handenhold area) to a modified Urpeth & Grange Villa ward, and include 91 electors from the existing Urpeth ward (Oak Terrace, Elm Avenue and The Parade – together known as Pelton Lane Ends). This would lead to the consequential warding of both Pelton and Urpeth parishes (detailed later in this Chapter). The proposed ward boundary between Pelton and Chester North wards would follow the C2C national cycleway, thereby transferring five electors in the High Flatts area from Chester North to Pelton.

54 No other representations for the two wards were received at Stage One, and in view of the reasonable level of electoral equality which would be achieved, we included the District Council's proposal for both Pelton and Pelton Fell wards as part of our draft recommendations. We concluded that the Council's proposals would follow identifiable boundaries, having regard to local communities.

55 At Stage Three the District Council supported the draft recommendations for both wards, and no alternative proposals were received. We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for Pelton and Pelton Fell wards as final. The number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent above the average in Pelton ward (8 per cent in 2002), and 5 per cent above in Pelton Fell ward (2 per cent in 2002).

Ouston ward

56 Ouston ward (and parish) currently elects two councillors, each representing on average 5 per cent fewer electors than the district average (8 per cent in 2002). At Stage One the District Council did not propose any changes to the ward. We noted

that the forecast electorate figures indicate that electoral equality is expected to deteriorate over the five-year period, although under a 34-member council the electoral imbalance is marginally better. However, Ouston is a defined settlement, with coterminous parish and ward boundaries, and any changes to the ward boundary would have an adverse effect on electoral equality in neighbouring wards. In view of our proposals for the surrounding wards, our draft recommendations included the Council's proposal for no change to the ward.

57 At Stage Three, the District Council supported the proposal and we confirm our draft recommendation as final. Under a 34-member council, the number of electors per councillor in Ouston ward would be 2 per cent below the average (5 per cent in 2002).

Grange Villa and Urpeth wards

58 Grange Villa ward is currently coterminous with Grange Villa parish ward of Pelton parish, and the councillor for the ward represents 31 per cent fewer electors than the district average (unchanged in 2002). Urpeth ward (coterminous with the parish of the same name) is extremely under-represented, with the councillor for the ward representing 126 per cent more electors than the average (120 per cent in 2002). The ward comprises the main settlement of Urpeth Grange, together with the smaller villages of Beamish, High Handenhold, High Urpeth, Pelton Lane Ends and West Pelton, but is otherwise rural in nature.

59 In addition to the proposal that the boundary between Urpeth and Pelton wards follows the A693, as outlined earlier, at Stage One the Council proposed that Urpeth and Grange Villa wards, together with the Twizell Woods area in Edmondsley ward (and parish), should be combined to form a new three-member Urpeth & Grange Villa ward. The south-western boundary of the proposed ward would follow Craghead Lane.

60 At Stage One both Urpeth Parish Council and Urpeth Labour Party supported the Council's enlarged Urpeth & Grange Villa ward, as they considered it would unite similar communities, but wished to retain the Urpeth ward name. Urpeth Parish Council stated that, while it had considered a single-member ward comprising Grange Villa ward and West Pelton village, it concluded that "the settlements of Beamish and West Pelton are

inextricably dependent on each other". A resident of Beamish and a former Urpeth parish councillor wanted to increase the number of councillors serving the existing Urpeth ward.

61 However, Pelton Parish Council, Grange Villa Action Group and Grange Villa Labour Party all opposed the District Council's proposals for an enlarged Urpeth & Grange Villa ward. They considered that the proposal would not reflect the community and historic links between Grange Villa and the West Pelton area of Urpeth parish. Instead, they proposed that the area should be served by two wards, as at present, but with the A693 forming the boundary: a modified single-member Grange Villa ward would cover the existing ward together with that part of the existing Urpeth ward south of the A693, including West Pelton village and the Twizell Woods area of Edmondsley ward; the remainder of Urpeth ward would elect two councillors.

62 Chester-le-Street Liberal Democrats proposed that the existing single-member Grange Villa ward be combined with the single-member Edmondsley ward and the rural part of Waldrige ward to form a new two-member Western Rural ward, arguing that it would combine communities with similar interests.

63 We carefully considered the representations received at Stage One for this area. The proposal by the Liberal Democrats for a new Western Rural ward would have an adverse effect on the overall electoral equality achieved by our proposals in the rest of the district. While either of the other proposals – an enlarged three-member Urpeth & Grange Villa ward, or a single-member Grange Villa ward and a two-member Urpeth ward – would achieve better electoral equality than the current arrangements, we considered that the latter proposal (similar to that which exists at present) would be more appropriate. It would use the A693, which the District Council has already used as the boundary for other wards, and which is expected to feature in a future parish review; it would reinforce the links between Grange Villa and West Pelton; and it would command a measure of local support.

64 In our draft recommendations report, we therefore proposed a modified single-member Grange Villa ward which would be extended to include West Pelton village (currently in Urpeth ward) and the Twizell Woods area of Edmondsley

ward; and that the rest of Urpeth ward should elect two councillors, subject to the boundary modifications with Pelton ward as outlined earlier.

65 In response to our consultation report, the District Council, Grange Villa Labour Party, Grange Villa Action Group and a resident from Beamish supported the draft recommendations for the two wards.

66 Urpeth Labour Party, Urpeth Parish Council (with a petition signed by some 200 local residents), High Handenhold Allotment Association (with a petition signed by 44 local residents), the member for Urpeth ward and 22 local residents opposed the draft recommendation to separate West Pelton village from Urpeth ward, arguing that the village is inextricably linked with the villages of Beamish and High Handenhold. The majority of these respondents considered that the Commission should accept Urpeth Parish Council's Stage One proposals for an enlarged three-member Urpeth ward, which would keep the villages together in one ward.

67 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period, including support for an enlarged three-member Urpeth ward and some support for two wards in the area. We consider that the case is finely balanced. However, in our judgement, we agree with the District Council's view that the A693 should be utilised as a ward boundary as much as possible in achieving a good electoral scheme for the district. (We are unable to recommend using this boundary in the Perkinsville and Pelton area, because of the pattern of the settlements and the distribution of electors in that area. In any event, no representations were received that included a proposal along these lines).

68 We also note that, historically, the communication links in the area were predominantly east to west, and would continue to be so with the newly built A693; our proposals would substantially reflect the current ward pattern; and they are now supported by the District Council. We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for Grange Villa and Urpeth wards as final. In order to recognise the inclusion of West Pelton village in the modified Grange Villa ward, we propose that the ward be named Grange Villa & West Pelton. Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the district

average in Grange Villa & West Pelton ward and 1 per cent above the average in Urpeth ward per cent above and 1 per cent below respectively in 2002).

Edmondsley and Waldrige wards

69 The councillor for Edmondsley ward represents 64 per cent fewer electors than the district average. The ward covers the parish of the same name and is the most sparsely populated area in the district, with no growth forecast over the five-year period. In contrast, the councillor for the neighbouring Waldrige ward (and parish) represents 132 per cent more electors than the average (145 per cent in 2002). The ward is made up of an urban area in the east which borders Chester town, and the more rural Waldrige village.

70 At Stage One the District Council stated that "in order to produce an acceptable solution in terms of electoral equality it has been acknowledged that the community of Edmondsley relates to the neighbouring communities to the south and east and very much less so to the north". The Council therefore proposed that Edmondsley ward should be combined with part of the existing Waldrige ward (Waldrige village and the properties north of Waldrige Road) to form a new single-member Edmondsley & Waldrige ward. The Twizell Woods area in the north of Edmondsley ward would be included in the Council's proposed Urpeth & Grange Villa ward (detailed earlier). It also proposed that the remainder of the existing Waldrige ward (most of the Waldrige Park Estate, south of Waldrige Road), together with part of Chester Moor village west of the A167, should form a new two-member Waldrige Park & Chester Moor ward.

71 Chester-le-Street Liberal Democrats generally supported the idea of two-member wards in the district. They proposed that the Waldrige urban area (polling district AB) should form a new two-member Waldrige Park ward, while the rest of the ward (Waldrige village), together with the existing Edmondsley and Grange Villa wards, should be combined to form a new two-member Western Rural ward. As stated earlier, this proposal would have an adverse effect on the overall electoral equality achieved throughout the district, and we did not include it as part of our draft recommendations.

72 In our draft recommendations report, we recognised the improved electoral equality that the Council's proposals would achieve in this area, compared with the current arrangements. However, we remained concerned at the relative over-representation that would occur initially in the proposed Edmondsley & Waldrige ward (14 per cent), and that the proposal appeared to split communities in Chester Moor village and the Waldrige urban area. We therefore proposed that the existing Waldrige ward, Edmondsley ward (less the Twizell Woods area) and the whole of Chester Moor village should constitute a new three-member Edmondsley & Waldrige ward. We are aware that the completion of the new road which will link Waldrige Park to Chester Moor would provide good communication between the two areas.

73 At Stage Three, both the District Council and Waldrige Parish Council supported the draft recommendations. We therefore conclude that, on balance, our proposals for this area would provide the best balance of representation, having regard to the statutory criteria, and confirm them as final. Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Edmondsley & Waldrige ward would be 3 per cent below the average (1 per cent above in 2002).

Plawsworth and Sacriston wards

74 Plawsworth ward, comprising Kimblesworth & Plawsworth parish, and Sacriston ward (and parish), represented by one councillor and three councillors respectively, are located in the extreme south of the district. The number of electors per councillor is 1 per cent above the average in Plawsworth ward (2 per cent below in 2002) and 5 per cent below the average in Sacriston ward (2 per cent in 2002).

75 With the exception of changing Plawsworth ward name to Kimblesworth & Plawsworth to reflect the identity of Kimblesworth village, the District Council proposed no change to both wards at Stage One. Sacriston Parish Council also proposed no change for Sacriston ward.

76 In view of the reasonable level of electoral equality in the wards, and taking into account our proposals for the rest of the district, we included the Council's proposals for no change to both wards in our draft recommendations, as well as the proposed Kimblesworth & Plawsworth name which appears to reflect community identities in that area.

77 In response to our consultation report, the District Council supported the draft recommendations for both wards, which reflected its Stage One proposals. It also stated that an expected development providing for 36 electors in Kimblesworth had been removed from its local plan. However, this would have a negligible effect on electoral variances. In the absence of any adverse comments and the good electoral equality which would prevail, we are confirming our draft recommendations for the wards as final. The number of electors per councillor in Kimblesworth & Plawsworth and Sacriston wards would be 4 per cent above and 2 per cent below the average respectively (1 per cent above in both wards in 2002).

Bournmoor and Lumley wards

78 On average, each of the two councillors for Bournmoor ward (comprising the parish of the same name) represents 31 per cent fewer electors than the district average (33 per cent in 2002). Lumley ward, comprising the parishes of Great Lumley and Little Lumley, is represented by three councillors and the average number of electors represented by each councillor is 1 per cent above the average (6 per cent in 2002).

79 To provide balanced representation, taking into account forecast development, at Stage One the District Council proposed that Bournmoor ward should be extended in the south to include electors from part of Little Lumley parish. However, the Council subsequently identified some anomalies in its proposals for this area and submitted a revised boundary. It proposed that 520 electors from Little Lumley parish should form part of a modified Bournmoor district ward. The proposed boundary would go along Lumley New Road (the B1284), Finchale Terrace and Elmwood Street to South Crescent, incorporating the greater part of Fencehouses village into Bournmoor ward. It would then follow a small section of South Crescent, before running northwards along a tributary of Lumley Park Burn to the existing ward boundary.

80 No other representations were received regarding these two wards. In view of the reasonable electoral equality which would be achieved, and which represents a substantial improvement in Bournmoor ward, we included the Council's proposals for both wards as part of our draft recommendations. The number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent below the

district average in both Bournmoor and Lumley wards (equal to the average and 5 per cent below the average respectively in 2002).

81 At Stage Three the District Council submitted a revised boundary in the Bournmoor/Lumley area, as three areas identified for development have been removed from the Draft Local Plan, including Bournmoor (324 electors) and Great Lumley (24 electors). The revised boundary is illustrated on the large map at the back of the report. Under the Council's revised proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Bournmoor and Lumley wards would be 5 per cent and 12 per cent below the district average respectively (8 per cent and 7 per cent in 2002).

82 No other representations were received and we are content to include the District Council's revised boundary as part of our final recommendations, since it would provide a better balance of representation between the two wards in light of the reduced level of development expected in the area. We acknowledge that a degree of over-representation would persist, particularly in Lumley ward, but consider that any attempt to address this imbalance would have an adverse effect on the overall electoral equality achieved in the district and on community identities.

Electoral Cycle

83 In the initial stage of the review we did not receive any proposals for change to the District

Council's electoral cycle. In our draft recommendations report, therefore, we proposed that the present system of whole-council elections every four years in Chester-le-Street be retained. At Stage Three no comments were received to the contrary, and we confirm our draft recommendation as final.

Conclusions

84 Having considered all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided to endorse our draft recommendations, subject to a revision to the boundary between Bournmoor and Lumley wards, as proposed by the District Council.

85 We have concluded that, in Chester-le-Street district:

- (a) there should be an increase in council size from 33 to 34;
- (b) there should be 16 wards, one less than at present;
- (c) the boundaries of 14 of the existing wards should be modified;
- (d) whole-council elections should continue to be held every four years.

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

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

	1997 electorate		2002 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	33	34	33	34
Number of wards	17	16	17	16
Average number of electors per councillor	1,310	1,272	1,352	1,312
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	11	1	10	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	6	0	6	0

87 As Figure 3 shows, our recommendations would reduce the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 11 to one, with no ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2002. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Chester-le-Street District Council should comprise 34 councillors serving 16 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 4, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A. The whole Council should continue to be elected together every four years.

Parish Council Electoral Arrangements

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

89 Edmondsley parish is currently represented by 11 parish councillors and is un-warded. At Stage One the District Council proposed that Edmondsley parish should be warded into two parish wards, Edmondsley and Twizell, represented by 10 councillors and one councillor respectively.

90 In the light of our proposals for district wards in this area, we consulted on the Council's proposed warding for Edmondsley parish. However, under our proposals, Edmondsley parish ward would form part of the proposed Edmondsley & Waldridge district ward, and Twizell parish ward would form part of the modified Grange Villa district ward.

91 At Stage Three the District Council supported the draft recommendation and no further comments were received. Therefore we confirm it as final.

Final Recommendation

Edmondsley Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Edmondsley (returning 10 councillors) and Twizell (one). The parish ward boundaries should be modified to reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

92 The parish of Kimblesworth & Plawsworth is currently divided into two parish wards, Kimblesworth and Plawsworth, represented by two and nine councillors respectively. In order to achieve better representation in the area at parish level, at Stage One the Parish Council proposed that the existing Nettlesworth (West) polling district should form a separate, third ward of the parish, named West Nettlesworth. It also proposed that Plawsworth parish ward should elect seven councillors, instead of the current nine, and that West Nettlesworth parish ward should elect two councillors.

93 The proposed district warding arrangements would not affect the warding of Kimblesworth & Plawsworth parish, and therefore we consulted on the Parish Council's proposal.

94 At Stage Three, no comments were received on the warding of the parish and we confirm it as final.

Final Recommendation

Kimblesworth & Plawsworth Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Kimblesworth (returning two councillors); Plawsworth (seven) and West Nettlesworth (two). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

95 The parish of Little Lumley is currently served by nine councillors and is un-warded. To reflect the proposed district wards in the area, at Stage One the District Council proposed that Little Lumley parish should be warded into two parish wards, North and South, represented by four and five councillors respectively. North parish ward would be included in the modified Bournmoor ward for district warding purposes, while South parish ward would continue to form part of a modified Lumley district ward, together with Great Lumley parish.

96 Having adopted the District Council's proposed district wards in this area, we included the Council's consequential proposal for warding Little Lumley parish as part of our draft recommendations.

97 At Stage Three, due to its revised electoral forecasts in this area, the Council proposed a revision to the boundary between Bournmoor and Lumley district wards, and consequently to the boundary between North and South parish wards of Lumley parish. It also proposed that North parish ward should return five councillors and South parish ward four, to reflect the size of the electorate in each ward of the parish (626 and 565 respectively). Having endorsed the Council's proposals for district warding arrangements in this area, we are content to include the modified parish warding proposal as a final recommendation.

Final Recommendation

Little Lumley Parish Council should comprise nine councillors, as at present, representing two wards: North (returning five councillors) and South (four). The parish ward boundaries should be modified to reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

98 The parish of Pelton is currently warded into two parish wards, Grange Villa and Pelton, represented by three and 12 councillors respectively. Following its district warding proposal in this area, at Stage One the District Council proposed an additional ward for the parish: Handenhold parish ward, covering a small area north of the A693, to be served by one councillor. Pelton parish ward would elect 11 councillors, instead of 12. The

Council indicated an intention to carry out a review of parish boundaries in the near future as it considers that the recently constructed A693 splits communities. In the light of our proposals for district wards in this area, we included the Council's proposed warding for Pelton parish as a draft recommendation.

99 At Stage Three no comments were received specifically on these parish proposals. In the light of our final recommendation for district warding in this area, which confirmed our draft recommendation, we propose to confirm our proposed warding of Pelton parish as final.

Final Recommendation

Pelton Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Grange Villa (returning three councillors), Handenhold (one) and Pelton (11). The parish ward boundaries should be modified to reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A3 in Appendix A.

100 The parish of Urpeth is currently served by 11 councillors and is un-warded. Following its district warding proposals in this area, at Stage One the District Council proposed that Urpeth parish should be warded into two parish wards, Pelton Lane Ends and Urpeth, served by one councillor and 10 councillors respectively. Under its initial proposals, Pelton Lane Ends parish ward would form part of a modified Pelton district ward, and Urpeth parish ward would form part of an enlarged Urpeth & Grange Villa district ward.

101 However, because of our proposal to utilise further the A693 as a ward boundary, and include West Pelton village in a modified single-member Grange Villa district ward, our draft recommendation proposed a third ward for Urpeth parish: West Pelton parish ward, to be served by one councillor, with nine councillors serving Urpeth parish ward.

102 At Stage Three we received some support for our district warding proposals in this area, including from the District Council. We also received several representations objecting to our

draft recommendations for district warding proposals for this area, including from Urpeth Parish Council and local Labour parties. However, as outlined earlier in this Chapter, we have confirmed our draft recommendation for district warding in this area as final, and therefore confirm our proposed warding of Urpeth parish as final.

Final Recommendation

Urpeth Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Pelton Lane Ends (returning one councillor), Urpeth (nine) and West Pelton (one). The parish ward boundaries should be modified to reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map A3 in Appendix A.

¹⁰³ The parish of Waldrige is currently served by 10 councillors and is un-warded. To facilitate its proposed district warding arrangements, at Stage One the District Council proposed that Waldrige parish should be warded into two parish wards, Waldrige Park and Waldrige Village & Poppyfields. However, our proposal to combine the whole of the existing Waldrige parish with part of Edmondsley district ward to form a new three-member Edmondsley & Waldrige ward would not necessitate the warding of Waldrige parish. Therefore, we did not put forward a recommendation for warding Waldrige parish in our consultation report.

¹⁰⁴ At Stage Three, both the District Council and Waldrige Parish Council welcomed no change to the electoral arrangements for Waldrige parish. Therefore, no recommendation for change is being made.

¹⁰⁵ In our draft recommendations report we proposed that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the district, and are confirming this as final.

Final Recommendation

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

Map 2:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Chester-le-Street



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

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Key to Wards

1 Bournmoor	5 Chester South	9 Kimblesworth and Plawsworth	13 Pelton
2 Chester Central	6 Chester West	10 Lumley	14 Pelton Fell
3 Chester East	7 Edmondsley and Waldrige	11 North Lodge	15 Sacriston
4 Chester North	8 Grange Villa and West Pelton	12 Ouston	16 Urpeth

Figure 4:

The Commission's Final Recommendations for Chester-le-Street

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1997)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Bournmoor	2	2,423	1,212	-5	2,425	1,213	-8
2 Chester Central (Chester town)	2	2,534	1,267	0	2,534	1,267	-3
3 Chester East (Chester town)	2	2,657	1,329	4	2,670	1,335	2
4 Chester North (Chester town)	3	3,995	1,332	5	4,050	1,350	3
5 Chester South (Chester town)	2	2,656	1,328	4	2,756	1,378	5
6 Chester West (Chester town)	2	2,434	1,217	-4	2,658	1,329	1
7 Edmondsley & Waldrige	3	3,714	1,238	-3	3,983	1,328	1
8 Grange Villa & West Pelton	1	1,309	1,309	3	1,345	1,345	2
9 Kimblesworth & Plawsworth	1	1,320	1,320	4	1,322	1,322	1
10 Lumley	3	3,359	1,120	-12	3,660	1,220	-7
11 North Lodge	2	2,563	1,282	1	2,563	1,282	-2
12 Ouston	2	2,493	1,247	-2	2,493	1,247	-5
13 Pelton	3	4,144	1,381	9	4,257	1,419	8
14 Pelton Fell	1	1,339	1,339	5	1,339	1,339	2
15 Sacriston	3	3,724	1,241	-2	3,977	1,326	1

continued overleaf

Figure 4: (continued)
 The Commission's Final Recommendations for Chester-le-Street

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1997)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
16 Urpeth	2	2,567	1,284	1	2,589	1,295	-1
Totals	34	43,231	—	—	44,621	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,272	—	—	1,312	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Chester-le-Street District Council's Stage Three submission.

Notes: 1 The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

2 At Stage Three, the District Council submitted revised electorate forecasts, as three areas identified for development (totalling 384 electors) had been removed from its Draft Local Plan. The total electorate figure in 2002 is therefore different from that submitted at Stage One and included in our draft recommendations, and consequently the variances from the average are slightly different in most wards.

6. NEXT STEPS

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

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

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

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

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for Chester-le-Street: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for the Chester-le-Street area.

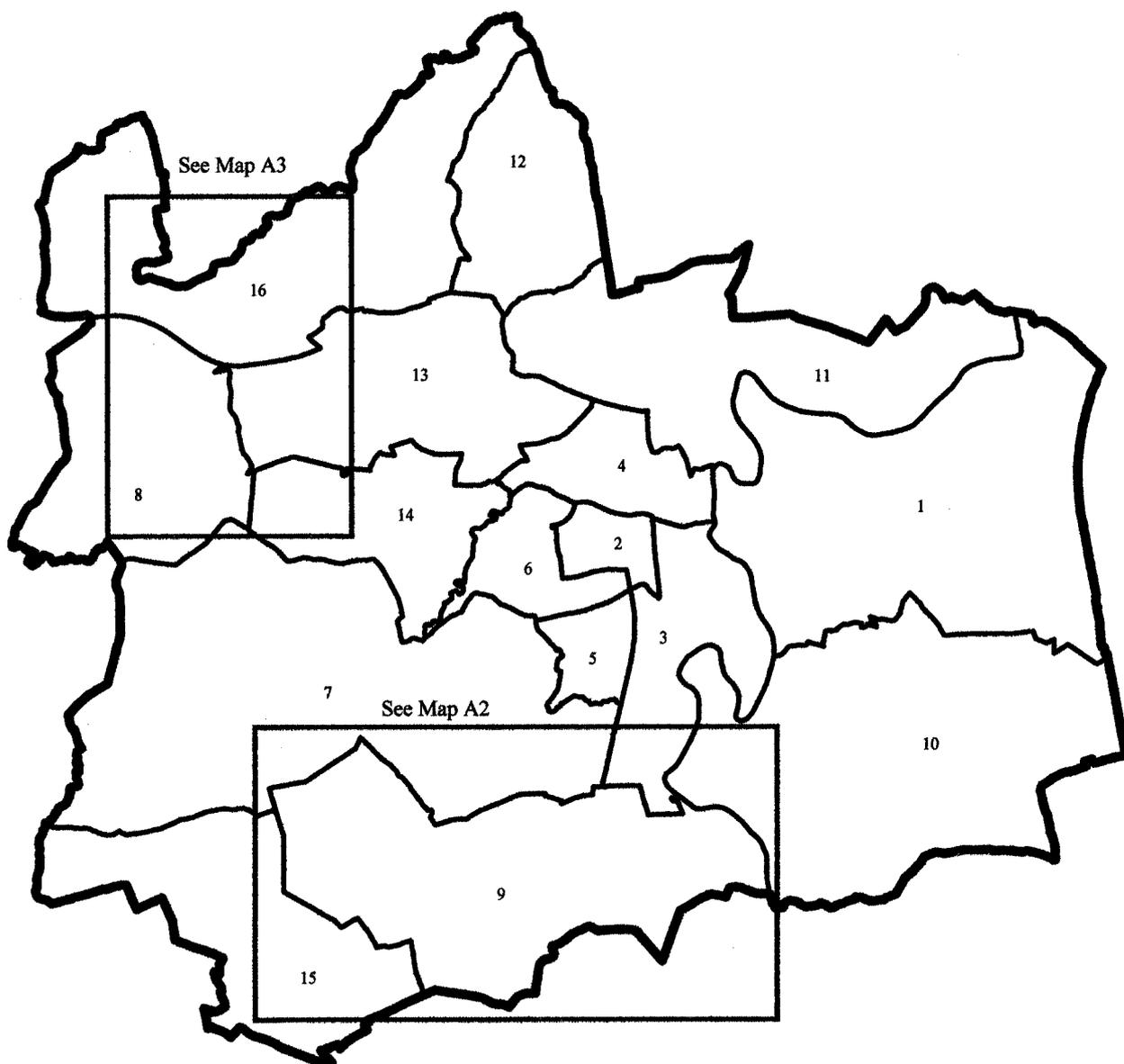
Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the district and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail on Maps A2 and A3.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed re-warding of Kimblesworth & Plawsworth parish.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed warding of Pelton and Urpeth parishes.

The **large map** inserted at the back of the report illustrates the Commission's proposed warding arrangements for the whole district.

Map A1:
Final Recommendations for Chester-le-Street: Key Map

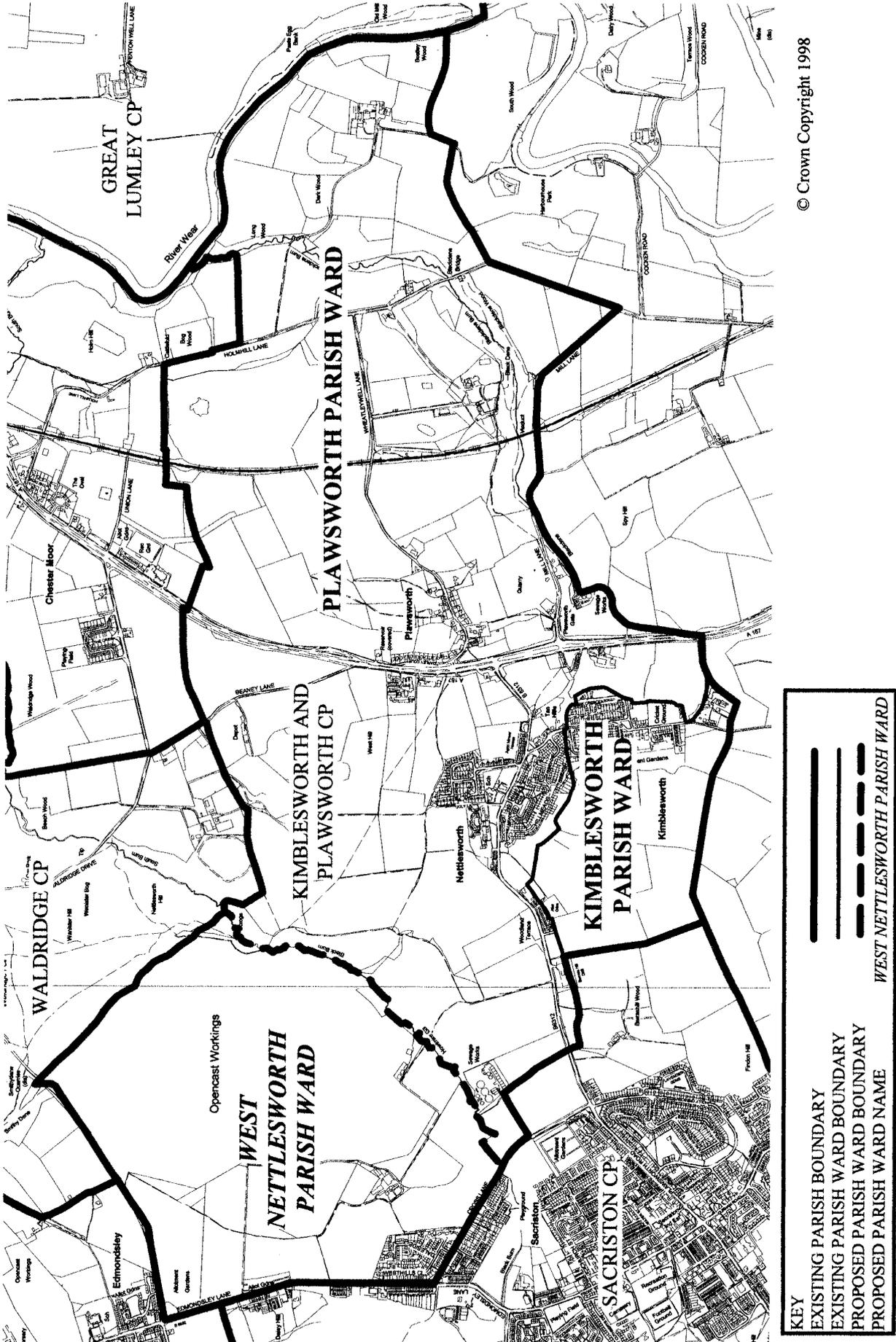


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Key to Wards

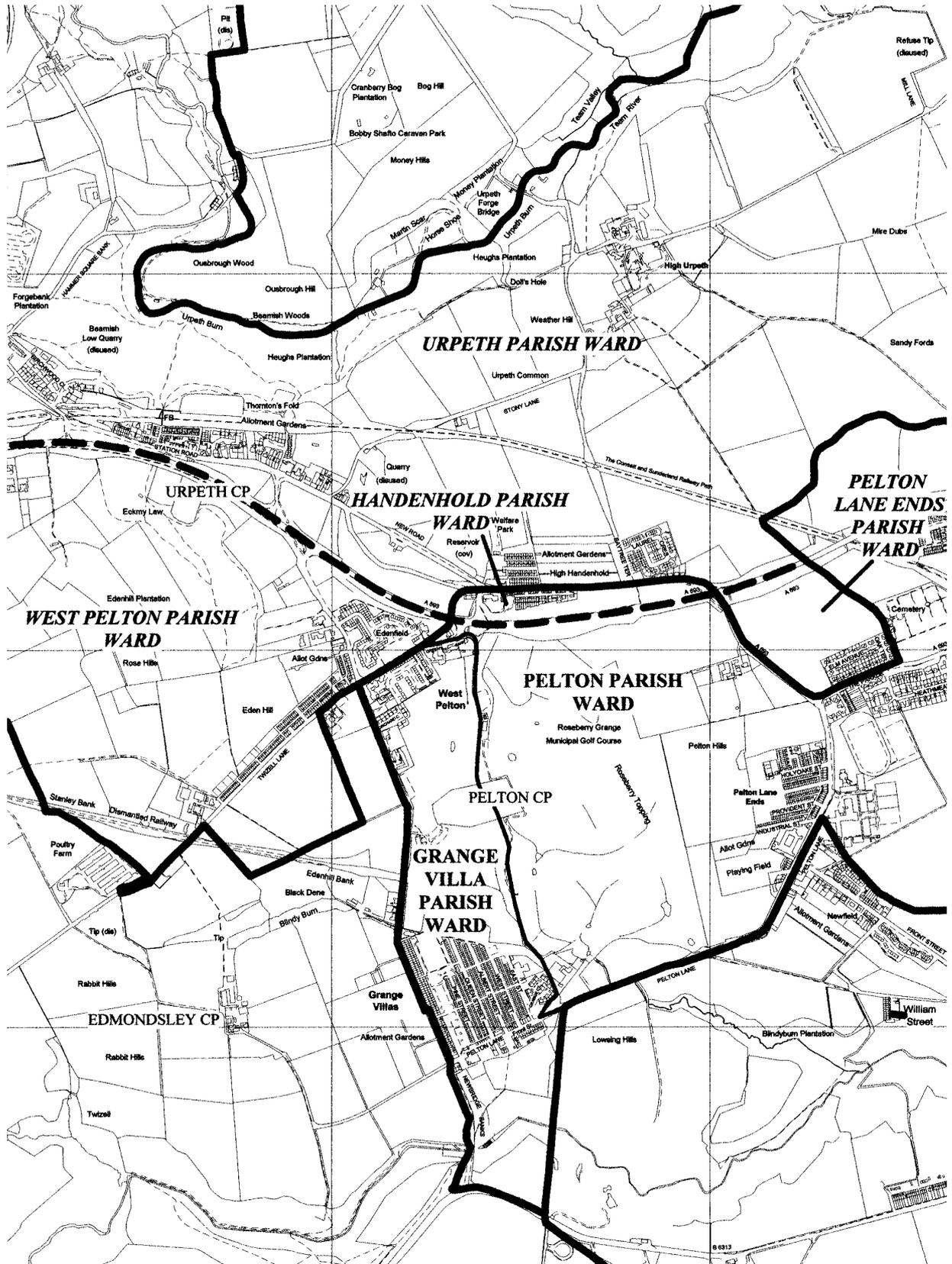
1 Bournmoor	5 Chester South	9 Kimblesworth and Plawsworth	13 Pelton
2 Chester Central	6 Chester West	10 Lumley	14 Pelton Fell
3 Chester East	7 Edmondsley and Waldrige	11 North Lodge	15 Sacriston
4 Chester North	8 Grange Villa and West Pelton	12 Ouston	16 Urpeth

Map A2:
Proposed Re-warding of Kimblesworth & Plawsworth Parish



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Map A3:
Proposed Warding of Pelton and Urpeth Parishes



KEY	
EXISTING PARISH BOUNDARY	—————
EXISTING PARISH WARD BOUNDARY	—————
PROPOSED PARISH WARD BOUNDARY	—————
PROPOSED PARISH WARD NAME	<i>WEST PELTON PARISH WARD</i>

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APPENDIX B

Draft Recommendations for Chester-le-Street

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 4, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations only in two wards, Bournmoor and Lumley. Although the constituent areas appeared the same in our draft recommendations, in fact our final recommendations propose that a greater part of the existing Little Lumley ward (and parish) should form part of the modified Bournmoor ward. The electoral figures set out below illustrate where our draft recommendations differ from those in Figure 4.

*Figure B1:
The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward*

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1997)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Bournmoor	2	2,319	1,160	-9	2,645	1,323	0
Lumley	3	3,463	1,154	-9	3,788	1,263	-5

Source: Electorate figures are based on Chester-le-Street District Council's Stage One submission which included additional forecast growth in these areas (348 electors), but some growth has been subsequently removed from the Draft Local Plan.

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

