

LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND

FINAL
RECOMMENDATIONS
ON THE FUTURE
ELECTORAL
ARRANGEMENTS FOR
CASTLE MORPETH IN
NORTHUMBERLAND

*Report to the Secretary of State for
the Environment*

March 1997

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for Castle Morpeth in Northumberland.

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Local Government Commission for England

25 March 1997

Dear Secretary of State

On 19 March 1996 the Commission commenced a periodic electoral review of the borough of Castle Morpeth under the Local Government Act 1992. It published its draft recommendations in October 1996 and undertook a nine-week period of consultation.

The Commission has now formulated its final recommendations in the light of the consultation. It has, for the most part, confirmed its draft recommendations, although it has modified some of its initial warding proposals in the light of further evidence. This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in the area.

The Commission is therefore recommending to you that Castle Morpeth should be served by 33 councillors representing 20 wards, and that some changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the Commission's statutory criteria. It is recommended that the whole Council should continue to be elected together every four years.

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

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Castle Morpeth on 19 March 1996. It published its draft recommendations on electoral arrangements on 31 October 1996, after which it undertook a nine-week period of consultation.

- **This report summarises the submissions received by the Commission during consultation on its draft recommendations, and offers its final recommendations to the Secretary of State.**

The Commission found that the existing electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Castle Morpeth because:

- **in 14 of the 21 wards, the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough;**
- **in three of these wards, Lynemouth, Ponteland North and Ellington, the number of electors per councillor varies by 30 per cent or more from the average, varying by 99 per cent in Ellington ward;**
- **by 2001, the number of electors per councillor is likely to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 12 of the wards.**

The Commission's final recommendations for the Borough Council's electoral arrangements (Figure 1) are that:

- **Castle Morpeth should be served by 33 councillors, compared with 34 at present;**
- **there should be 20 wards, rather than 21 as at present;**
- **the ward boundaries of 11 of the existing wards should be modified, while 10 wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years, with the next elections taking place in 1999.**

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

- **In 14 of the 20 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **By 2001 the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average in 15 wards.**

Recommendations are also made for changes to town and parish council electoral arrangements.

- **They provide for changes to the ward boundaries of Morpeth Town Council and Ponteland Parish Council so that they are coterminous with the recommended borough council wards.**
- **Stannington Parish Council would become unwarded.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, who will not make an Order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 5 May 1997.

Figure 1:
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1 Chevington	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of East Chevington and West Chevington)	Map 2
2 Ellington	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Ellington and Linton and Cresswell)	Map 2
3 Hartburn	1	Hartburn ward (the parishes of Hartburn, Meldon, Netherwitton and Wallington Demense); Whalton ward (part - the parishes of Capheaton and Belsay)	Map 2
4 Hebron, Hepscoth and Mitford	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Hebron, Hepscoth and Mitford)	Map 2
5 Heddon-on-the-Wall	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parish of Heddon-on-the-Wall)	Map 2
6 Longhorsley	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Longhorsley, Thirston and Tritlington)	Map 2
7 Lynemouth	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parish of Lynemouth)	Map 2
8 Morpeth Central	2	Morpeth Central ward (part - borough and parish ward); Morpeth North ward (part - borough and parish ward); Morpeth Stobhill ward (part - borough and parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A1
9 Morpeth Kirkhill	2	Morpeth Kirkhill ward (part - borough and parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A1
10 Morpeth North	2	Morpeth North ward (part - borough and parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A1
11 Morpeth South	2	Morpeth South ward; Morpeth Central ward (part - borough and parish ward); Morpeth Kirkhill ward (part - borough and parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A1
12 Morpeth Stobhill	2	Morpeth Stobhill ward (part - borough and parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A1
13 Pegswood	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Longhirst and Pegswood)	Map 2
14 Ponteland East	2	Ponteland East ward (part - borough and parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A2
15 Ponteland North	2	Ponteland North ward; Ponteland East ward (part - borough and parish ward); Ponteland West ward (part - borough and parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A2

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

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
16 Ponteland South	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Ponteland South borough and parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A2
17 Ponteland West	2	Ponteland West ward (part - borough and parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A2
18 Stamfordham	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Matfen and Stamfordham)	Map 2
19 Stannington	1	Stannington ward (the parish of Stannington); Whalton ward (part - the parish of Whalton)	Map 2
20 Ulgham	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Ulgham, Widdrington and Widdrington Station and Stobswood)	Map 2

1. INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Castle Morpeth in Northumberland.

2 The Commission has now reviewed the districts in Northumberland as part of its programme of periodic electoral reviews of all principal local authority areas in England. This is the Commission's first review of the electoral arrangements for Castle Morpeth. The last such review was undertaken by the Commission's predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in March 1975 (Report No. 15). The electoral arrangements of Northumberland County Council were last reviewed in January 1980 (Report No. 370). It is intended that a review of the County Council's electoral arrangements will follow in due course.

3 In undertaking these reviews, the Commission is required to have regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992:
 - (a) to reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
 - (b) to 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.

4 The Commission has also had regard to its own *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (published in March 1996 and supplemented in September 1996). This sets out its approach to the reviews.

5 The review of Castle Morpeth was in four stages (Figure 2).

6 Stage One commenced on 19 March 1996. The Commission wrote to Castle Morpeth Borough Council inviting it to make proposals for its future electoral arrangements. Copies of that letter were sent to Northumberland County Council, the other borough and district councils in Northumberland, the Northumbria Police Authority, the local authority associations, the Northumberland Association of Local Councils, parish and town councils in the borough, Members of Parliament and Members of the European Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, and the headquarters of the main political parties. The Commission also placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council itself to publicise the review further.

7 At Stage Two the Commission considered all the representations received during Stage One and formulated its draft recommendations.

8 Stage Three began on 31 October 1996 with the publication of the Commission's report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Castle Morpeth in Northumberland*. Copies were sent to all those to whom the Commission wrote at the start of the review as well as to those who had written to the Commission during Stage One, inviting comments on the Commission's preliminary conclusions. Again the Commission placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the report more widely.

9 Finally, during Stage Four, the Commission reconsidered its draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation.

Figure 2:
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
Four	Final deliberation and report to the Secretary of State for the Environment

2. CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

10 Castle Morpeth borough is a mixture of urban and rural communities situated in the south-east of Northumberland. It has two distinct areas of population, Morpeth and Ponteland. Morpeth, with an electorate of just over 11,000, is the largest town. It is a major provider of employment, a significant residential area and the headquarters of Northumberland County Council. Ponteland is also a large residential area within easy commuting distance of the Tyneside conurbation. To the west of Ponteland and Morpeth, the borough is predominantly rural in character, extending towards the moors and further to the foothills of the Simonside and Cheviot hills. In the north-east of the borough are the traditional mining areas of Ellington and Lynemouth, where much of the population growth of recent years has been centred.

11 The current electoral arrangements in the borough provide for a total of 34 councillors representing 21 wards (Map 1 and Figure 3). Eight wards are each represented by a single councillor; the other 13 wards, which are mainly urban, are each represented by two councillors. The Borough Council holds whole-council elections every four years, with the next elections taking place in May 1999.

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

13 The current electorate of the borough is 38,967 (February 1996). This is projected to increase to around 40,000 by 2001. At present each councillor represents an average of 1,146 electors, which would increase to 1,175 by 2001. Since the last review in 1975, growth in electorate has been uneven across the borough. As a result, the number of electors per councillor varies significantly from the average in many wards. There are currently 14

wards in which the number of electors per councillor varies from the average by over 10 per cent and six wards which vary by more than 20 per cent. Currently, in Ellington ward the number of electors per councillor varies by 99 per cent from the average so that the councillor for this ward represents 2,275 electors compared to the borough average of 1,146 electors.

14 There are 28 parish and town councils in the borough, thirteen of which are warded.

Map 1:
Existing Wards in Castle Morpeth

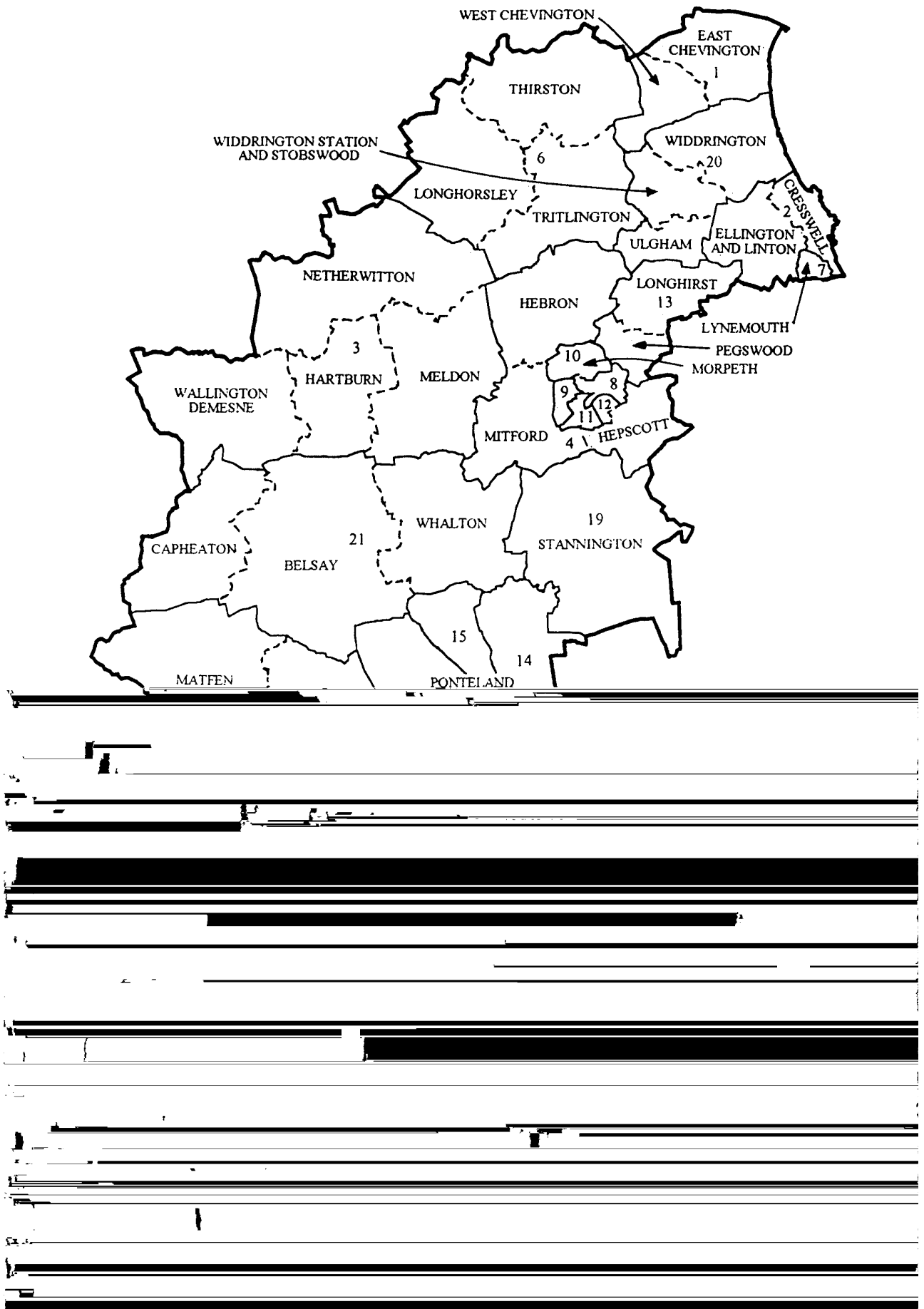


Figure 3:
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	1996				2001 (Projected)		
	Number of councillors	Electorate	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Chevington	2	2,096	1,048	-9	2,105	1,053	-10
2 Ellington	1	2,275	2,275	99	2,252	2,252	92
3 Hartburn	1	809	809	-29	801	801	-32
4 Hebron, Hepscoth and Mitford	1	1,303	1,303	14	1,290	1,290	10
5 Heddon-on-the-Wall	1	1,328	1,328	16	1,315	1,315	12
6 Longhorsley	1	1,052	1,052	-8	1,101	1,101	-6
7 Lynemouth	2	1,547	774	-33	1,532	766	-35
8 Morpeth Central	2	1,929	965	-16	2,250	1,125	-4
9 Morpeth Kirkhill	2	2,334	1,167	2	2,311	1,156	-2
10 Morpeth North	2	2,530	1,265	10	2,725	1,363	16
11 Morpeth South	2	1,891	946	-18	1,872	936	-20
12 Morpeth Stobhill	2	2,553	1,277	11	2,747	1,374	17
13 Pegswood	2	2,725	1,363	19	2,858	1,429	22
14 Ponteland East	2	2,544	1,272	11	2,609	1,305	11
15 Ponteland North	2	1,478	739	-36	1,463	732	-38
16 Ponteland South	2	2,432	1,216	6	2,408	1,204	2
17 Ponteland West	2	2,801	1,401	22	2,913	1,457	24
18 Stamfordham	1	1,093	1,093	-5	1,082	1,082	-8
19 Stannington	1	1,015	1,015	-11	1,055	1,055	-10
20 Ulgham	2	2,422	1,211	6	2,468	1,234	5
21 Whalton	1	810	810	-29	802	802	-32
Totals	34	38,967	—	—	39,959	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,146	—	—	1,175	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Castle Morpeth Borough Council's submission.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, electors in Lynemouth ward are relatively over-represented by 33 per cent, while Ellington ward is relatively under-represented by 99 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

15 During Stage One, the Commission received a submission from Castle Morpeth Borough Council on electoral arrangements in the borough. It also received eight submissions from parish councils, local organisations and residents. In the light of those representations, the Commission formulated its preliminary conclusions which were set out in its report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Castle Morpeth in Northumberland*. The Commission proposed that Castle Morpeth should be served by 33 councillors, representing 18 wards. It also proposed:

- (a) combining the two wards of Ellington and Lynemouth to form a three-member ward;
- (b) combining the two wards of Heddon-on-the-Wall and Stamfordham to form a two-member ward;
- (c) modifying the boundaries of the wards of Morpeth Central, Morpeth Kirkhill, Morpeth North, Morpeth South and Morpeth Stobhill;
- (d) modifying the boundaries of the wards of Ponteland East, Ponteland North and Ponteland West;
- (e) transferring the parish of Whalton from the present Whalton ward to Stannington ward;
- (f) transferring the parishes of Belsay and Capheaton from the present Whalton ward to Hartburn ward;
- (g) no change to the existing wards of Chevington, Hebron, Hepscoth and Mitford, Longhorsley, Pegswood, Ponteland South and Ulgham;
- (h) modifying the boundaries of the parish wards of Morpeth and Ponteland to make them coterminous with the proposed borough ward boundaries;
- (i) that the parish of Stannington should cease to be warded for parish council elections.

16 The Commission's proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 14 of 18 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the average. By 2001, the number of electors per councillor would be no more than 10 per cent from the average in 15 wards.

17 The Commission's draft recommendations are summarised in Appendix B.

Draft Recommendation

Castle Morpeth Borough Council should comprise 33 councillors, serving 18 wards. The whole Council should continue to be elected together every four years.

4. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

18 During the consultation on the Commission's draft recommendations report, 28 submissions were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission.

Castle Morpeth Borough Council

19 The Council reiterated the proposals it put forward at Stage One of the review, namely, the rewarding of Morpeth and Ponteland, the allocation of an additional councillor to the Ellington ward, and the retention of the existing arrangements in all other parishes and wards.

20 The Council accepted the Commission's proposed minor modification to its original proposal for a realignment of the ward boundary between Morpeth Kirkhill and Morpeth South wards. It also proposed a modification to the boundary between Morpeth North ward and Morpeth Central ward. This would result in Howard Road remaining in a single borough ward, reflecting the community identity which the Council contended this area enjoys. The Council also argued that its proposed boundary would still provide for good electoral equality.

21 In Ponteland the Council preferred its own proposals for ward boundaries to those proposed by the Commission. It proposed that the boundary between Ponteland North and Ponteland West wards should not run along the backs of houses, arguing that "it is more appropriate for boundaries to follow main roads rather than rear lanes and boundaries between individual properties".

22 The Council argued against the Commission's proposal for a three-member ward covering the current wards of Ellington and Lynemouth, reasoning that the two wards are "separate and distinct communities and that they have different social and community characteristics". The Council contended that "recommendations on electoral representation should not be made in a way which simply is designed to give representational balance but should reflect the fact that adjacent communities could be, and in this case are, very different". It proposed that Lynemouth ward should continue to be represented by two councillors on its present boundaries, and that the number of councillors in Ellington ward be increased from one to two.

23 The Council also opposed the disaggregation of the present Whalton ward and the transfer of Belsay and Capheaton parishes to Hartburn ward, and of Whalton parish to Stannington ward. It justified the retention of the present arrangements by listing a number of problems which it contended would arise were the Commission's draft recommendations to be implemented; these are detailed in Chapter 5.

24 Finally, the Council opposed the Commission's proposal for a ward covering the currently separate wards of Heddon-on-the-Wall and Stamfordham, arguing that Heddon-on-the-Wall is a commuter village and Stamfordham a rural community. It expressed concern that an amalgamation of the two wards could result in the views of either the rural or the more urban areas not being sufficiently represented depending upon which area the elected councillors came from.

25 The Council's proposals would result in the retention of the present number of wards (21) and an increase in the number of councillors from 34 to 35.

Castle Morpeth Borough Council Labour Group

26 The Castle Morpeth Borough Council Labour Group supported the Commission's proposals for both Morpeth and Ponteland, and for the wards of Hartburn, Whalton and Stannington. However, it strongly opposed the Commission's proposals for Ellington and Lynemouth, which it considered were separate communities with different social and community links and no historic connections.

Wansbeck Constituency Conservative Association

27 The Wansbeck Constituency Conservative Association supported the Commission's draft recommendations, which it stated "will improve the electoral imbalance which currently exists". It expressed disappointment, however, that the Commission had not taken up its suggestion of recommending single-member wards.

Hexham Constituency Conservative Association

28 The Hexham Constituency Conservative Association opposed the Commission's proposals for the wards of Hartburn, Heddon-on-the-Wall, Stamfordham, Stannington and Whalton. It expressed concern that rural areas would be poorly represented on the Borough Council, and argued for the retention of the current arrangements in these wards. The Association also considered that the Commission's proposed boundary between Ponteland West and Ponteland North wards would not be clearly identifiable and would cause confusion to the electorate.

Berwick-upon-Tweed Constituency Liberal Democrats

29 The Berwick-upon-Tweed Constituency Liberal Democrats asked the Commission to reconsider its draft recommendation for the wards of Ellington and Lynemouth, which it considered were "totally different in character, culture and lifestyle".

Members of Parliament

30 Alan Beith, MP for Berwick-upon-Tweed, opposed the Commission's draft recommendation to combine the two wards of Ellington and Lynemouth. He argued that Lynemouth, built as a planned mining village, had a strong sense of pride and many locally based organisations and activities, whereas Ellington consisted predominantly of private housing and had no affinity with Lynemouth. He contended that there was a clear physical gap between the two settlements, and expressed concern that if they were joined all three elected councillors could be from the same village, causing resentment in the other.

31 He also expressed his opposition to the Commission's proposed extension of Hartburn ward, on the grounds that this would produce too large a ward for one councillor to represent adequately.

Borough Councillors

32 Councillor Jackson, who represents Whalton ward, opposed the Commission's proposal to disaggregate the ward and transfer the three constituent parishes to the wards of Hartburn and Stannington. He argued that it was the "duty of a

councillor to be the line of communication between the electorate and the local authority. In the proposed wards of Hartburn and Stannington maintaining contact with the local electors will be an almost impossible task".

Northumberland Association of Local Councils

33 The Northumberland Association of Local Councils objected to the Commission's proposals for the Whalton and Hartburn area, and the amalgamation of the Heddon-on-the-Wall and Stamfordham wards. It contended that the proposed Hartburn ward would be geographically too large and that there were no close functional links between Whalton and Stannington. It also submitted that the current electoral imbalances in Heddon-on-the-Wall and Stamfordham were, in its opinion, acceptable and that "these two wards [were] quite different, and there [were] no functional links between the communities".

Parish and Town Councils

34 The Commission received submissions from 12 parish and town councils in the area. Ponteland Parish Council stated its preference for the warding arrangements that had been proposed by the Borough Council at Stage One, and objected to the Commission's proposed minor modification to the boundary between Ponteland West and Ponteland North wards. Morpeth Town Council also opposed the Commission's modification to the boundary between Morpeth Kirkhill and Morpeth South wards.

35 The parish councils of Whalton, Capheaton and Belsay, which are currently in Whalton ward, all made submissions during Stage Three. Whalton Parish Council opposed the proposals for the area on the grounds that the enlarged Stannington ward would be too large, and that rural representation on the Borough Council would be reduced, leading to "further disproportionate erosion in the level and quality of rural services". It also considered that, while there were "close ties with the parish of Belsay", there were no community links with Stannington and no direct link of any quality between the two settlements.

36 Belsay Parish Council pointed to the "close, successful and happy relationship between the parishes of Whalton, Belsay and Capheaton" and supported the retention of the existing arrangements for the ward. Capheaton Parish

Council argued that a borough councillor for the proposed Hartburn ward would “have to attend 24 parish council meetings a year quite apart from his or her duties in respect of the Borough Council. This is obviously unreasonable”. The Parish Council enclosed a petition, which had been signed by 76 residents, in support of its views.

37 Stannington Parish Council also opposed the Commission’s draft recommendation to expand Stannington ward, contending that it would “provide an unworkable and ineffective basis for representation of the residents of the parish”. However, the Council supported the Commission’s proposal to abolish its parish council wards.

38 The Commission also received submissions from the parish councils of Heddton-on-the-Wall, Matfen and Stamfordham, all of which opposed the amalgamation of the wards of Heddton-on-the-Wall and Stamfordham. The councils argued that the two wards formed separate communities and that there was little connection between the two areas.

39 Ellington and Linton Parish Council made a submission to the Commission as did Lynemouth Parish Council. Both councils opposed the amalgamation of Lynemouth and Ellington wards, stating that they were two distinct communities, both economically and socially. They stated that the two wards were separated by the River Lyne and contended that they experienced very different problems from each other. The councils identified the different social and demographic make up of the two wards, and the high unemployment rate in Lynemouth, 30 per cent of its population, as reasons for retaining two separate wards. They proposed that both wards should be represented by two councillors, an increase of one in Ellington ward.

40 Hepscoth Parish Council stated that it did “not wish to see a reduction in the rural wards’ representation” and that it did “not agree with the concept of redrawing electoral wards purely based upon a numerical representation basis”.

Other Representations

41 The Commission received a further eight submissions - three objecting to the proposal for Heddton-on-the-Wall and Stamfordham; two opposing the proposal for Ellington and Lynemouth; one from a resident of Ponteland proposing alternative ward boundaries in the town; one from a resident of Stannington supporting the

extension of the ward to include Whalton ward, arguing that there were many economic, sporting and leisure activities which united the area; and one concerning county divisions.

5. ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

42 As indicated previously, the Commission's prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Castle Morpeth was to achieve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria and to 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".

43 However, the Commission's function is not merely arithmetical, for three reasons. First, its 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, it must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries, and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken. Third, the Commission has had to consider the desirability of servicing effective and convenient local government, and reflecting the interests and identities of local communities.

44 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. In conducting its electoral reviews, the Commission's predecessor, the LGBC, considered that variations from the average number of electors per councillor for an authority as a whole should be kept to the absolute minimum: a variation of up to plus or minus 10 per cent in a particular ward may be regarded as being "acceptable", but variations in excess of plus or minus 20 per cent were generally accepted only in very exceptional circumstances.

45 The Commission's view is that the LGBC's approach to this issue had merit insofar as it combined a clearly defined tolerance threshold with the degree of flexibility necessary to achieve reasonable levels of electoral equality across a local authority's area. Accordingly, the Commission has decided to adopt this approach for the purposes of its reviews.

46 In its March 1996 *Guidance*, the Commission expressed the view that "proposals for changes in electoral arrangements should therefore be based on variations in each ward of no more than plus or minus 10 per cent from the average councillor:elector ratio for the authority, having regard to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates. Imbalances in excess of plus or minus 20 per cent may be acceptable, but only in highly exceptional circumstances...and will have to be justified in full". However, as the Commission emphasised in its September 1996 supplement to the *Guidance*: "While the Commission accepts that absolute equality of representation is likely to be unattainable, it considers that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, such equality should be the starting point in any electoral review".

Electorate Projections

47 The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2001, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 3 per cent over the five-year period from 1996, from 38,967 to 39,959. The Council did, however, advise the Commission that these figures were based on a draft Local Plan which had subsequently been rejected by the Council, and that a new Local Plan was in the process of being drawn up. The Commission accepts that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to projected electorates, is content that they represent the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council Size

48 The Commission indicated in its March 1996 *Guidance* that it would normally expect the number of councillors serving a borough council to be in the range of 30 to 60.

49 Castle Morpeth Borough Council is at present served by 34 councillors. The Council proposed an increase in council size to 35 during Stage One of the review. In its draft recommendations the Commission considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received. The Commission concluded that the statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would best be served by a council of 33 members. At Stage Three the Borough Council remained of the view that there should be an increase in council size. However, the Commission has not received evidence to persuade it to move away from its draft recommendations which it confirms as final.

Electoral Arrangements

50 Having considered all representations received during both Stage One and Stage Three of the review, the Commission has further considered its draft recommendations. The following areas are covered in turn:

- (a) Morpeth (five wards) and Ponteland (four wards);
- (b) Heddon-on-the-Wall and Stamfordham wards;
- (c) Ellington and Lynemouth wards;
- (d) Hartburn, Stannington and Whalton wards;
- (e) the remaining wards of Chevington, Hebron, Hepscoth and Mitford, Longhorsley, Pegswood and Ulgham.

Morpeth and Ponteland

51 In its draft recommendations report, the Commission recommended modifications to all five Morpeth town wards. Those draft recommendations would have achieved a generally satisfactory level of electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in each of the wards of Morpeth Central, Morpeth Kirkhill, Morpeth North, Morpeth South and Morpeth Stobhill, varying from the borough average by 8 per cent, 6 per cent, 1 per cent, 6 per cent and 3 per cent respectively in 1996, and 3 per cent, 10 per cent, 4 per cent, 9 per cent and 3 per cent by 2001.

52 During Stage Three the Commission received submissions concerning the warding of Morpeth from the Borough Council, the Borough Council Labour Group and Morpeth Town Council. The submissions broadly supported the draft

recommendations for the town, although the Town Council opposed the Commission's proposal for a minor modification to the Borough Council's Stage One scheme for the Morpeth Kirkhill and Morpeth South ward boundary. However, both the Borough Council and the Castle Morpeth Borough Council Labour Group accepted the modification. The Borough Council also proposed an alternative ward boundary between Morpeth North and Morpeth Central contending that the proposed boundary would retain the community based on the Howard Road area in a single ward.

53 The Commission has considered the effect that the Borough Council's proposals would have on the electoral equality of the area. All five wards of the town would continue to have electoral variances of 10 per cent or less, both now and in 2001. In the light of the Council's arguments that communities ties would not be broken, the Commission proposes to accept this modification to the ward boundary.

54 Given the support from the Borough Council and the good level of electoral equality that its draft recommendation would provide, the Commission has decided to confirm the majority of its recommendations for Morpeth as final, but it has decided to realign the boundary between Morpeth Central and Morpeth North ward as outlined by the Borough Council. The final recommendations are illustrated in Maps 2 and A1 and summarised in Figures 1 and 5.

55 In the four Ponteland wards, the Commission's draft recommendations would have resulted in the number of electors per councillor in Ponteland East, Ponteland North, Ponteland South and Ponteland West wards varying from the average by 2 per cent, 6 per cent, 3 per cent and 3 per cent respectively in 1996, and 2 per cent, 9 per cent, 1 per cent and 1 per cent by 2001.

56 The Commission received five submissions in relation to Ponteland. The Castle Morpeth Borough Council Labour Group supported the Commission's proposals in their entirety, but the Borough Council, Ponteland Parish Council and the Hexham Constituency Conservative Association all contended that the boundary between Ponteland North and Ponteland West wards would be more identifiable if it ran along the centre of Moor Lane rather than along the backs of houses. A resident of Ponteland also proposed an alternative ward boundary. However, his suggestion would have led to significant under-representation in Ponteland North ward.

57 The Commission seeks boundaries which are easily identifiable and recognisable on the ground. Notwithstanding the representations received, it has concluded that the boundaries proposed in its draft recommendations, following the rear curtilage of properties in Moor Lane, are clear and would be suitable for their purpose. The Commission's proposals would also provide improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in all four wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average both now and by 2001. It has therefore decided to confirm its draft recommendations for these four wards as final.

The wards of Heddon-on-the-Wall and Stamfordham

58 The Commission's draft recommendations for this area were to replace the two current wards of Heddon-on-the-Wall and Stamfordham with a single two-member ward. Assuming a council size of 33, the number of electors represented by each councillor in the proposed new ward would vary by only 3 per cent from the average for the borough.

59 During Stage Three, the Commission received submissions from all three parish councils in the proposed ward (Heddon-on-the-Wall, Matfen and Stamfordham), the Borough Council, the Northumberland Association of Local Councils, the Hexham Constituency Conservative Association, two parish councillors in the area, and from a local resident.

60 All opposed the Commission's draft recommendations, arguing that the two areas had very differing outlooks. Heddon-on-the-Wall, it was argued, is a commuter area for Newcastle, while Stamfordham is a more rural area. Some respondents also argued that transport links between the two centres of population were poor, and that they were divided by the main A69 road.

61 The Commission has reconsidered its draft recommendations in the light of the representations received during Stage Three, and the further evidence on community identities and interests in the area.

62 The Commission has concluded that there are economic and cultural differences between the two current wards, which may be exacerbated by the effect of the A69 trunk road, and what is said to be poor direct transport links. The Commission has considered the impact on electoral equality that retaining the existing arrangements would have,

assuming a 33 member council. In Heddon-on-the-Wall the number of electors represented by a councillor would vary from the borough average by 12 per cent, reducing to 9 per cent by the year 2001, while in Stamfordham the number would be 7 per cent and 11 per cent by 2001.

63 In the circumstances, the Commission has concluded that its draft recommendations should not be confirmed and that there should be no change to Heddon-on-the-Wall and Stamfordham wards.

The wards of Ellington and Lynemouth

64 Currently the number of electors per councillor in Ellington ward is 99 per cent above the borough average, while in Lynemouth ward it is 33 per cent below the average. During Stage One of the review, the Commission received several submissions proposing an increase in the number of councillors representing Ellington ward, from one to two.

65 The Commission considered possible alternatives for the whole area, which might also address the imbalance in Lynemouth ward. It concluded in its draft recommendations report that the two separate wards of Ellington and Lynemouth should be combined into a single ward represented by three councillors. The number of electors per councillor in the proposed ward would vary from the borough average by 8 per cent (4 per cent by 2001).

66 The Commission's draft recommendations for this area were opposed by the Borough Council, Ellington & Linton and Lynemouth parish councils, the Castle Morpeth Borough Council Labour Group, the Berwick-upon-Tweed Constituency Liberal Democrats, Alan Beith MP and two local residents. Community differences between the two wards were cited as the main grounds of opposition. The Borough Council argued that Ellington is considered to be a commuter area with a large proportion of relatively new housing development. Lynemouth, however, as a former mining village, has separate economic and social problems. The Castle Morpeth Borough Council Labour Group identified high unemployment in the ward as one such problem faced in Lynemouth. Concerns were also expressed by Alan Beith MP that it would be possible for all three councillors to be residents of the same village, and that this could cause resentment among electors in the other village.

67 Currently, the two councillors for Lynemouth represent 1,547 electors between them, so that each councillor represents an average of 774 electors. The electors of Lynemouth are therefore relatively over-represented by 33 per cent. The Commission's draft recommendations would have provided three councillors to represent the proposed Ellington and Lynemouth ward and would have led to a more balanced distribution of councillors to electors. The fact that this would be the only three-member ward in the borough, and all other wards in the borough are either single-member or two-member wards, however, was of concern to the Commission. It therefore invited more information to assist in the formulation of warding arrangements which were not only applicable to the specific area, but also to the borough as a whole.

68 As in Heddon-on-the-Wall and Stamfordham, the areas are divided, in this instance by the River Lyne. Having received further information from individuals and organisations in the area outlining the socio-economic differences between these two communities, the Commission considers that its statutory criteria would be better served by retaining two separate wards in the area.

69 While acknowledging this point the Commission considers that alternative means of reducing electoral inequality in the area should be found. Several respondents, both in Stage One and Stage Three, brought the Commission's attention to the significant levels of growth that have occurred in Ellington ward over the past two decades, leaving the ward severely under-represented. To rectify this the Commission concurs with the views expressed that an additional councillor is needed to represent Ellington. This would result in the number of electors per councillor in Ellington varying by 4 per cent from the average, 7 per cent by 2001.

70 In Lynemouth, however, the 1,547 electors are relatively over-represented by 33 per cent. The Commission recognises the views of residents who preferred to be represented by a councillor who is local to them, and has had to balance its aim of achieving electoral equality against its statutory criteria. The Commission has concluded that of the two alternative solutions for the area - combining the ward with Ellington or reducing the number of councillors - a balance between these two aims could most effectively be achieved by reducing the number of councillors representing Lynemouth ward from two to one, while still

retaining a separate ward. This would result in the number of electors per councillor varying by 31 per cent from the borough average, reducing to 27 per cent by 2001, an improvement on the current arrangements.

71 The Commission has concluded on balance, that the wards of Ellington and Lynemouth should remain separate, but that Ellington should be represented by an additional (second) councillor, and that Lynemouth should be represented by a single councillor, rather than two as at present.

The wards of Hartburn, Stannington and Whalton

72 The number of electors per councillor in the wards of Hartburn, Stannington and Whalton currently varies from the borough average by 29 per cent, 11 per cent and 29 per cent respectively, becoming 32 per cent 10 per cent and 32 per cent by 2001.

73 In its draft recommendations report, the Commission proposed that the three wards should be modified as follows: Hartburn ward should comprise the parishes of Hartburn, Meldon, Netherwitton and Wallington Demense (currently in Hartburn ward), together with the parishes of Belsay and Capheaton (currently in Whalton ward); Stannington ward should comprise the parishes of Stannington and Whalton; and Whalton ward should cease to exist.

74 In response to this proposal the Commission received submissions from the Borough Council, the Castle Morpeth Borough Council Labour Group, the Northumberland Association of Local Councils, the Hexham Constituency Conservative Association, Alan Beith MP, the parish councils of Belsay, Capheaton, Hepscott, Stannington and Whalton, and a parish councillor in the area. Most opposed the Commission's draft recommendations for these wards. The Borough Council identified a number of problems which it contended would arise from such ward boundaries being drawn:

- (a) the creation of a geographically large ward of Hartburn, which, given the poor quality of road communication, would make effective representation in the area very difficult;
- (b) with six parishes in the extended Hartburn ward, communication between the borough councillor and the parish councillors would become more difficult;

- (c) residents of Hartburn ward have a stronger affinity with Morpeth while those in Belsay and Capheaton have a stronger affinity with Ponteland;
- (d) Whalton has “little or nothing in common” with Stannington and road communications between the two parishes are poor. Children from Stannington attend schools in Morpeth while those from Whalton attend Ponteland schools; and
- (e) the proposal would lead to a greater inequality in the representation of rural interests on the Borough Council and perhaps therefore to a further erosion of services provided to the rural area;

75 Concern was also expressed by many of those who wrote in connection with these wards that rural issues may not be sufficiently represented on the Borough Council. The Hexham Constituency Conservative Association stated that there were “already strong feelings about the poor service in the rural areas”. While the Commission acknowledges these concerns, its task in this review is to make recommendations which, so far as is practicable, achieve equality of representation across the whole of the Borough Council’s area, having regard to the statutory criteria.

76 The Commission concurs with the Castle Morpeth Borough Council Labour Group and the views expressed by a local resident, that the area has a common rural nature and that similar issues and problems may affect electors throughout the area. The Commission believes that these rural areas will not be disadvantaged as the area is entirely parished and thus has an additional effective voice in local government.

77 The Commission recognises the objections to its draft recommendations that several parish councils, the Borough Council and other respondents have raised during Stage Three of the review, and has carefully considered all views expressed. However, the Commission considers that the retention of the existing arrangements is not possible because of the high level of electoral inequality that would result. It has therefore concluded that its draft recommendations would best meet the statutory criteria. The Commission has therefore decided to confirm its draft recommendations as final.

The wards of Chevington, Hebron, Hepscott and Mitford, Longhorsley, Pegswood and Ulgham

78 In its draft recommendations report, the Commission adopted the Borough Council’s proposal for no change to the wards of Chevington, Hebron, Hepscott and Mitford, Longhorsley, Pegswood and Ulgham. During Stage Three, the Borough Council supported the Commission’s draft recommendations. Although the number of electors per councillor in the wards of Chevington and Pegswood would vary from the average by more than 10 per cent, both in 1996 and in 2001, the geography of the area and the position of the two wards in the borough have led the Commission to conclude that the statutory criteria would best be met by retaining the current arrangements for the wards.

79 In the wards of Hebron, Hepscott and Mitford, Longhorsley and Ulgham, the number of electors per councillor would vary by 10 per cent, 11 per cent and 3 per cent, reducing to 7 per cent, 9 per cent and 2 per cent by 2001. As it did not receive any new evidence to dissuade it from its draft recommendations in these areas, the Commission has therefore decided to confirm its draft recommendations as final.

Electoral Cycle

80 The Commission proposed that the present system of whole-council elections be retained. At Stage Three, the Commission did not receive any comments on this issue. It has therefore decided to confirm its draft recommendation as final.

Parish Council Electoral Arrangements

81 The Commission recommends that the warding arrangements of Morpeth Town Council and Ponteland Parish Council be modified to reflect the new borough warding arrangements in those areas, and that Stannington Parish Council cease to be warded for parish council elections.

Conclusions

82 Having considered all the evidence and representations it has received on its draft recommendations, the Commission has concluded that there should be a reduction in council size from 34 members to 33; that there should be 20 wards rather than 21 as at present; that elections should remain on a whole-council basis; and that the boundaries of 11 of the existing wards should be modified. Figure 4 shows the impact of the Commission's final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements as based on 1996 electorate figures, and with projected electorates in the year 2001.

83 As Figure 4 shows, the Commission's recommendations would result in a reduction from 14 to six in the number of wards where the number of electors per councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average. The Commission concludes that its recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Castle Morpeth Borough Council should comprise 33 councillors serving 20 wards, as detailed in Figures 1 and 5, Map 2 and Appendix A. The whole Council should continue to be elected every four years.

84 As indicated above, changes in parish electoral arrangements will be required as a consequence of the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the Borough Council.

85 In the Morpeth Town Council area, the Commission confirms its draft recommendations in the town with the exception of the boundary between Morpeth Central and Morpeth North borough wards which it recommends should be amended as outlined above. Consequently, the warding arrangements of the Town Council should be modified to reflect these changes.

*Figure 4:
Comparison of Current and Recommended Arrangements*

	1996 electorate		2001 projected electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	34	33	34	33
Number of wards	21	20	21	20
Average number of electors per councillor	1,146	1,181	1,175	1,211
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	14	6	12	5
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	6	1	7	1

Final Recommendation

Morpeth Town Council should continue to comprise 15 councillors representing five wards, with each ward represented by three councillors. However, the boundaries of the five wards should be modified to reflect the proposed Borough Council wards illustrated in Map A1 in Appendix A.

86 In the Ponteland Parish Council area, the Commission confirms its draft recommendations.

Final Recommendation

Ponteland Parish Council should continue to comprise 12 councillors representing four wards, with each ward represented by three councillors. However, the boundaries of three of the four wards should be modified to reflect the proposed Borough Council wards illustrated in Map A2 in Appendix A.

87 The Commission confirms its draft recommendations for the Stannington Parish Council area.

Final Recommendation

Stannington Parish Council should continue to comprise eight councillors but should cease to be warded for parish council elections.

88 The Commission also proposes that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of town and parish councils in the area.

Final Recommendation

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

Map 2:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Castle Morpeth

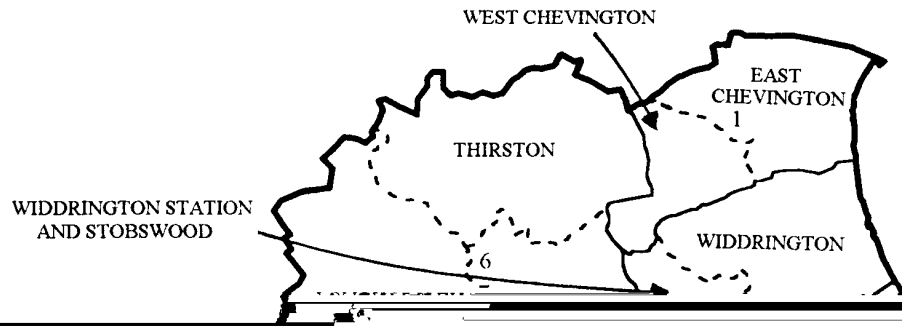


Figure 5:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Castle Morpeth

Ward name	1996				2001 (Projected)		
	Number of councillors	Electorate	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Chevington	2	2,096	1,048	-11	2,105	1,053	-13
2 Ellington	2	2,275	1,138	-4	2,252	1,126	-7
3 Hartburn	1	1,291	1,291	9	1,278	1,278	6
4 Hebron, Hepscott and Mitford	1	1,303	1,303	10	1,290	1,290	7
5 Heddon-on-the-Wall	1	1,328	1,328	12	1,315	1,315	9
6 Longhorsley	1	1,052	1,052	-11	1,101	1,101	-9
7 Lynemouth	1	1,547	1,547	31	1,532	1,532	27
8 Morpeth Central	2	2,198	1,099	-7	2,519	1,260	4
9 Morpeth Kirkhill	2	2,213	1,107	-6	2,190	1,095	-10
10 Morpeth North	2	2,311	1,156	-2	2,506	1,253	3
11 Morpeth South	2	2,214	1,107	-6	2,195	1,098	-9
12 Morpeth Stobhill	2	2,301	1,151	-3	2,495	1,248	3
13 Pegswood	2	2,725	1,363	15	2,858	1,429	18
14 Ponteland East	2	2,315	1,158	-2	2,380	1,190	-2
15 Ponteland North	2	2,215	1,108	-6	2,200	1,100	-9
16 Ponteland South	2	2,432	1,216	3	2,408	1,204	-1
17 Ponteland West	2	2,293	1,147	-3	2,405	1,203	-1
18 Stamfordham	1	1,093	1,093	-7	1,082	1,082	-11
19 Stannington	1	1,343	1,343	14	1,380	1,380	14
20 Ulgham	2	2,422	1,211	3	2,468	1,234	2
Totals	33	38,967	—	—	39,959	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,181	—	—	1,211	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Castle Morpeth Borough Council's submission.

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

6. NEXT STEPS

89 Having completed its review of electoral arrangements in Castle Morpeth and submitted its final recommendations to the Secretary of State, the Commission has fulfilled its statutory role under the Local Government Act 1992.

90 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to the Commission's 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 the Commission's recommendations are submitted to the Secretary of State.

91 All further correspondence concerning the Commission's recommendations and matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State at the following address:

The Secretary of State for the Environment
Local Government Review
Department of the Environment
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

APPENDIX A

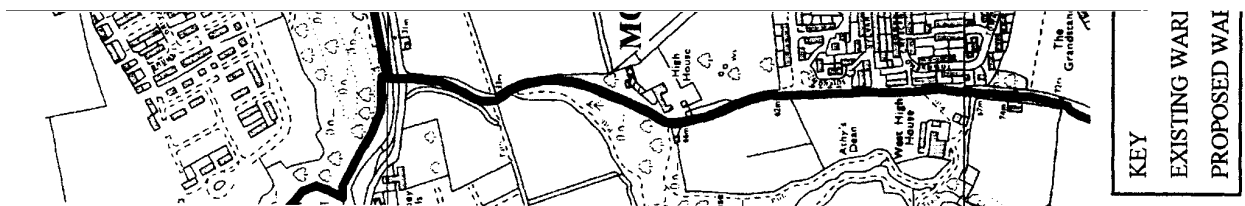
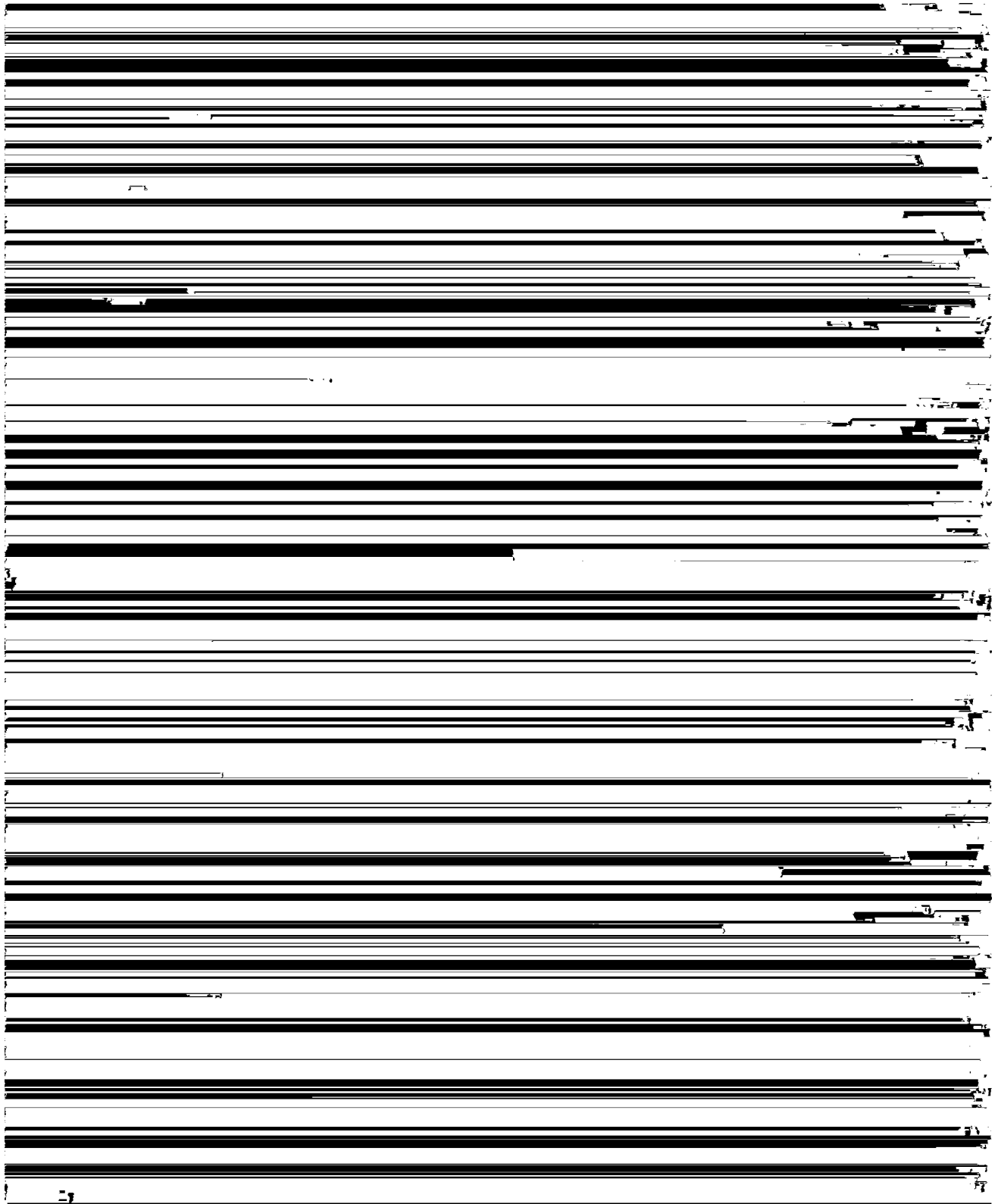
Final Recommendations for Castle Morpeth: Detailed Mapping

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

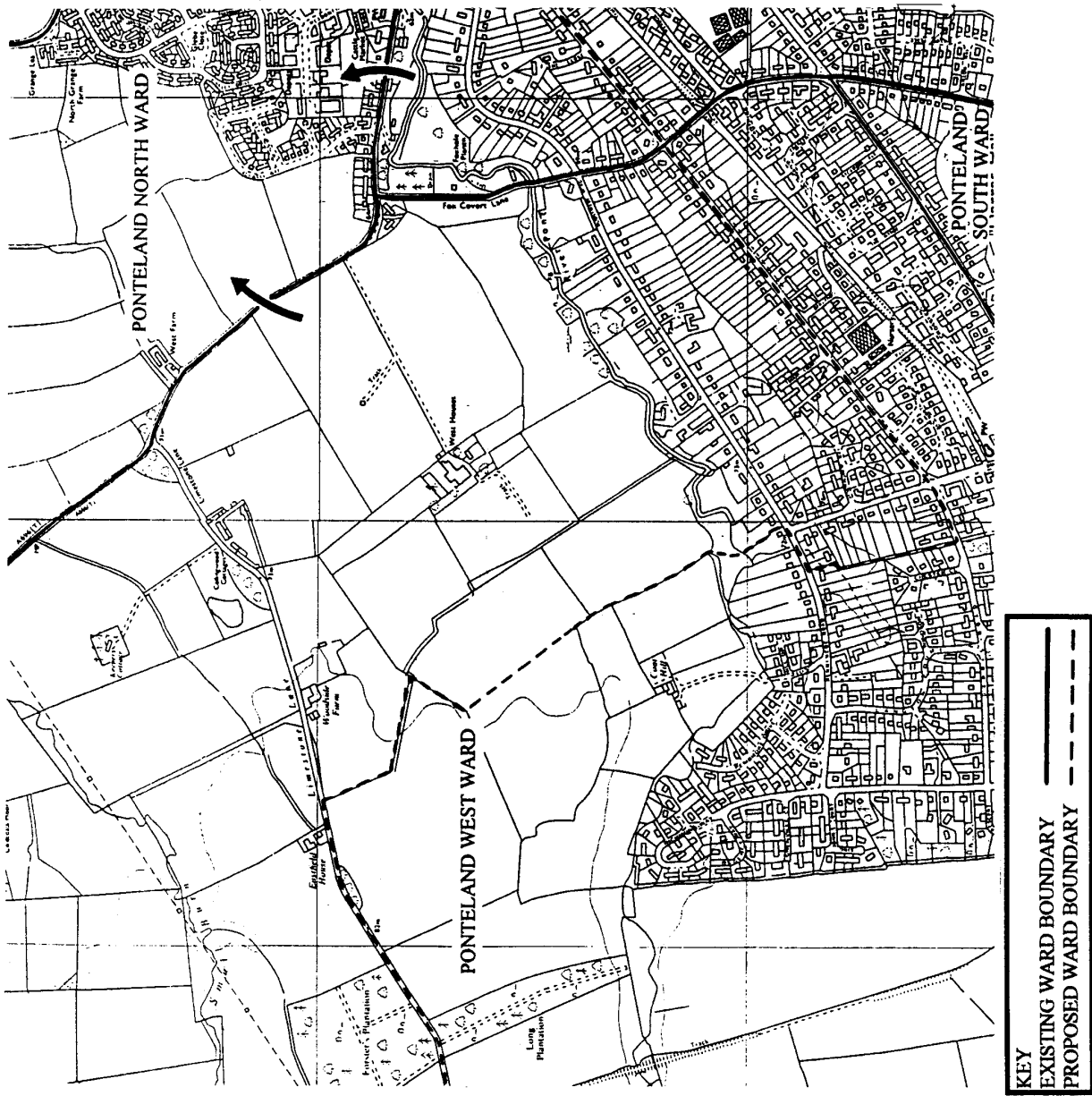
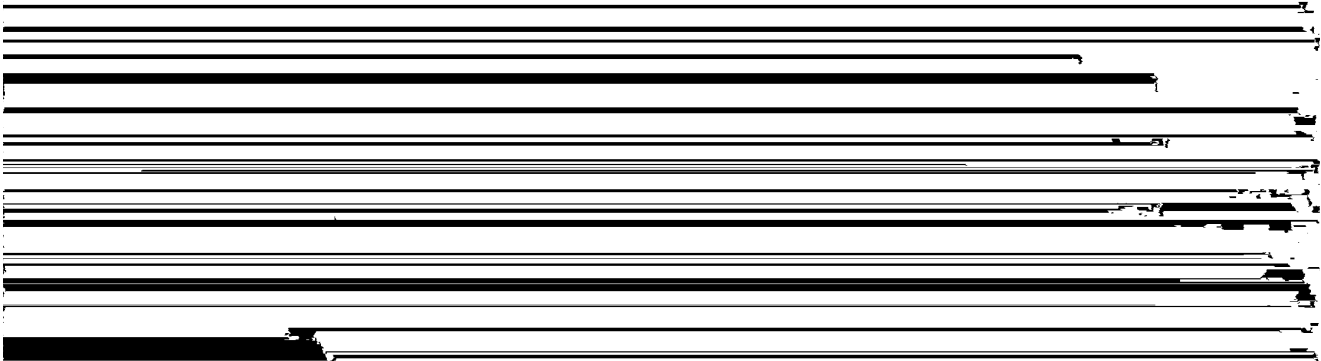
Map A1 illustrates the proposed ward boundary changes in Morpeth town.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed boundary changes in Ponteland. The boundary between the proposed wards of Ponteland West and Ponteland North would continue along Limestone Lane until it reaches the Ponteland parish boundary.

Map A1:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Morpeth



Map A2:
 The Commission's Final Recommendations for Ponteland



APPENDIX B

Draft Recommendations for Castle Morpeth

Figure B1:
The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
1 Chevington	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of East Chevington and West Chevington)
2 Ellington and Lynemouth	Ellington ward (the parishes of Ellington and Linton and Cresswell); Lynemouth ward (the parish of Lynemouth)
3 Hartburn	Hartburn ward (the parishes of Hartburn, Meldon, Netherwitton and Wallington Demense); Whalton ward (part - the parishes of Capheaton and Belsay)
4 Hebron, Hepscoth and Mitford	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Hebron, Hepscoth and Mitford)
5 Heddon-on-the-Wall and Stamfordham	Heddon-on-the-Wall ward (the parish of Heddon-on-the-Wall); Stamfordham ward (the parishes of Matfen and Stamfordham)
6 Longhorsley	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Longhorsley, Thirston and Tritlington)
7 Morpeth Central	Morpeth Central ward (part - borough and parish ward); Morpeth North ward (part - borough and parish ward); Morpeth Stobhill ward (part - borough and parish ward)
8 Morpeth Kirkhill	Morpeth Kirkhill ward (part - borough and parish ward)
9 Morpeth North	Morpeth North ward (part - borough and parish ward)
10 Morpeth South	Morpeth Central ward (part - borough and parish ward); Morpeth Kirkhill ward (part - borough and parish ward); Morpeth South ward
11 Morpeth Stobhill	Morpeth Stobhill ward (part - borough and parish ward)
12 Pegswood	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Longhirst and Pegswood)
13 Ponteland East	Ponteland East ward (part - borough and parish ward)
14 Ponteland North	Ponteland East ward (part - borough and parish ward); Ponteland North ward; Ponteland West ward (part - borough and parish ward)
15 Ponteland South	<i>Unchanged</i> (Ponteland South borough and parish ward)

Continued overleaf

Figure B1 (continued):

The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent Areas
16 Ponteland West	Ponteland West ward (part - borough and parish ward)
17 Stannington	Stannington ward (the parish of Stannington); Whalton ward (part - the parish of Whalton)
18 Ulgham	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Ulgham, Widdrington and Widdrington Station and Stobswood)

Figure B2:
The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Castle Morpeth

Ward name	1996				2001 (Projected)		
	Number of councillors	Electorate	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Chevington	2	2,096	1,048	-11	2,105	1,053	-13
2 Ellington and Lynemouth	3	3,822	1,274	8	3,784	1,261	4
3 Hartburn	1	1,291	1,291	9	1,278	1,278	6
4 Hebron, Hepscott and Mitford	1	1,303	1,303	10	1,290	1,290	7
5 Heddon-on-the-Wall and Stamfordham	2	2,421	1,211	3	2,397	1,199	-1
6 Longhorsley	1	1,052	1,052	-11	1,101	1,101	-9
7 Morpeth Central	2	2,176	1,088	-8	2,497	1,249	3
8 Morpeth Kirkhill	2	2,213	1,107	-6	2,190	1,095	-10
9 Morpeth North	2	2,333	1,167	-1	2,528	1,264	4
10 Morpeth South	2	2,214	1,107	-6	2,195	1,098	-9
11 Morpeth Stobhill	2	2,301	1,151	-3	2,495	1,248	3
12 Pegswood	2	2,725	1,363	15	2,858	1,429	18
13 Ponteland East	2	2,315	1,158	-2	2,380	1,190	-2
14 Ponteland North	2	2,215	1,108	-6	2,200	1,100	-9
15 Ponteland South	2	2,432	1,216	3	2,408	1,204	-1
16 Ponteland West	2	2,293	1,147	-3	2,405	1,203	-1
17 Stannington	1	1,343	1,343	14	1,380	1,380	14
18 Ulgham	2	2,422	1,211	3	2,468	1,234	2
Totals	33	38,967	—	—	39,959	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,181	—	—	1,211	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Castle Morpeth Borough Council's submission

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

