

# Final recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for St Helens

Report to The Electoral Commission

*March 2003*

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# What is The Boundary Committee for England?

The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of The Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. The functions of the Local Government Commission for England were transferred to The Electoral Commission and its Boundary Committee on 1 April 2002 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001 (SI 2001 No. 3692). The Order also transferred to The Electoral Commission the functions of the Secretary of State in relation to taking decisions on recommendations for changes to local authority electoral arrangements and implementing them.

Members of the Committee are:

Pamela Gordon (Chair)  
Professor Michael Clarke CBE  
Robin Gray  
Joan Jones CBE  
Ann M Kelly  
Professor Colin Mellors

Archie Gall (Director)

We are required by law to review the electoral arrangements of every principal local authority in England. Our aim is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, the number of councillors and ward names. We can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish councils.

This report sets out our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of St Helens in Merseyside.



# Summary

We began a review of the electoral arrangements of St Helens on 4 December 2001. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 3 September 2002, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation. We now submit final recommendations to The Electoral Commission.

- **This report summarises the representations that we received during consultation on our draft recommendations, and contains our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission.**

We found that the existing arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in St Helens:

- **in eight of the 18 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10% from the average for the borough and four wards vary by more than 20%;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10% from the average in nine wards and by more than 20% in four wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 140-141) are that:

- **St Helens Borough Council should have 48 councillors, six fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 16 wards, instead of 18 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 17 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of two, and only one ward, Rainhill, should retain its existing boundaries.**

The purpose of these proposals is to ensure that, in future, each borough councillor represents approximately the same number of electors, bearing in mind local circumstances.

- **In 10 of the proposed 16 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10% from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in only three wards - Bold, Rainford and Rainhill - expected to vary by more than 10% from the average for the borough in 2006.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Bold and Windle;**
- **revised warding arrangements and an increase in the number of councillors serving Seneley Green Parish Council;**
- **a decrease in the number of councillors serving Eccleston Parish Council.**

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to The Electoral Commission, which will not make an Order implementing them before six weeks after publication of the Final Report. The information in the representations will be available for public access once the Order has been made.

**The Secretary  
The Electoral Commission  
Trevelyan House  
Great Peter Street  
London SW1P 2HW**

**Fax: 020 7271 0667**

**Email: [implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk)  
(This address should only be used for this purpose)**

Table 1: Final recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Large Map reference
1	Billinge & Seneley Green	3	Billinge Chapel End parish; the proposed Seneley Green North parish ward of Seneley Green parish	2
2	Blackbrook	3	the proposed Seneley Green South parish ward of Seneley Green parish; part of Blackbrook ward; part of Broad Oak ward; part of Haydock ward	2
3	Bold	3	Bold parish; part of Sutton & Bold ward; part of West Sutton ward	4
4	Earlestown	3	part of Newton East ward; part of Newton West ward	2,3 and 4
5	Eccleston	3	Eccleston parish; part of Grange Park ward; part of Queen's Park ward; part of Thatto Heath ward	1,2 and 4
6	Haydock	3	the proposed Seneley Green East parish ward of Seneley Green parish; part of Haydock ward	2,3 and 4
7	Moss Bank	3	Moss Bank ward; part of Blackbrook ward	2
8	Newton	3	part of Newton East ward; part of Newton West ward	3
9	Parr	3	part of Broad Oak ward; part of Sutton & Bold ward	2 and 4
10	Rainford	3	Rainford ward; the proposed Windle North parish ward of Windle parish; part of Windle ward	1 and 2
11	Rainhill	3	<i>Unchanged:</i> Rainhill parish	4
12	Sutton	3	part of Marshalls Cross ward; part of Sutton and Bold ward	4
13	Thatto Heath	3	part of Grange Park ward; part of Thatto Heath ward; part of West Sutton ward	4
14	Town Centre	3	part of Marshalls Cross ward; part of Grange Park ward; part of Parr & Hardshaw ward; part of Queen's Park ward; part of West Sutton ward	2 and 4
15	West Park	3	part of Grange Park ward; part of Queen's Park ward; part of Thatto Heath ward	2 and 4
16	Windle	3	the proposed Windle South parish ward of Windle parish; part of Windle ward; part of Queen's Park ward	1 and 2

Notes:

- 1) There are seven parishes in the borough and they comprise parts of eight wards, as indicated above.
- 2) The wards on the above table are illustrated on Map 2, Map A1 and the large maps.
- 3) We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors.

Table 2: Final recommendations for St Helens

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Billinge & Seneley Green	3	9,457	3,152	11	9,547	3,182	9
2	Blackbrook	3	8,818	2,939	3	8,617	2,872	-1
3	Bold	3	7,018	2,339	-18	7,563	2,521	-13
4	Earlestown	3	7,617	2,539	-11	8,007	2,669	-8
5	Eccleston	3	9,326	3,109	9	9,239	3,080	6
6	Haydock	3	8,956	2,985	5	9,243	3,081	6
7	Moss Bank	3	9,038	3,013	6	8,977	2,992	3
8	Newton	3	8,272	2,757	-3	8,256	2,752	-5
9	Parr	3	8,472	2,824	-1	9,224	3,075	6
10	Rainford	3	7,083	2,361	-17	7,133	2,378	-18
11	Rainhill	3	9,646	3,215	13	9,697	3,232	11
12	Sutton	3	9,464	3,155	11	9,337	3,112	7
13	Thatto Heath	3	7,956	2,652	-7	8,728	2,909	0
14	Town Centre	3	8,284	2,761	-3	9,031	3,010	3
15	West Park	3	8,953	2,984	5	8,855	2,952	1
16	Windle	3	8,147	2,716	-5	8,172	2,724	-6
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>136,507</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>139,626</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
	<b>Average</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,844</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,909</b>	<b>-</b>

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

# 1 Introduction

1 This report contains our final recommendations for the electoral arrangements for the borough of St Helens. We are reviewing the five metropolitan boroughs in Merseyside as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. The programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to finish in 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of St Helens. St Helens' last review was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which reported to the Secretary of State in April 1979 (Report no. 329).

3 In making final recommendations to The Electoral Commission, we have had regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3692), ie the need to:
  - reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
  - secure effective and convenient local government; and
  - achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of St Helens was conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Periodic Electoral Reviews*. This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review.

5 Our task is to make recommendations on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also propose changes to the electoral arrangements for parish councils in the borough.

6 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as possible, equal representation across the borough as a whole. Schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10% in any ward will have to be fully justified. Any imbalances of 20% or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

7 We are not prescriptive on council size. However, we believe that any proposals relating to council size, whether these are for an increase, a reduction or no change, should be supported by evidence and argumentation. Given the stage now reached in the introduction of new political management structures under the provisions of the local Government Act 2000, it is important that whatever council size interested parties may propose to us they can demonstrate that their proposals have been fully thought through, and have been developed in the context of a review of internal political management and the role of councillors in the new structure. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified. In particular, we do not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of the council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

8 Under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 there is no limit to the number of councillors which can be returned from each metropolitan borough ward. However, the figure must be divisible by three. In practice, all metropolitan borough wards currently return three councillors. Where our recommendation is for multi-member wards, we believe that the number of councillors to be returned from each ward should not exceed three, other than in very exceptional circumstances. Numbers in excess of three could lead to an unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate and we have not, to date, prescribed any wards with more than three councillors.

9 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 4 December 2001, when the LGCE wrote to St Helens Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. It also notified Merseyside Police Authority, the Local Government Association, the Lancashire Association of Parish & Town Councils, parish councils in the borough, Members of Parliament with constituencies in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the North West Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. It placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 25 March 2002. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

10 Stage Three began on 3 September 2002 with the publication of the report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for St Helens*, and ended on 28 October 2002. During this period comments were sought from the public and any other interested parties on the preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four the draft recommendations were reconsidered in the light of the Stage Three consultation and we now publish the final recommendations.

## 2 Current electoral arrangements

11 The borough of St Helens is industrialised but is broken up by large green belt areas surrounding the previously independent administrations which amalgamated to form St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council in 1974. The main industry is manufacturing glass and the borough contains The World of Glass, Haydock Park Racecourse, Billinge Beacon and Kings Moss, as well as being home to St Helens Rugby League Football Club, winners of the World Club Championship in 2001. The borough has excellent transport links with the M6 and the M62 motorways both passing through the area.

12 The borough contains seven parishes, but much of the area is unparished. It experienced a decline in population of 4.9% between 1981 and 1991 but this decline has now stabilised, with a decline of just 1% between 1991 and 2000.

13 The electorate of the borough is 136,507 (December 2001). The Council presently has 54 members who are elected from 18 wards, the majority of which are relatively urban. All wards are three-member wards.

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

15 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,528 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,586 by the year 2006 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 eight of the 18 wards varies by more than 10% from the borough average, in four wards by more than 20% and in one ward by more than 30%. The worst imbalance is in Billinge & Seneley Green ward where each of the councillors represent 36% more electors than the borough average.

*Map 1: Existing wards in St Helens*

Table 3: Existing electoral arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Billinge & Seneley Green	3	10,332	3,444	36	10,387	3,462	34
2	Blackbrook	3	6,986	2,329	-8	7,022	2,341	-9
3	Broad Oak	3	6,628	2,209	-13	6,662	2,221	-14
4	Eccleston	3	8,542	2,847	13	8,587	2,862	11
5	Grange Park	3	7,486	2,495	-1	7,740	2,580	0
6	Haydock	3	9,029	3,010	19	9,277	3,092	20
7	Marshalls Cross	3	5,960	1,987	-21	5,991	1,997	-23
8	Moss Bank	3	8,215	2,738	8	8,257	2,752	6
9	Newton East	3	7,598	2,533	0	7,638	2,546	-2
10	Newton West	3	8,295	2,765	9	8,629	2,876	11
11	Parr & Hardshaw	3	5,940	1,980	-22	6,109	2,036	-21
12	Queens Park	3	7,002	2,334	-8	7,038	2,346	-9
13	Rainford	3	6,940	2,313	-8	6,976	2,325	-10
14	Rainhill	3	9,646	3,215	27	9,697	3,232	25
15	Sutton & Bold	3	7,463	2,488	-2	8,413	2,804	8
16	Thatto Heath	3	7,198	2,399	-5	7,815	2,605	1
17	West Sutton	3	6,318	2,106	-17	6,422	2,141	-15
18	Windle	3	6,929	2,310	-9	6,966	2,322	-10
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>136,507</b>	-	-	<b>139,626</b>	-	-
	<b>Average</b>	-	-	<b>2,528</b>	-	-	<b>2,586</b>	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by St Helens Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Parr & Hardshaw ward were relatively over-represented by 22%, while electors in Billinge & Seneley Green ward were significantly under-represented by 36%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.



### 3 Draft recommendations

16 During Stage One 36 representations were received, including three borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats and Rainhill Parish Council. We also received representations from the Conservative Party, four local Labour parties, five other parish councils, two community groups and 21 local residents. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for St Helens*.

17 Our draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council's proposals, which we considered provided a good balance between electoral equality, the recognition of community identity and interests and the provision of effective and convenient local government. However, we moved away from the Borough Council's scheme in a number of areas, to improve electoral equality and to provide what we considered to be a better recognition of community identity. We proposed that:

- St Helens Borough Council should be served by 48 councillors, compared to the current 54, representing 16 wards, two fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of two wards;
- there should be new warding arrangements for Bold, Eccleston, Rainhill, Seneley Green and Windle parishes.

*Draft recommendation*

St Helens Borough Council should comprise 48 councillors, serving 16 wards.

18 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 15 of the 18 wards varying by no more than 10% from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with only one ward, Rainford, varying by more than 10% from the average by 2006.



## 4 Responses to consultation

19 During the consultation on the draft recommendations report, 695 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of St Helens Borough Council.

### St Helens Borough Council

20 The Borough Council supported the majority of the draft recommendations but put forward amendments to the proposed Bold, Haydock, Newton West and Sutton wards. It also proposed several ward name changes.

### Political groups

21 We received eight representations from local political groups. The St Helens Liberal Democrats opposed the draft recommendations and reiterated their proposal for a council size of 54 members. They agreed with the Council that the draft recommendations for Town Centre and Sutton wards should be rejected and proposed an amendment to the northern boundary of the proposed Bold ward. They supported the comments of Eccleston Parish Council at Stage Three.

22 The St Helens Conservative Group supported the Council's submission but opposed the draft recommendations for Windle. Four local Labour parties and St Helens North Constituency Labour Party expressed their support for the draft recommendations for their respective areas while West Sutton Labour Club opposed the draft recommendations for Bold and Rainhill.

### Parish councils

23 We received six representations from parish councils at Stage Three. Rainhill Parish Council strongly opposed the draft recommendations for Rainhill and stated that they wished to retain Rainhill parish in a single ward. We also received a further submission from Rainhill Parish Council containing two resolutions against the draft recommendations.

24 Bold, Eccleston and Seneley Green parish councils generally supported the draft recommendations but proposed amendments to their respective internal parishing arrangements. Eccleston Parish Council considered that an 18-ward scheme would have been preferable. Windle Parish Council generally supported the reduction in council size to 48 members but opposed the draft recommendation to ward Windle parish.

### Other representations

25 A further 680 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from local organisations, councillors and residents.

26 Councillor Ashcroft and 11 residents also opposed the draft recommendation to ward Windle parish. Three residents proposed renaming the proposed Newtown ward as West Park ward. A resident expressed general support for the draft recommendations but proposed amendments to the proposed Bold and Rainhill wards and commented on several other wards. Another resident was disappointed with the draft recommendations and wished for the Liberal Democrat's proposals to be adopted in full. A resident proposed an amendment to the draft recommendations for Thatto Heath ward while another resident questioned the cabinet system of political management and opposed any changes to the existing arrangements.

27 661 local residents and organisations opposed the draft recommendations for Rainhill and stated that they wished Rainhill parish to remain in a single ward.



## 5 Analysis and final recommendations

28 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for St Helens is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended): the need to secure effective and convenient local government; reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and secure the matters referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (equality of representation). Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

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

30 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which results in 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.

31 We accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be minimised, the aim of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should make electoral equality their starting point, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate must also be considered and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

### Electorate forecasts

32 Since 1975 there has been a 1.5% decrease in the electorate of St Helens borough. However, this decrease has shown signs of stabilisation in the last 10 years and at Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 2.3% from 136,507 to 139,626 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in the existing wards of Sutton & Bold and Thatto Heath due to substantial new developments in these areas, although a significant amount is also expected in the wards of Grange Park and Newton West. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained. Having accepted that this is an inexact science and, having considered the forecast electorates, we stated in our draft recommendations report that we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

33 We received no comments on the Council's electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and we remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates currently available.

### Council size

34 St Helens Borough Council presently has 54 members. During Stage One the Borough Council put forward a reduced council size of 48 members. To support its proposal for a reduction in council size, the Council argued that following the experience of operating under the

new political management structure for three months, 'the size of the Council could be reduced without impacting on the efficiency of members to meet the different demands of their new roles'. The Council argued that although the number of formal meetings had increased under the new arrangements, there were considerably more committees and sub-committees under the old system and that 'while most of those bodies did not meet as frequently as some of the recent creations, they involved a lot more members for longer periods'. In conclusion, the Council considered that 'compared to the previous system, members are spending less time in formal meetings under the new Constitution, even allowing for the new Overview and Scrutiny arrangements. Furthermore, it is envisaged that as those arrangements bed in and the process develops, still less time will be required in formal meetings'. Therefore the Council concluded that a reduced council of 48 members would be capable of providing effective and convenient local government for the borough of St Helens.

35 Alternative council sizes of 54, 45 and 18 members were also proposed at Stage One by the Liberal Democrats, Rainhill Parish Council and a resident respectively. The Liberal Democrats proposed retaining the current council size of 54 members as they considered that this would best enable councillors to deal with 'the increased responsibilities and workload of councillors over recent years'. They argued that while the expectation was that under the modernisation process councillors would attend fewer formal meetings and would become more involved with their communities 'in reality this has not been the case' and concluded that 'given all the circumstances our view is that there should be no reduction in the number of councillors'.

36 Rainhill Parish Council proposed a reduction in council size from 54 members to 45 members. It considered that 'the reduction to a 45-member council will in no way affect the efficient operation of the Council and it will still be able to more than adequately provide an effective service to all the residents of St Helens'. It also considered that the seven parish councils of the borough represent an additional resource available to the Council and one which 'if used as a communication channel to the community would further support the contention of the Parish Council that St Helens could effectively function with 45 councillors'.

37 A resident proposed a reduction in council size from 54 members to 18 members representing a single ward and argued that the councillors' workload had been much reduced in recent years due to the transfer of such services as bus services, fire service, police force and council housing out of councillors' direct control.

38 We carefully considered all the proposals for various council sizes submitted at Stage One and were convinced by the Council's proposal for a reduced council of 48 members. Although we recognised that the Council originally proposed retaining the existing council size of 54 members and understood the Liberal Democrats' reasons for supporting a council of this size, we considered that the Council was right to have taken on board the experience of operating under the new political arrangements for three months. The Council had clearly given careful thought to the requirements of governance under the new structure and had taken what we considered to be an objective view on the number of councillors required for St Helens Borough Council to provide effective and convenient local government. We share the view of the Council that members are spending less time in formal meetings than under the old management structure and concur that as these arrangements become more settled, the time demands on members with relation to formal meetings will decrease further.

39 Therefore, having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 48 members, as proposed by the Borough Council.

40 At Stage Three we received six submissions regarding council size. The Borough Council stated that 'the Council approved the Boundary Committee's endorsement of the Council's main submission, at the first stage of the review process, that in order to secure effective and

convenient local government the size of the Council ought to be 48 members'. St Helens North Constituency Labour Party and Rainford Branch Labour Party supported the proposal to reduce the council from 54 to 48 members. Newton-le-Willows Labour Party considered that 'the reasons stated for the reduction in the numbers of councillors and electoral wards are sound and well overdue'.

41 The Liberal Democrats opposed the draft recommendations and remained 'of the opinion that St Helens would be better served by 54 councillors rather than 48'. They also suggested that 'any future reviews should be done in two stages, firstly determine the size of council and then redraw boundaries'.

42 A resident also opposed the council size of 48 members as proposed in the draft recommendations and stated that 'whether or not the decision is appropriate to consider council size foremost, to the exclusion of other council sizes, the methodology adopted and logic applied to reach the conclusion that 48 members is the correct size is fundamentally flawed'. The resident argued that there was little objective evidence to support the Council's proposal to reduce the size of the council from 54 to 48 members and considered that 'the logical coherence of the Liberal Democrat submission is largely ignored in a vain attempt to support that of St Helens MBC'.

43 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three and are proposing to endorse our draft recommendation for a reduced council size of 48 members. Although we note the objections to our draft recommendations from the Liberal Democrats and a resident, we do not consider that there is sufficient new evidence to persuade us to move away from our draft recommendations.

44 We have noted the support for our proposed council size from the Borough Council and St Helens North Constituency Labour Party, Rainford Branch Labour Party and Newton-le-Willows Labour Party and, given this support and the lack of any strong evidence to convince us to move away from our draft recommendations, we are content to endorse the draft recommendation for a reduced council size of 48 members.

## Electoral arrangements

45 We received three borough-wide schemes from the Council, the Liberal Democrats and Rainhill Parish Council at Stage One. The Council proposed a scheme consisting of 16 three-member wards, the Liberal Democrats proposed a scheme consisting of 18 three-member wards and Rainhill Parish Council proposed a scheme consisting of 15 three-member wards.

46 Having considered all the representations carefully, and having decided to adopt the Council's proposed council size of 48 members as the most appropriate for St Helens, it was very difficult for us to adopt any of the wards proposed by the Liberal Democrats or Rainhill Parish Council. Both of these proposals were based on different council sizes from the one that we adopted and therefore the wards in both schemes were of different sizes to those required under a council of 48 members resulting in higher levels of electoral inequality and thus making it very difficult to incorporate individual wards from these schemes into a borough-wide scheme based on a different council size. We based our proposals on the Council's scheme as we considered that it provided the best balance between electoral equality, the recognition of community identity and interests, and the provision of effective and convenient local government, given the constraints of a uniform three-member ward pattern. However, we proposed moving away from the Council's proposals in certain areas to improve electoral equality and provide what we considered to be a better recognition of community identity.

47 At Stage Three the Council generally supported the draft recommendations but proposed amendments to our proposed Haydock and Sutton wards. It also proposed renaming five of our proposed wards following local representations. The Liberal Democrats opposed our draft

recommendations and considered that 'the priority of the criteria was altered to suit a 16-ward option'. Electoral equality is always the prime aim of a periodic electoral review. However, in the process of producing our recommendations we must balance the achievement of electoral equality with other issues such as the need to recognise community identities and interests and the need to provide effective and convenient local government.

48 At the beginning of the review, in meetings with councillors and group leaders we stressed the importance of achieving cross-party support on council size, even if on nothing else. In cases where this consensus cannot be achieved we must make a decision on council size based on the available evidence. As mentioned above, once this decision is made, however unfortunate it may seem, it is very difficult for us to adopt wards from schemes based on different council sizes simply because the wards will be of varying sizes.

49 The Conservatives and several local Labour parties generally supported the draft recommendations. We also received a large number of representations from residents and local organisations in Rainhill, many providing strong evidence of community identity.

50 Eccleston and Seneley Green parish councils both requested that the parish council elections be delayed until 2004. However, we have no powers to delay elections and any such requests are a matter for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister or local authorities themselves.

51 We also received a letter from a resident questioning the cabinet system of political management and opposing any change to the existing arrangements because they would give a greater majority to Labour. It is not within our remit to comment on the particular style of political management that an authority has adopted and we are also unable to have any regard for the political outcome of our recommendations.

52 Given the general support for the majority of the draft recommendations we are content to endorse our proposals in the majority of St Helens. However, having taken into account the representations received at Stage Three, we are proposing four amendments in the Rainhill, Bold and Sutton area to provide a better balance between electoral equality, the recognition of community identity and the provision of strong, easily identifiable boundaries. We have been persuaded by the evidence received that Rainhill is a strong local community and are proposing to retain the existing Rainhill ward. We are also proposing a minor amendment to the boundary between the proposed Haydock and Newton West wards. Finally, we are proposing a number of ward name changes to better reflect community identity.

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

- a) Billinge & Seneley Green, Moss Bank, Rainford and Windle wards;
- b) Eccleston, Grange Park, Rainhill and Thatto Heath wards;
- c) Marshalls Cross, Sutton & Bold and West Sutton wards;
- d) Blackbrook, Broad Oak, Parr & Hardshaw and Queen's Park wards;
- e) Haydock, Newton East and Newton West wards.

54 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large maps.

## **Billinge & Seneley Green, Moss Bank, Rainford and Windle wards**

55 These four wards are situated in the north of the borough. Billinge & Seneley Green ward comprises the parishes of Billinge Chapel End and Seneley Green, Rainford ward comprises the parish of Rainford, and Windle ward includes Windle parish and an unparished area. The number of electors per councillor in Billinge & Seneley Green and Moss Bank wards is 36% and 8% above the borough average respectively (34% and 6% above by 2006). The number of

electors per councillor in Rainford and Windle wards is 8% and 9% below the borough average respectively (10% and 10% below by 2006).

56 At Stage One, the Council proposed a warding arrangement broadly based on the existing wards. It proposed retaining four wards generally based on the existing boundaries but with some amendments to provide an improved level of electoral equality. It proposed that Billinge & Seneley Green ward be renamed Billinge ward and proposed moving the southern boundary of the ward to run along the East Lancashire Road. It also proposed transferring Pewfall and Ashtons Cross into a revised Haydock ward with the eastern boundary of Billinge ward running north from the East Lancashire Road between Old Garswood Hall Farm and Pewfall to Tithe Barn Hillock and then north east to join the borough boundary. The Council proposed a largely unchanged Moss Bank ward but proposed amending the eastern boundary of the existing ward to include electors in the Laffak, Peebles Avenue and Paisley Avenue estates. It proposed an amended Rainford ward incorporating a substantial proportion of the existing Windle ward and using the East Lancashire Road as the southern boundary except where this road passes through Eccleston parish. Using the East Lancashire Road as the boundary in this area would necessitate the creation of a parish ward of Eccleston parish containing approximately 25 electors and so the Council proposed following the Eccleston parish boundary until it rejoins the East Lancashire Road. Although this proposed ward would have a high level of electoral variance (17% below the borough average rising to 18% below by 2006) the Council argued that 'it would be unrealistic to try and "stretch" the ward any further as this would be an unnatural association with other communities which are too far away and unrelated'. Finally, the Council proposed an amended Windle ward to be renamed Denton's Green ward, consisting of the majority of the existing Windle ward to the south of the East Lancashire Road. The proposed ward would follow the existing southern boundary of Windle ward apart from in two areas. In the south-western area of the ward the proposed boundary would run south down Alder Hey Road before running east behind the allotments and rejoining the existing boundary at the rear of Percival Way. In the south-eastern area of the ward the boundary would run down Lingholme Road before turning north-east on Boundary Road. It would then run south-east along Duke Street before running north-east along Crab Street to the junction with North Road where it would turn north and run up North Road to rejoin the existing boundary.

57 The Liberal Democrats put forward a revised warding arrangement for this area but retained the existing Rainford ward. It proposed amended Billinge, Moss Bank and Windle wards. Rainhill Parish Council put forward a revised warding arrangement for this area including a ward based on the existing Rainford ward but with an amended southern boundary. It also proposed amended wards in the Billinge and Moss Bank areas, with the existing Windle ward being split between the surrounding wards. The Billinge & Seneley Green branch of St Helens North Labour Party, the Moss Bank ward branch of the Labour Party and Rainford Branch Labour Party all supported the Council's Stage One submission. The St Helens North Conservative Association supported the Council's submission but proposed a number of amendments.

58 Billinge Chapel End Parish Council stated that it wished to 'remain unwarded as a comprehensive unit of nine parish councillors' and also stated that it supported Option 2 of the Council's consultation exercise for an 18-ward borough-wide scheme. Seneley Green Parish Council supported an 18-ward borough-wide scheme and wished to increase the number of parish councillors representing the parish council from eight to 10. Windle Parish Council supported the Council's submission for a 16-ward borough-wide scheme but felt 'most strongly against the splitting-up of the parish'. It stated that it favoured the '16-ward proposal, but with the amendment that the parish area not be warded, but retained in its entirety, as in the 18-ward Option 2 proposal'. A resident also put forward proposals for revised wards in this area.

59 We carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One and, given our acceptance of the Council's proposed council size of 48 members and the generally good levels of electoral equality provided by the Council's scheme, we based our proposals in this area on the Council's scheme. As mentioned earlier, our adoption of this council size rather than a

council size of 45 or 54 made it very difficult for us to adopt any of the wards proposed by the Liberal Democrats or Rainhill Parish Council. This is because the wards contained in their schemes were of different size to those contained in the Council's submission and thus would result in high electoral variances if adopted as part of a scheme based on a council of 48 members.

60 Although the Council's proposal for an amended Rainford ward would provide a high level of electoral inequality (18% below the borough average by 2006), we considered that this variance was justified given the nature of the area. Rainford is a separate and distinct community which is geographically separated from the rest of the borough by substantial areas of open land and the strong natural barrier of the East Lancashire Road and we were of the opinion that any re-warding arrangement to provide improved electoral equality in this area would necessitate the creation of an artificial ward and would not provide for effective and convenient local government. We considered that the Council's proposal to use the East Lancashire Road as most of the southern boundary of an amended Rainford ward provided a strong boundary. However, we agreed that the boundary should leave the East Lancashire Road to follow the existing northern boundary of Eccleston parish as we do not consider that creating a parish ward for very few electors provides for effective and convenient local government.

61 With one amendment, to provide what we considered to be a better and more easily identifiable boundary, we adopted the Council's proposed Billinge ward. We proposed moving the boundary between the proposed Billinge and Haydock wards to run along the railway line as we considered that this provided for a stronger and more easily identifiable boundary with a minimal effect on electoral equality. As suggested by St Helens North Conservative Association, we proposed that the Council's proposed Billinge ward be renamed Billinge & Seneley Green ward as we considered that this provided a better reflection of community identity. Also, as put forward by St Helens North Conservative Association, we proposed to rename the Council's proposed Denton's Green ward as Windle ward as, despite the revised warding arrangement, most of the population of Windle parish would still be contained within the revised ward. We endorsed the Council's proposals in the rest of this area as we considered that they provided the best balance between the statutory criteria.

62 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Billinge & Seneley Green ward (comprising the parish of Billinge Chapel End and the proposed Seneley Green North parish ward of Seneley Green parish) and Moss Bank ward would be 11% and 6% above the borough average respectively (9% and 3% by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Rainford ward (including the parish of Rainford and the proposed Windle North parish ward of Windle parish) and Windle ward (including the proposed Windle South parish ward of Windle parish) would be 17% and 5% below the borough average respectively (18% and 6% by 2006).

63 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported the draft recommendations for this area. St Helens North Constituency Labour Party supported the Committee's 'draft proposal that the wards of Windle and Billinge & Seneley Green be allowed to keep their names'. Windle Members Branch of St Helens North Constituency Labour Party stated that 'we give our total support for the name of Windle. Denton's Green is not an appropriate name because the area of Denton's Green forms a very small part of this area and the name of Windle is far more significant to the community'. Rainford Branch Labour Party stated that it was 'grateful that the Boundary Committee has accepted the argument that Rainford is a separate and distinct community and that a re-warding based on electoral equality would have necessitated the creation of an artificial ward that would not have provided for effective and convenient local government'. It also supported the draft recommendation that 'the wards of Windle and Billinge & Seneley Green be allowed to keep their names' and considered that 'as a village community we recognize the historic links and affection that a name can hold'. The Moss Bank Ward Branch of the Labour Party stated that it 'fully agreed with your proposal for the Moss Bank ward'.

64 St Helens Conservative Group was 'pleased to note that the recommendations to conserve the historic names of Windle and Billinge & Seneley Green have been retained'. However, it objected to the boundary between the proposed Rainford and Windle wards arguing that residents in this area would 'find themselves voting for a Windle parish councillor and a Rainford ward councillor'. The Conservative Group considered that the draft recommendations would be detrimental to community identity in this area and argued that 'it seems pointless to destroy the successful community relations that currently exist between Windle ward and Windle parish, only to enhance numbers in Rainford ward'.

65 Windle Parish Council supported the proposals to retain the name of Windle ward but opposed the proposal to ward Windle parish. It argued that 'for a small part of the parish to be split off and transferred into the proposed Rainford ward might result in alienating residents involved'. It also argued that there could be practical difficulties when district and parish council elections were held and stated that 'this might well produce increased voter apathy with regard to elections'. The parish council concluded that 'Windle Parish Council would wish to endorse the major proposals, but with the amendment that the Windle parish area not be warded, but retained in its entirety'.

66 Seneley Green Parish Council agreed with the majority of the draft recommendations but did not support the proposed allocation of parish councillors within the proposed parish wards of Seneley Green parish. It proposed an alternative allocation and this is discussed in more detail in the parishing section at the end of this chapter. The parish council supported the names of the proposed Billinge & Seneley Green, Blackbrook and Haydock wards and asked for consideration to be given to delaying the parish council elections until 2004.

67 Councillor Ashcroft supported the proposal to retain the name Windle in preference to the Council's proposed name Denton's Green. However, he opposed the draft recommendation to ward the parish of Windle. He argued that 'while the East Lancashire Road appears to offer a strong boundary line, this is far from reality' and that 'the links with this section of the community within the wider community of Windle ward are extremely close'. He argued that there were few community links between Rainford and Windle and that 'it seems pointless to destroy the successful community relations that currently exist, just to prop up numbers'. Councillor Ashcroft also enclosed a number of letters from local residents opposing the proposal to ward the parish of Windle.

68 We also received letters from 11 local residents opposing the proposal to ward Windle parish. The residents were concerned that the draft recommendations would be detrimental to the community identities and interests of Windle parish and argued against the recommendation to include part of Windle parish in an amended Rainford ward on the grounds of the geographical separation between the two areas.

69 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to endorse the draft recommendations in their entirety in this area. We note the objections to our proposed warding of Windle parish but have not been persuaded by the evidence received to move away from our draft recommendations. We consider that the East Lancashire Road does provide for a strong, easily identifiable boundary and, on balance, do not consider that there is sufficient evidence that our proposals would be significantly detrimental to community identity in the area to convince us to move away from our draft recommendations, especially in light of the higher electoral variance that moving away from our recommendations would entail.

70 We have noted the support for our recommendations in the remainder of this area and are content to endorse our draft recommendations as final as we consider that they provide the best balance between electoral equality, the recognition of community identity and the provision of strong, easily identifiable boundaries.

71 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Billinge & Seneley Green ward (comprising the parish of Billinge Chapel End and the proposed Seneley Green North parish ward of Seneley Green parish) and Moss Bank ward would be 11% and 6% above the borough average respectively (9% and 3% by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Rainford ward (including the parish of Rainford and the proposed Windle North parish ward of Windle parish) and Windle ward (including the proposed Windle South parish ward of Windle parish) would be 17% and 5% below the borough average respectively (18% and 6% by 2006).

## Eccleston, Grange Park, Rainhill and Thatto Heath wards

72 These four wards are situated in the south-west of the borough. Eccleston ward comprises Eccleston parish and Rainhill ward comprises Rainhill parish. The number of electors per councillor in Eccleston and Rainhill wards is 13% and 27% above the borough average respectively (11% and 25% by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in Grange Park and Thatto Heath wards is 1% and 5% below the borough average respectively (equal to and 1% above by 2006).

73 At Stage One the Council proposed a revised warding arrangement in this area. It proposed a revised Eccleston ward with an amended eastern boundary which would leave the existing boundary and run down Alder Hey Road before turning briefly west and then south down Holme Road. The boundary would then run south down the path to Prescott Road where it would run south-west to rejoin the existing boundary. It would then leave the existing boundary again in the south-east of the ward to run around the houses on Eilerslie Avenue, Nottingham Close and Sherwood Close until rejoining the existing boundary again. The Council proposed abolishing the existing Grange Park ward with the majority of the existing ward being split between a new Newtown ward and a new Town Centre ward. The new Newtown ward would border the revised Eccleston ward to the west and would then run to the south of the allotments and behind the houses on Percival Way in the north-east of the ward. The boundary would then run along Marsden Avenue before turning north along Rivington Road and then south-east along Lingholme Road. It would then run south-west along Cowley Hill Lane to the junction with Prescott Road before running south along Alexandra Drive to Stafford Road. The boundary would then run east along Ravenhead Road and then east to the railway line. It would run south-west along the railway line to the junction with Thatto Heath Road where it would run north briefly before running north-west along Springfield Road. At Broadway it would run south briefly before running west behind the houses to the north of Uplands Road and the east of Cumberland Avenue to rejoin the boundary with the proposed Eccleston ward on Prescott Road.

74 The Council also proposed an amended Thatto Heath ward which would use the Liverpool to Manchester railway line as its southern boundary, Marshalls Cross Road, the A569 and Burtonhead Road as its eastern boundary and the Wigan to Liverpool railway line as its northern boundary to the junction with Thatto Heath Road. Here the boundary would run north-west along Springfield Road before reaching Broadway where it would run south briefly before running west behind the houses to the north of Uplands Road and the east of Cumberland Avenue. The boundary would then run south-west along Prescott Road before turning south down Portico Lane and east along Scholes Lane. It would then run behind all the houses on the Scholes Park and Foxwood estates before rejoining the existing boundary. The proposed boundary would then leave the existing boundary again to run behind all the houses in the Nottingham Close, Eilerslie Avenue, Field Way and Gardeners Way area before running south-east to meet the Liverpool to Manchester railway line. Finally the Council proposed an amended Rainhill ward including those properties in the Nottingham Close, Eilerslie Avenue, Field Way and Gardeners Way area. The proposed boundary would run south-west along the Liverpool to Manchester railway line to the A57 where the boundary would turn south-east and follow the A57 to the M62 and the borough boundary. The Council stated that 'ideally the existing ward boundary should not change as this, along with Rainford, is a clear case of settlement identity. Following the Local Government

Commission rules however it is clear the electorate size of the existing ward is too great and adjustments will, reluctantly, be required in the interests of electoral equality’.

75 The Liberal Democrats proposed an alternative warding arrangement in this area with a largely unchanged Eccleston ward, a new Rainhill North ward, a new Rainhill South ward, a revised Thatto Heath ward and a new ward comprising parts of the existing Grange Park, Queen’s Park, West Sutton and Parr & Hardshaw wards.

76 Rainhill Parish Council put forward a revised warding arrangement for this area with a slightly amended Rainhill ward, amended wards in the Thatto Heath and Grange Park areas and a slightly enlarged Eccleston ward. It also put forward a supplementary proposal for consideration if we decided to adopt the Council’s 16-ward scheme. Eccleston Parish Council supported the Liberal Democrats’ submission and opposed the Council’s submission, stating that it ‘threatens the future integrity of the present Eccleston parish area in several ways’. It also proposed three amendments to be considered if we chose to adopt the Council’s 16-ward scheme.

77 Rainhill Civic Society stated that it found ‘the division of its township by an arbitrary line quite unacceptable’ and would prefer a fourth consultation option that would leave Rainhill virtually unchanged. Rainhill Crime and Disorder Group opposed the division of Rainhill and expressed concern at the consultation process undertaken by the Council. Four residents and 14 proforma letters opposed the division of Rainhill parish while another resident proposed an alternative for the Rainhill area.

78 We carefully considered all representations received at Stage One and, given our acceptance of the Council’s proposed council size of 48 members and the generally good levels of electoral equality provided by the Council’s scheme, we based our proposals in this area on the Council’s scheme. As mentioned earlier, our adoption of this council size rather than a council of 45 or 54 made it very difficult for us to adopt any of the wards proposed by the Liberal Democrats or Rainhill Parish Council as the wards contained in their schemes are of different size to those contained in the Council’s submission and thus would result in high electoral variances if adopted as part of a scheme based on a council of 48.

79 However, although our proposals were based on the Council’s scheme, in Eccleston we proposed moving away from the Council’s proposal to provide a better reflection of community identity along with an improvement in electoral equality. As proposed by Eccleston Parish Council in its amendments to the Council’s proposals, we proposed retaining Scholes Park in the proposed Eccleston ward as we considered that there are too few electors in this area to constitute a viable parish ward. We also proposed moving the Foxwood estate and Benedicts Court from the proposed Thatto Heath ward and retaining them in a revised Eccleston ward, as this provided an improvement in electoral equality as well as providing what we considered to be a better reflection of community identity.

80 We adopted the Council’s proposals for the rest of this area as we considered that they provided the best balance between the statutory criteria. We recognised that the proposed Rainhill ward is not an ideal solution but considered that given the circumstances it was the best option available. We were constrained in this area by the borough boundary to the north and the west and, although we appreciated the efforts of Rainhill Parish Council and local residents to provide an alternative solution, we considered that these amendments would lead to a high level of electoral inequality in neighbouring wards. We were unable to consider any ward in isolation and thus, although we appreciated that this may not be the ideal solution for Rainhill, we considered that having taken the circumstances of the borough into account this option provided the best balance between our statutory criteria.

81 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Eccleston ward (including Eccleston East, Eccleston West and the proposed Eccleston South

parish wards of Eccleston parish) and Newtown ward would be 5% above the borough average in both (1% in both by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Rainhill ward (including the proposed Eccleston South East parish ward of Eccleston parish and Rainhill South, West and the proposed Rainhill North parish wards of Rainhill parish) and Thatto Heath ward would be 2% and 7% below the borough average respectively (3% below and equal to the borough average by 2006).

82 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported the draft recommendations for Eccleston and Thatto Heath wards but suggested that the proposed Bold and Rainhill wards be renamed Rainhill East and Bold ward and Rainhill West ward respectively.

83 Rainhill Parish Council considered that the draft 'proposals are an affront to the residents of Rainhill and will effectively serve to divide and separate the long established community of Rainhill'. The Parish Council pointed to the retention of Rainford as a 'separate and distinct community' and found it 'difficult to comprehend this logic other than to conclude that in the eyes of the Boundary Committee the community identity of Rainhill known worldwide for its historical railway links is less important than the unknown community of Rainford'. The Parish Council 'would urge the Boundary Committee to revisit its recommendations with a view to retaining Rainhill as a community contained within one borough electoral ward'. However, if the Boundary Committee did split Rainhill between two borough wards the Parish Council urged that 'you mitigate the effect of such a decision on the village of Rainhill by naming the borough ward into which you intend moving the parish ward of Rainhill East by the name of "Rainhill East and Bold borough ward"'.

84 Rainhill Parish Council sent a further submission after a public meeting was held and stated that 'the feeling of all those attending the meeting was strongly against the draft recommendations as they relate to Rainhill'. It also stated that 'all residents present at the meeting felt very strongly that while the Boundary Committee had shown special consideration to Rainford in order to protect its community identity, your committee had completely ignored the fact that Rainhill also was a long established community'. Rainhill Parish Council stated that the public meeting passed the following resolution 'This meeting is appalled at the Boundary Committee's proposals that have the effect of splitting the community of Rainhill, with the boundary running right through the village centre. It calls upon the Boundary Committee to review its recommendations in order to ensure that this community remains intact as is the wish of its residents'. The Parish Council also stated that the meeting passed a resolution regarding a possible parish review after the current review finished and this is discussed in more detail in the parishing section at the end of this chapter.

85 We received a total of 661 letters concerning the community identity of Rainhill, and residents and organisations pointed to the existence of community groups such as the Ex-Serviceman's Club, the Rainhill Civic Society, the Rainhill Railway and Heritage Society, the Rainhill Garrick Society and the Rainhill Operatic Society. A resident argued that under the draft recommendations 'some of the local facilities would stay in Rainhill eg library, some shops, three schools and churches, but others would become Bold Heath eg Rainhill High School, Rainhill Station (world famous through the Rainhill Trials), Rainhill Community Nursery, Rainhill Post Office, Rainhill Ex-Serviceman's Club, Rainhill St Bartholomews church and school'.

86 The Clerk to Rainhill Parish Council also wrote in as an individual and enclosed a copy of page three of the Charter Mark Assessors report referring to Rainhill Parish Council which states that 'Your councillors have a sense of duty and are committed to preserving the heritage of Rainhill. They wish to strengthen further the already strong sense of local community'. Another resident argued that 'the proposed changes would divide the very centre of the village between two wards, with Rainhill Post Office and Rainhill High School both being represented by the Bold ward'. This resident argued that we had treated Rainford and Rainhill differently and stated that 'you have clearly not applied the same criteria when considering Rainhill and Bold wards: Rainhill is separated from Bold by substantial areas of open land and the natural barrier of the St

Helens Linkway'. Another resident stated that 'the area you consider taking out has a lot of village life ie Recreation Club (tennis, cricket, football and bowls), War Memorial, British Legion, Scout Hut, Children's Nursery and High School' and that our proposals would 'take out [of Rainhill ward] the headquarters of the league [Rainhill Junior Football] and the playing fields where all the cup finals and important matches take place'. Another resident mentioned the Rainhill Swimming Club and considered that 'The Swimming Club has...made a significant contribution to the community spirit of Rainhill'.

87 Another resident considered that 'the whole of Rainhill consists of a continuous and compact residential community, with family and social links between all sectors of the parish, separated to the south by a mile-wide strip of open countryside and the M62 motorway from the nearest township of Cronton, and to the east from any other built-up areas by a similar band of open countryside, the St Helens Linkway and the M62 motorway'.

88 A resident demonstrated the community identity of Rainhill stating that 'we have the St Ann's Millennium Centre which has painting, computers, mums and tots, coffee evenings etc...a village hall for dancing and parties, a parish hall for Girl Guides, Brownies and Scouts, Stephenson's Rocket (our history and heritage), a library twinned with the "Rockets" museum, we are twinned with a town in Germany'. Another resident included a "photographic walk" around the village of Rainhill' and argued that Rainhill 'like Rainford, is a 'separate and distinct community'" and was 'a true, thriving community with many organisations and societies, and people who care about their environment and the welfare of their fellow residents'.

89 The Rainhill Railway & Heritage Society opposed the proposals for Rainhill and wrote to 'express the total shock and disbelief which is felt by the whole population of Rainhill at the way you intend to split this long-standing close-knit community right down the middle and to link half of it with a community separated by miles of open country and having no links at all with Rainhill'. Rainhill United Junior Football Club, the Rainhill Civic Society, the Rainhill Ex-Serviceman's Club and Kendrick's Cross Women's Institute all opposed the draft recommendations with the latter enclosing two petitions objecting to the proposed changes with a total of 81 signatures.

90 In addition to the representations outlined above we also received a further 648 representations opposing our draft recommendations for Rainhill.

91 Eccleston Parish Council was 'happy with the "new" areas, which will come into Eccleston' under our draft recommendations. As a result of our draft recommendations which would transfer the Eilerslie and Brookfield area of Eccleston parish into an amended Rainhill ward, Eccleston Parish Council undertook a consultation exercise in the affected area. It issued a letter explaining the changes recommended in the draft recommendations and also included a reply slip for residents to demonstrate their views. The Parish Council stated that '52 papers were returned out of 132, which we believe is a statistically acceptable number on which to make a decision. Of these 30 slips indicated an acceptance of The Boundary Committee's draft proposals, 21 wished to remain in Eccleston and one said it did not matter either way to him'. The Parish Council considered that 'having carried out this subsequent consultation and taken account of the views expressed by residents, Eccleston Parish Council is prepared to accept the draft proposals put forward for the Eilerslie Road/Rainhill Road area'. The Parish Council was, however, concerned about the electoral imbalance the creation of the proposed Eccleston South East parish ward would create and therefore proposed deferring the 2003 parish elections until 2004 and undertaking a parish review in the meantime. This is discussed in more detail in the parishing section at the end of this chapter. Eccleston Parish Council also stated that 'we still believe that the 16-ward option is obviously and significantly inferior to the 18-ward option put forward by the Liberal Democrats in terms of electoral equality' and that 'we therefore wish to put on record our disappointment that The Boundary Committee appear to have ignored their own "prime directive" by selecting the 16-ward option rather than the 18-ward option'.

92 A resident opposed the draft recommendations for Thatto Heath ward and stated that 'it places me in an area which I have no affinity with and disconnects me from the community and the school I attended'. The resident proposed that the 'boundary still encompass, at least up to Leslie Road, the houses that are in the H2 Pathway area, as we are allocated funds on a ward basis and these proposals will split this designated area and its government funding'.

93 We also received three representations from local residents who proposed that Newtown ward be renamed West Park ward. Two of these residents considered that Newtown could be confused with Newton East and Newton West while all three residents pointed to the fact that West Park was a traditional name in the area and was the only park entirely contained within the proposed ward.

94 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received. We have been impressed with the standard of submissions regarding Rainhill and consider that many of the representations received provide good evidence and argumentation regarding the existence of a strong community identity in the area. In particular, we have noted the existence of a large number of community and recreation groups, many of whom are active in promoting the sense of community in the area. We also acknowledge the work of an active parish council and the fact that we have received so many individually written and argued submissions.

95 In light of the evidence and argumentation we received at Stage Three regarding the existence of community identity in the Rainhill area, we are proposing to move away from our draft recommendations and are retaining the existing Rainhill ward. We recognise the level of electoral inequality that this proposal will provide for (13% above the borough average initially and 11% above by 2006) but consider that, given the very strong evidence of community identity in the Rainhill area, the position of Rainhill in the extreme southwest of the borough and the constraints placed upon us by a three-member warding pattern, this would provide the best balance between electoral equality and the recognition of community identity in this area.

96 We note that retaining the existing Rainhill ward would result in us amending our draft recommendation for the boundary between Eccleston, Rainhill and Thatto Heath wards which received support from Eccleston Parish Council at Stage Three. However, despite the local consultation that Eccleston Parish Council carried out regarding the draft recommendations for this area, we are not convinced that there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that the residents of this area feel more of an affinity with Rainhill than Eccleston. The area that we are proposing to retain in Eccleston ward is part of Eccleston parish and we note that in Eccleston Parish Council's Stage One submission it stated that 'we are totally opposed to any redrawing of our external parish boundaries and will fight very hard to retain all our current Eccleston parish area'. It went on to say that 'where we have proposed that part of South [parish] ward should become part of another borough ward, we have already pledged to those residents that we will keep them informed of parish issues and still regard them as a vital part of our parish'. We consider that in light of the fact that we are retaining the eastern boundary of the existing Rainhill ward, transferring the Brookfield, Ellerslie, Field Way and Gardeners Way area to an amended Rainhill ward would provide an unnecessarily high level of electoral variance (16% above the borough average by 2006). On balance, we consider that the statutory criteria would best be reflected by retaining the boundary between the existing Eccleston and Rainhill wards and consider that, as the properties in the Brookfield Avenue and Ellerslie Avenue area are already part of Eccleston parish, they will have an affinity with the rest of Eccleston, notwithstanding the results of the consultation carried out by Eccleston Parish Council at Stage Three.

97 We also understand that a parish review may follow this review and we would not wish to prejudice the outcome of this parish review with our final recommendations. If, as a result of a parish review after the conclusion of this review, the external parish boundaries in the area change it is possible to request The Electoral Commission to consider consequential amendments to the relevant borough ward boundaries.

98 We are therefore proposing to retain the boundary between the existing Eccleston and Rainhill wards but are proposing an amendment to the boundary between the existing Eccleston and Thatto Heath wards in this area. We consider that the properties on Field Way and Gardeners Way share more of a community identity with properties in this area in the existing Eccleston ward than with properties in the remainder of the existing Thatto Heath ward and are therefore proposing to include this area in an amended Eccleston ward.

99 As proposed by the Borough Council and residents, we are proposing that Newtown ward be renamed West Park ward. We have been persuaded by the evidence provided that the name West Park provides for a better reflection of community identity in the area and, given the local support for this name, are happy to adopt it as part of our final recommendations. We considered the proposal by a resident for an amended Thatto Heath ward but we have not been persuaded that this proposal would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the recognition of community identity in the area than our proposed Thatto Heath ward. We are also unable to take into account arguments based on socioeconomic factors such as the distribution of funding when considering what warding arrangement to recommend for a particular area.

100 Finally we would like to commend Eccleston and Rainhill parish councils and those residents in this area for their detailed submissions and the level of interest shown throughout the review process.

101 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Eccleston ward (including Eccleston parish), Rainhill ward (comprising Rainhill parish) and West Park ward would be 9%, 13% and 5% above the borough average respectively (6%, 11% and 1% by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Thatto Heath ward would be 7% below the borough average (equal to the average by 2006).

## Marshalls Cross, Sutton & Bold and West Sutton wards

102 These three wards are situated in the south-east of the borough and are predominantly unparished although Sutton & Bold ward includes Bold parish. The number of electors per councillor in Marshalls Cross and West Sutton wards is 21% and 17% below the borough average respectively (23% and 15% below by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in Sutton & Bold ward is 2% below the borough average (8% above by 2006).

103 At Stage One the Council proposed a revised warding arrangement in this area. A new Bold ward would comprise most of the existing Sutton & Bold ward and would also comprise parts of the existing Rainhill and West Sutton wards. This proposed ward would have the borough boundary as its southern and eastern boundary while to the west the boundary would run down the centre of the A57. The northern boundary of the proposed ward would run along the Liverpool to Manchester railway line from where it meets the A57 to where it meets the A569, where the boundary would leave the railway line and run south down Clock Face Road. After the junction with Leach Lane, the boundary would leave the road and run behind the houses on the eastern side of Clock Face Road before turning north-east and running along the dismantled railway to Reginald Road. The proposed boundary would then run east along Reginald Road and Bold Road before turning north behind the properties on Hills Moss Road and following the Bold parish boundary to the borough boundary.

104 The Council also proposed a revised Sutton ward, which as its southern boundary would have the boundary with Bold ward, described earlier. To the west, this proposed ward would follow the A569 north before turning east along Robins Lane and then running north and east to include all properties in Sutton Village within the proposed ward. The boundary would then run briefly east along the Liverpool to Manchester railway line before turning south and rejoining the boundary with Bold ward, described earlier. The existing Marshalls Cross ward would be split between the proposed Sutton and Town Centre wards and the existing West Sutton ward would

be split between the proposed Bold and Thatto Heath wards. The boundaries of the Council's proposed Thatto Heath ward are described in the preceding section and the boundaries of the proposed Town Centre ward are described in the following section.

105 The Liberal Democrats proposed an alternative warding arrangement in this area, including a new Sutton ward comprising parts of the existing Marshalls Cross, Parr & Hardshaw and West Sutton wards. They also proposed a revised ward in the south-east of the borough, comprising parts of the existing Bold and West Sutton wards. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals the existing West Sutton ward would be split between a new Rainhill South ward, a new Sutton ward and a revised Thatto Heath ward.

106 Rainhill Parish Council proposed an amended warding pattern in this area, with an amended ward in the Marshalls Cross area also including part of the existing Sutton & Bold ward, while a revised ward in the Sutton & Bold area would comprise part of the existing Sutton & Bold ward and part of the existing West Sutton ward. St Helens North Conservative Association suggested an amendment to the Council's submission regarding the proposed Bold ward. Bold Parish Council put forward proposals for the re-warding of Bold parish. A resident proposed a revised warding arrangement in this area.

107 We carefully considered all representations received at Stage One and, given our acceptance of the Council's proposed council size of 48 members and the generally good levels of electoral equality provided by the Council's scheme, we based our proposals in this area on the Council's scheme. As mentioned earlier, our adoption of this council size rather than a council size of 45 or 54 made it very difficult for us to adopt any of the wards proposed by the Liberal Democrats or Rainhill Parish Council as the wards contained in their schemes are of different size to those contained in the Council's submission and thus would result in high electoral variances if adopted as part of a scheme based on a council of 48.

108 In this area, with just one amendment, we endorsed the Council's proposals in full. This amendment was to the proposed Sutton ward and was to improve levels of electoral equality. Under the Council's proposals, the revised Sutton ward would have an electoral variance of 12% above the borough average by 2006 and we considered that, given the nature of the area, this was unnecessarily high. We proposed an amendment to transfer all those electors in the area to the south of Robins Lane, to the west of New Street and Irwin Road, on and to the north of Olga Road and to the east of Marina Avenue from the proposed Sutton ward to the proposed Town Centre ward. This area that we proposed transferring is currently contained in the same ward as properties to the north of Robins Lane and thus we were of the opinion that this area will already have some affinity with the properties to the north. However, we also looked carefully at an alternative option to reduce the electoral variance in the proposed Sutton ward, and this would involve moving the area bounded by the Liverpool to Manchester railway line to the north, by the dismantled railway line to the west, by Reginald Road and Bold Road to the south and by the former Bold Power Station to the east, from the proposed Sutton ward into the proposed Bold ward. This alternative would reduce the electoral variance of the proposed Sutton ward to an acceptable level and although, at this stage, we proposed the first amendment detailed above, we welcomed local comment as to which of these two options would gain most support locally. The Council's proposal for a revised Thatto Heath ward would include the Sutton Heath Estate, as proposed by a resident but, because no area can be considered in isolation and because we adopted the majority of the Council's scheme in this area, we were unable to adopt the other proposals put forward by this resident. As stated earlier, we endorsed the Council's proposals for the remainder of this area.

109 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Bold ward (including Bold parish and the proposed Rainhill East parish ward of Rainhill parish) and Sutton ward would be 4% below and 10% above the borough average respectively (equal to and 7% above the borough average by 2006).

110 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported the alternative option for the proposed Sutton ward that was outlined in the draft recommendations. It stated that ‘although the Council believes that the alternative option is not ideal, it is preferable because the existing and dismantled railways do form natural boundaries and the Council therefore supports the alternative option’. It also proposed that the proposed Bold ward be renamed Rainhill East & Bold ward.

111 The Liberal Democrats stated that ‘we agree with the Council that your amendment to include the area to the south of Robins Lane, to the west of New Street and Irwin Road, on and to the north of Olga Road and to the east of Marina Avenue should be rejected. However, we also do not agree that your alternative option should be adopted’. It also stated that ‘we feel that as much of Sutton should be retained as a community as possible’ and ‘to suggest that people living next to Sutton Park have any community [identity or] affinity with people living in the town centre is absurd’. The Liberal Democrats also proposed that the northern boundary of the proposed Bold ward should follow the Bold parish boundary to ‘put the Abbotsfield Industrial Estate in the proposed Sutton’ arguing that ‘this would make sense given that the operation of that site only affects people living in Sutton’.

112 Bold Parish Council noted ‘with pleasure, that the suggestions it made to the Committee are supported’ but proposed a minor amendment to the parish warding proposed in the draft recommendations and this amendment is discussed in more detail in the parishing section at the end of this chapter.

113 A resident stated that ‘the boundary between Thatto Heath and Sutton should be the Linkway rather than Marshalls Cross Road, [as] this is the more obvious boundary being a dual carriageway national speed limit road with deep cuttings at this point’.

114 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three we propose endorsing our draft recommendations for this area as final with three amendments. As discussed in the previous section we are retaining the existing Rainhill ward and are therefore retaining the existing boundary between the Rainhill and Sutton & Bold wards as the western boundary of our proposed Bold ward.

115 In our draft recommendations we proposed transferring part of the Council’s proposed Sutton ward to an amended Town Centre ward to provide an improved level of electoral equality. However, we outlined an alternative to transfer part of the proposed Sutton ward to an amended Bold ward and asked for local views on which of these options was preferred. Given our decision to retain the existing Rainhill ward and the local opposition to our proposal to transfer an area in the north of the proposed Sutton ward into an amended Town Centre ward, we are proposing to adopt the alternative outlined in our draft recommendations and transfer the area bounded by the Liverpool to Manchester railway line to the north, by the dismantled railway line to the west, by Reginald Road and Bold Road to the south and by the former Bold Power Station to the east from the proposed Sutton ward into an amended Bold ward. We note the support of the Borough Council for this alternative and consider that it is necessary to improve electoral equality in our proposed Bold ward given our recommendations in the Rainhill area.

116 As a consequence of this decision regarding the southern boundary of our proposed Sutton ward we are moving away from our draft recommendation with regard to the northern boundary of the proposed Sutton ward. The proposed boundary will follow Robins Lane as proposed by the Council rather than Irwin Road and Olga Road as proposed in our draft recommendations and we note the support of the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats for this proposal. Using Robins Lane for the northern boundary of this ward would, in our opinion, provide for a strong and easily identifiable boundary while also leading to a slight improvement in electoral equality. In the remainder of this area we are content to endorse our draft recommendations as final as we consider that they provide the best balance between

electoral equality, the recognition of community identity and the provision of strong, easily identifiable boundaries.

117 We considered the proposal by a resident to use the Linkway as the boundary between Sutton and Thatto Heath wards but we are concerned that using this as a boundary would mean that Sherdley Hall Farm, the access to which is from the proposed Thatto Heath ward, would be transferred into the proposed Sutton ward. We do not consider that this would provide for effective and convenient local government and are therefore proposing to retain the boundary of Marshalls Cross Road in this area.

118 We note the poor level of electoral equality in our proposed Bold ward (18% below the borough average initially and 13% by 2006) and looked carefully at options to improve electoral equality in this ward. In particular, we looked at the possibility of retaining the existing boundary between Marshalls Cross and Sutton & Bold wards, but we considered that any of the options we looked at would give a poor reflection of community identity and adopting any such proposals at this stage would not allow for any consultation. Despite the relatively poor level of electoral equality in this area, we consider that in light of our proposals elsewhere in the borough and, given the constraints of recommending a three-member warding pattern, our proposals provide the best balance between the statutory criteria.

119 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Bold ward (including Bold parish) would be 18% below the borough average (13% by 2006). The number of electors in our proposed Sutton ward would be 11% above the borough average (7% by 2006).

## Blackbrook, Broad Oak, Parr & Hardshaw and Queen's Park wards

120 These four wards are situated in the centre of the borough and are unparished. The number of electors per councillor in Blackbrook, Broad Oak, Parr & Hardshaw and Queen's Park wards is 8%, 13%, 22% and 8% below the borough average respectively (9%, 14%, 21% and 9% below by 2006).

121 At Stage One the Council proposed a revised warding arrangement in this area, with the wards of Broad Oak, Parr & Hardshaw and Queen's Park being replaced by a revised Blackbrook ward and the new wards of Newtown, Parr and Town Centre. The proposed Parr ward would use the St Helens Canal as its northern boundary and the Sankey Brook and Sutton Brook as its western boundary. The southern boundary would run behind the housing in Sutton Village before following the railway line, and then Bold parish boundary to the borough boundary, which forms the eastern boundary of the proposed ward. The proposed Town Centre ward would use Robins Lane, Burtonhead Road and the Wigan to Liverpool railway line as its southern boundary. The western boundary would be formed by Ravenhead Road, Alexandra Drive, Cowley Hill Lane, Duke Street and Crab Street. The northern boundary would then follow North Road and Oldfield Street before running to the south of Pilkington's Cowley Hill Works and then along St Helens Canal. The eastern boundary of the proposed ward would consist of Sankey Brook and Sutton Brook. The Council stated that this new ward would 'add strength and much needed focus to the Town Centre whilst reflecting and recognising existing communities'. The revised Blackbrook ward would use the East Lancashire Road as its northern boundary and the St Helens Canal and Sankey Brook as its southern boundary. The eastern boundary of the proposed ward would follow the Seneley Green parish boundary to Vicarage Road where it would turn south-east before turning south down Legh Road. The boundary would then run to the south of the houses on Windermere Road before running south down Wagon Lane to meet St Helens Canal. The western boundary of the proposed Blackbrook ward would leave St Helens Canal at Islands Brow and would run to the west of the houses on Hinckley Road. At the junction with Chain Lane the boundary would run south-east along Chain Lane before running north along Erskine Close and to the east of the houses on Renfrew Avenue. The boundary

would then follow the Seneley Green parish boundary again before rejoining the East Lancashire Road. The boundaries of the proposed Newtown ward are described earlier in this chapter.

122 The Liberal Democrats and Rainhill Parish Council both proposed alternative warding arrangements in this area. St Helens North Conservative Association commented on the Council's proposed boundary between Blackbrook and Haydock wards. A resident proposed a number of amendments to the existing warding arrangements in this area.

123 We carefully considered all representations received at Stage One and, given our acceptance of the Council's proposed council size of 48 members and the generally good levels of electoral equality provided by the Council's scheme, we based our proposals in this area on the latter. As mentioned earlier, our adoption of this council size rather than a council of 45 or 54 made it very difficult for us to adopt any of the wards proposed by the Liberal Democrats or Rainhill Parish Council as the wards contained in their schemes are of different size to those contained in the Council's submission and thus would result in high electoral variances if adopted as part of a scheme based on a council of 48.

124 In this area, with one minor amendment which does not affect any electors, we proposed adopting the Council's proposals as we considered that they provided the best balance between electoral equality, the recognition of community identity and the provision of strong and easily identifiable boundaries. The amendment that we put forward concerned the boundary between the proposed Blackbrook and Parr wards. We proposed to move the proposed boundary to run to the north of the sewage works along Black Brook before following the western edge of the sewage works down to Sankey Brook to rejoin the Council's proposed boundary. We considered that this would provide a stronger and more easily identifiable boundary than that proposed by the Council, which runs through the middle of the sewage works. Our proposed amendment would not affect any electors. Due to the fact that no area can be considered in isolation and because of the fact that we adopted the majority of the Council's scheme in this area, we were unable to adopt any of the proposals put forward by a resident in this area.

125 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Blackbrook ward (including the proposed Seneley Green South parish ward of Seneley Green parish), Parr ward and Town Centre ward would be 3% above, 1% below and 4% above the borough average respectively (1% below, 6% above and 9% above by 2006).

126 At Stage Three we received one representation regarding this area. A resident considered that 'the proposed Town Centre ward seems to extend too far to the southeast'. The resident proposed that the southeastern boundary of Town Centre ward should follow Scorecross to Marshalls Cross Road before running north to Sutton Road and then east and north east to our proposed boundary. The resident stated that if our proposals were adopted 'then Sutton Police Station and Robins Lane School would be in the Town Centre ward rather than Sutton'.

127 The Council and the Liberal Democrats commented on the boundary between the proposed Sutton and Town Centre wards and this is dealt with in the previous section.

128 We considered the submission by the resident for an amended boundary between the proposed Town Centre and Sutton wards but have not been persuaded to move away from our draft recommendations for this area. For reasons of electoral equality and to provide strong, easily identifiable boundaries we are content to endorse the boundary between the proposed Sutton and Town Centre wards. Given the general support for the draft recommendations and the lack of any opposition to any of our other proposals in this area we propose endorsing our draft recommendations in full as we consider that they provide the best balance between electoral equality and the recognition of community identity and interests in this area.

129 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Blackbrook ward (including the proposed Seneley Green South parish ward of Seneley Green parish), Parr ward and Town Centre ward would be 3% above, 1% and 3% below the borough average respectively (1% below, 6% and 3% above by 2006).

## Haydock, Newton East and Newton West wards

130 These three wards are situated in the east of the borough and are unparished. The number of electors per councillor in Haydock, Newton East and Newton West wards is 19% above, equal to and 9% above the borough average respectively (20% above, 2% below and 11% above by 2006).

131 At Stage One the Council proposed a slightly revised warding arrangement in this area, with an extended Haydock ward and slightly amended Newton East and Newton West wards. The proposed Haydock ward would have the borough boundary for its eastern boundary and the boundary with the proposed Billinge ward, described earlier, as its northern boundary. As its western boundary the proposed Haydock ward would use the boundary with Blackbrook ward described earlier. The southern boundary would run along St Helens Canal and Sankey Brook and would follow the existing boundary to the borough boundary. The boundary between the proposed Newton East and Newton West wards would run north from the borough boundary along a very similar path to that of the existing boundary before running north and east along the dismantled railway. The boundary would then run north along Victoria Road before turning east along Crow Lane East and then north-west along Ashton Road. It would then run north behind Newton-le-Willows Community High School and Sports Centre to meet the M6 where it would run south-east before turning north along Rob Lane to meet the borough boundary.

132 The Liberal Democrats and Rainhill Parish Council both proposed alternative warding arrangements in this area. St Helens North Conservative Association commented on the Council's proposed boundary between Blackbrook and Haydock wards and a resident proposed two amendments to the existing warding arrangements.

133 We carefully considered all representations received at Stage One and, with four minor amendments, proposed to adopt the Council's proposals for this area as we considered that they provided the best balance between the statutory criteria. The first of these amendments concerned the boundary between the proposed Billinge & Seneley Green ward and Haydock ward and this amendment is discussed further in an earlier section. The second amendment was to the boundary between the proposed wards of Haydock and Blackbrook and does not affect any electors. The Council's proposed boundary runs to the east and north of Legh Vale County Primary School and we considered that a stronger boundary would be provided by running the boundary to the south and west of the school before rejoining the Council's proposed boundary on Legh Road. The third amendment concerned the boundary between the proposed Haydock and Newton West wards and concerned only four electors. The Council proposed retaining much of the existing boundary to the west of the properties on Common Road but we considered that a stronger boundary would be provided by running the boundary directly behind the properties on the west of Common Road. Finally, we proposed amending the Council's proposed boundary between the proposed Newton East and Newton West wards very slightly so that the boundary would run directly behind the properties on the west side of Catherine Way, the Newton Community Hospital and Valley View rather than along a path slightly to the west of these properties, as we considered that this would provide a stronger boundary.

134 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors in the proposed Haydock ward (including the proposed Seneley Green East parish ward of Seneley Green parish), Newton East ward and Newton West ward would be 5% above, 3% below and 11% below the borough average respectively (6% above, 5% below and 8% below by 2006).

135 At Stage Three we received only one submission regarding this area. The Council stated that it supported the boundary between the proposed Billinge and Haydock wards. It also supported the proposal to include Legh Vale County Primary School in Haydock ward. However the Council proposed an amendment to the boundary between the proposed Haydock and Newton West wards. It stated that a planning application had been received for a development to the west of Common Road. Under the draft recommendations this area was in the proposed Haydock ward but the Council considered that 'the site is allocated for residential purposes in the adopted Unitary Development Plan and is seen as an extension to the Newton-le-Willows urban area'. It went on to state that it is 'the view of the Council that the land to the west of Common Road ought to remain in the Newton West ward and the present boundary ought to be retained'. The Council also stated that it did not object to the draft recommendation to run the western boundary of the proposed Newton West ward behind the properties to the west of Vista Road to provide a clear and more easily identifiable boundary. Finally, the Council proposed to rename two wards in 'light of representations made by residents'. It proposed that the proposed Newton West ward be renamed Earlestown ward and that the proposed Newton East ward be renamed Newton ward.

136 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to endorse the draft recommendations for this area with two amendments. We are adopting the Council's proposal to retain the existing boundary between the proposed Haydock and Newton West ward in light of the proposed development in this area. We enquired whether any electors had been allocated to this development in the Council's electorate forecasts for 2006. The Council replied that it had not allocated any electors to this development as the development was not confirmed at the start of the review. Having learnt of the proposed development we enquired whether the Council considered that the properties in this area would be occupied by 2006, as if this was the case then the 2006 electorate forecasts would have to be revised. The Council replied that it was not confident that the development would be completed and inhabited by 2006 and so considered that its original forecasts remained the most accurate estimates available.

137 While we recognise that the development may not be occupied by 2006 we consider that any future electors in this development would share more of an affinity with electors in the proposed Newton West ward rather than with electors in the proposed Haydock ward and so propose to retain the existing boundary in this area to include the proposed development in Newton West ward. The other amendment that we propose is that, in light of local support, we are proposing that Newton West ward be renamed Earlestown ward and that Newton East ward be renamed Newton ward.

138 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Haydock ward (including the proposed Seneley Green East parish ward of Seneley Green parish) would be 5% above the borough average (6% by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Earlestown ward and Newton ward would be 11% and 3% below the borough average respectively (8% and 5% by 2006).

## Electoral cycle

139 Under section 7(3) of the Local Government Act 1972, all Metropolitan boroughs have a system of elections by thirds.

## Conclusions

140 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided to substantially endorse those draft recommendations, subject to the following amendments:

- in Rainhill, having been convinced by very strong arguments of community identity, we propose retaining the existing borough ward;
- following our proposals in Rainhill we are making consequential amendments to Bold, Eccleston, Sutton, Thatto Heath and Town Centre wards;
- we are also proposing an amendment to the boundary between the proposed Haydock and Newton West wards;
- we also propose renaming Newton East, Newton West and Newtown wards as Newton, Earlestown and West Park wards respectively.

141 We conclude that, in St Helens:

- there should be a reduction in council size from 54 to 48;
- there should be 16 wards, two fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 17 of the existing wards should be modified.

142 Table 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2001 and 2006 electorate figures.

*Table 4: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements*

	2001 electorate		2006 electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	54	48	54	48
Number of wards	18	16	18	16
Average number of electors per councillor	2,528	2,846	2,586	2,909
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	8	6	9	3
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	4	0	4	0

143 As Table 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from eight to six, with no wards varying by

more than 20% from the borough average. This level of electoral equality would improve further by 2006, with only three wards, Bold, Rainford and Rainhill, varying by more than 10% from the average, at 13%, 18% and 11% respectively. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the statutory criteria.

*Final recommendation*

St Helens Borough Council should comprise 48 councillors serving 16 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A and the large maps.

## Parish council electoral arrangements

144 When reviewing parish electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different borough wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. Accordingly, in our draft recommendations we proposed consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Eccleston, Rainhill, Seneley Green and Windle to reflect the proposed borough wards. We also proposed amending the internal warding arrangements of Bold parish as proposed by Bold Parish Council.

145 The parish of Bold is currently served by 12 councillors representing two wards: Bold North (returning five councillors) and Bold South (returning seven councillors). At Stage One Bold Parish Council questioned the Council's projected electorate figures for Bold ward and put forward three options for re-warding Bold parish. Bold Parish Council proposed the adoption of Option Two which would increase the number of parish wards to four. It stated that a 'major strength of this option was that it addressed the existing distinction between the communities of Clock Face Village and Bold Heath and the fairly significant remoteness from the two of the new development on the Power Station site which, it is clear, will create a new and distinct community'. No further comments were received during Stage One.

146 Having considered the evidence received, we were content that the second option put forward by Bold Parish Council creating four parish wards recognised the community identity and interests in the area while providing for strong, easily identifiable boundaries and we therefore adopted this parish warding arrangement as part of our draft recommendations.

147 At Stage Three Bold Parish Council supported the draft recommendations but stated that 'on examining Large Map 4 there is a small difference in the boundary the Parish Council intended for the Bold North parish ward and that shown'. It went on to say that 'the Parish Council would recommend that all the land to the north of Bold Road and Travers Entry...should be included in the new Bold North parish ward'. No further comments were received regarding the warding arrangements of Bold parish.

148 Having considered all the evidence received, we are content to correct the slight mistake which appeared in the draft recommendations regarding the boundary between the Bold North and Bold East parish wards. With this amendment, we confirm the draft recommendation for warding Bold parish as final.

*Final recommendation*

Bold Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Bold East (returning three councillors), Bold North (returning four councillors), Bold South (returning one councillor) and Bold West (returning four councillors). The parish ward boundaries are illustrated and the wards are named on the large maps.

149 The parish of Eccleston is currently served by 13 councillors representing three wards: Eccleston East (returning three councillors), Eccleston South (returning five councillors) and Eccleston West (returning five councillors). In light of the scheme for borough warding that the Borough Council proposed in this area, it proposed new parish warding arrangements for Eccleston parish. Eccleston Parish Council proposed reducing the number of parish councillors from 13 to 12 and put forward revised warding arrangements.

150 Having carefully considered the evidence received, and in light of the scheme we adopted for borough warding in this area, we proposed our own parish warding arrangement here. We proposed to divide the existing Eccleston South into two new parish wards with the area of the existing Eccleston South parish ward that would fall within our proposed Eccleston borough ward forming a revised Eccleston South parish ward to be represented by three councillors, while the part of the existing Eccleston South parish ward that would fall within our proposed Rainhill borough ward would form a new Eccleston South East parish ward to be represented by one councillor.

151 At Stage Three Eccleston Parish Council supported the majority of the draft recommendations and, as described earlier, conducted local consultation regarding the proposal in the southeast of the parish. The parish council stated that it 'was very concerned, as are the Boundary Committee, about the electoral imbalance that the creation of the "Eccleston South East" parish ward would cause'. To prevent this the parish council requested that the 2003 parish elections be delayed until 2004 and that a parish review take place before then to place the Brookfield Avenue and Ellerslie Avenue area in Rainhill parish. It also stated that 'we would like the Boundary Committee to confirm to us, as soon as possible, that if/when the Ellerslie Road/Rainhill Road area does become part of Rainhill parish, that Eccleston South ward would be represented by four parish councillors, retaining the agreed number of 12 parish councillors for Eccleston parish as a whole'. The parish council also stated that 'we are a very busy and active parish council and we believe that 12 parish councillors is the minimum number we need to enable us to continue to do our best for the residents of Eccleston parish'. The Liberal Democrats supported Eccleston Parish Council's Stage Three representation. No further comments were received regarding the warding arrangements of Eccleston parish.

152 Having considered all the evidence received, and given our recommendations for borough ward boundaries in the area, which are discussed earlier, we are proposing to move away from our draft recommendations to retain the existing parish ward boundaries in Eccleston parish. However, as requested by the parish council, we are proposing to reduce the number of parish councillors from 13 to 12 representing three wards: Eccleston East (returning three councillors), Eccleston South (returning four councillors) and Eccleston West (returning five councillors). We do not have the power to defer parish council elections and the timing of these elections is a matter for the Implementation Team of the Electoral Commission rather than for ourselves. Neither do we have the power to undertake a parish review but, after such a review has taken place, consequential borough warding amendments may be requested of the Electoral Commission to reflect any changes in the external parish boundaries resulting from a parish review. Such a parish review could address, amongst other issues, the question of whether voters in the Brookfield Avenue and Ellerslie Avenue area of Eccleston parish feel more of an affinity with Eccleston or Rainhill parish, and we did not wish to prejudice the outcome of such a review with our final recommendations.

*Final recommendation*

Eccleston Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, a reduction of one, representing three wards: Eccleston East (returning three councillors), Eccleston South (returning four councillors) and Eccleston West (returning five councillors).

153 The parish of Rainhill is currently served by 14 councillors representing three wards: Rainhill North (returning six councillors), Rainhill South (returning four councillors) and Rainhill West (returning four councillors). In light of the scheme for borough warding that the Borough Council proposed in this area, it proposed a new parish warding arrangement with Rainhill North parish ward being divided with four councillors representing the northern part of the ward and two councillors representing the southern part of the ward. It also proposed addressing the level of representation in a subsequent parish review. Rainhill Parish Council stated that 'Rainhill is a long established community and residents wish to retain both the existing borough and parish boundaries as they currently exist'.

154 Having considered the evidence received and in light of the scheme we adopted for borough warding in this area, which made it impossible for us to retain the existing parishing arrangements, we adopted the Council's proposed parish warding scheme in this area.

155 At Stage Three Rainhill Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations and 'urged the Boundary Committee to revisit its recommendations with a view to retaining Rainhill as a community contained within one borough electoral ward'. At a public meeting organised by the parish council a resolution was passed which stated that 'this meeting mandates Rainhill Parish Council to take all possible steps to resist any attempt to redefine the boundaries of Rainhill Parish Council by moving Rainhill East ward into Bold and urges all residents to assist the parish council in ensuring the parish boundaries remain as currently constituted'. A further 660 representations were received arguing that Rainhill parish remain in a single borough ward.

156 Having considered all the evidence received, and given our recommendations for borough ward boundaries in the area, which are discussed earlier, we are moving away from our draft recommendations and are proposing to retain the existing warding arrangements for Rainhill parish.

*Final recommendation*

Rainhill Parish Council should comprise 14 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Rainhill North (returning six councillors), Rainhill South (returning four councillors) and Rainhill West (returning four councillors).

157 The parish of Seneley Green is currently served by eight councillors and is unwarded. In light of the borough warding scheme that it put forward for this area, the Council proposed warding Seneley Green parish and creating three parish wards. It proposed that the majority of the parish that would fall within the proposed Billinge borough ward should be represented by six councillors, the area of the parish that would fall within the proposed Blackbrook borough ward should be represented by one councillor and that the area of the parish that would fall within the proposed Haydock ward should also be represented by one councillor. Seneley Green Parish Council considered that 'any attempt to ward the parish would...be a retrograde step' and wished for the parish to remain in a single borough ward. It also wished to increase the number of parish councillors representing the parish from eight to 10 stating that 'this was considered some time ago by St Helens MBC but was left in abeyance until this review'.

158 Having carefully considered the evidence received and in light of the borough warding scheme for this area, we adopted the Council's proposed parish wards but proposed increasing the number of parish councillors from eight to 10 at the request of Seneley Green Parish Council. As we proposed dividing the existing borough ward between three revised borough wards we were unable to avoid warding Seneley Green parish, as Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act states that if a parish is to be divided between different borough wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. The two parish wards that would form part of the revised Blackbrook and Haydock borough wards would each be represented by two councillors, while the parish ward that would form part of a revised Billinge borough ward would be represented by six councillors.

159 At Stage Three Seneley Green Parish Council argued that ‘the Council agrees with the majority of your recommendations but cannot agree to the projected split of councillors within the three parish wards’. It stated that ‘the only way of achieving equality of representation for parish matters is to increase the number of councillors in North ward to eight and reduce the number of East and South ward to one per ward’. The parish council also considered that ‘in view of the proposed new warding arrangements for the parish, consideration should be given to delaying the parish council’s elections until 2004 when all the new arrangements would be in place, thus avoiding an extra financial burden upon the electorate and preventing any unnecessary confusion’.

160 Having considered all the evidence received, and given our recommendations for borough ward boundaries in the area, we propose endorsing our draft recommendations as final with one amendment proposed by the parish council to increase the number of councillors representing Seneley Green North parish ward to eight and reduce the number of councillors representing Seneley Green East and Seneley Green South wards to one each. While we do not have a statutory requirement to provide electoral equality at parish level as part of a periodic electoral review we would seek to achieve electoral equality wherever possible and therefore we are proposing this amendment as it would improve electoral equality. However, as mentioned earlier, we do not have the power to defer parish council elections and the timing of these elections is a matter for the Implementation Team of the Electoral Commission rather than for ourselves.

*Final recommendation*

Seneley Green Parish Council should comprise 10 parish councillors, two more than at present, representing three wards: Seneley Green East (returning one councillor), Seneley Green North (returning eight councillors) and Seneley Green South (returning one councillor). The boundaries between the parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large maps.

161 The parish of Windle is currently served by nine councillors and is unwarded. At Stage One, in light of the borough warding scheme that it put forward for this area, the Council proposed warding Windle parish and creating two parish wards. It proposed that the area of the parish that would fall within the proposed Rainford ward should be represented by one councillor, while the area of the parish that would fall within the proposed Windle ward should be represented by eight councillors. Windle Parish Council stated that it was ‘in agreement with a reduction to 16 wards but felt most strongly against the splitting-up of the parish’.

162 Having carefully considered the evidence received, and in light of the borough warding scheme for this area, we adopted the Council’s proposed parish warding scheme for this area as part of our draft recommendations.

163 At Stage Three Windle Parish Council opposed the warding of Windle parish. The Parish Council stated that it had ‘worked hard to successfully foster the community spirit and sense of belonging which prevails amongst residents of the parish’ and considered that ‘for a small part of the parish to be split off and transferred into the proposed Rainford ward might result in alienating residents involved’. Councillor Ashcroft and 11 local residents also opposed the draft recommendation to ward Windle parish arguing that the draft recommendations would be detrimental to the community identities and interests of Windle parish.

164 Having considered all the evidence received, and given our recommendations for borough ward boundaries in the area, we propose endorsing our draft recommendations as final for this area. Although we recognise the opposition to the proposal to ward Windle parish, as discussed earlier, we have not been persuaded to alter our borough warding pattern in this area and as a result of this are not proposing to alter our proposal for the warding of Windle parish.

*Final recommendation*

Windle Parish Council should comprise nine parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Windle North (returning one councillor) and Windle South (returning eight councillors). The boundaries between the parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large maps.

*Map 2: Final recommendations for St Helens*

## 6 What happens next?

165 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in St Helens and submitted our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3692).

166 It is now up to The Electoral Commission to decide whether to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 29 April 2003, and The Electoral Commission will normally consider all written representations made to them by that date. They particularly welcome any comments on the first draft of the Order, which will implement the new arrangements.

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

**The Secretary  
The Electoral Commission  
Trevelyan House  
Great Peter Street  
London SW1P 2HW**

**Fax: 020 7271 0667**

**Email: [implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk)  
(This address should only be used for this purpose)**

# Appendix A

## Final recommendations for St Helens:

### **Detailed mapping**

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for the St Helens area.

**Map A1** illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the borough and indicates the areas, which are shown in more detail on the large maps.

The **large maps** illustrate the proposed warding arrangements for St Helens.

*Map A1: Final recommendations for St Helens: Key map*

## Appendix B

# Guide to interpreting the draft of the Statutory Instrument

### Preamble

This describes the process by which the Statutory Instrument will be made, and under which powers. Text in square brackets will be removed if The Electoral Commission decides not to modify the Final Recommendations.

### Citation and Commencement

This defines the name of the Statutory Instrument and sets the dates on which it will come into force.

### Interpretation

This defines terms that are used in the Statutory Instrument.

### Wards of the Borough of St Helens

This abolishes the existing wards, and defines the names and areas of the new wards, in conjunction with the map and the Schedule.

### Elections of the council of the Borough of St Helens

This sets the date on which a whole council election will be held to implement the new wards, and the dates on which councillors will retire.

### Maps

This requires St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council to make a print of the map available for public inspection.

### Electoral Registers

This requires St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council to adapt the electoral register to reflect the new wards.

### Revocation

This revokes the Statutory Instrument that defines the existing wards, with the exception of any articles that established the system of election by thirds.

### Explanatory Note

This explains the purpose of each article. Text in square brackets will be removed if The Electoral Commission decides not to modify the Final Recommendations.

# Appendix C

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## STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

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**2003 No.**

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT, ENGLAND**

#### **The Borough of St Helens (Electoral Changes) Order 2003**

*Made* - - - - - 2003

*Coming into force in accordance with article 1(2)*

Whereas the Boundary Committee for England(**a**), acting pursuant to section 15(4) of the Local Government Act 1992(**b**), has submitted to the Electoral Commission(**c**) recommendations dated March 2003 on its review of the borough(**d**) of St Helens:

And whereas the Electoral Commission have decided to give effect [with modifications] to those recommendations:

And whereas a period of not less than six weeks has expired since the receipt of those recommendations:

Now, therefore, the Electoral Commission, in exercise of the powers conferred on them by sections 17(**e**) and 26(**f**) of the Local Government Act 1992, and of all other powers enabling them in that behalf, hereby make the following Order:

#### **Citation and commencement**

- 1.—(1) This Order may be cited as the Borough of St Helens (Electoral Changes) Order 2003.
- (2) This Order shall come into force –
  - (a) for the purpose of proceedings preliminary or relating to any election to be held on 6th May 2004, on 15th October 2003;
  - (b) for all other purposes, on 6th May 2004.

#### **Interpretation**

2. In this Order –

- 
- (a) The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, established by the Electoral Commission in accordance with section 14 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (c. 41). The Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001 (S.I. 2001/3962) transferred to the Electoral Commission the functions of the Local Government Commission for England.
  - (b) 1992 c.19. This section has been amended by S.I. 2001/3962.
  - (c) The Electoral Commission was established by the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (c. 41). The functions of the Secretary of State, under sections 13 to 15 and 17 of the Local Government Act 1992, to the extent that they relate to electoral changes within the meaning of that Act, were transferred with modifications to the Electoral Commission on 1st April 2002 (S.I. 2001/3962).
  - (d) The metropolitan district of St Helens has the status of a borough.
  - (e) This section has been amended by S.I. 2001/3962 and also otherwise in ways not relevant to this Order.
  - (f) This section has been amended by S.I. 2001/3962.

“borough” means the borough of St Helens;

“existing”, in relation to a ward, means the ward as it exists on the date this Order is made;

any reference to the map is a reference to the map marked “Map referred to in the Borough of St Helens (Electoral Changes) Order 2003”, of which prints are available for inspection at –

- (a) the principal office of the Electoral Commission; and
- (b) the offices of St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council; and

any reference to a numbered sheet is a reference to the sheet of the map which bears that number.

### **Wards of the borough of St Helens**

**3.**—(1) The existing wards of the borough(a) shall be abolished.

- (2) The borough shall be divided into sixteen wards which shall bear the names set out in Schedule 1.
- (3) Each ward shall comprise the area designated on the map by reference to the name of the ward and demarcated by red lines; and the number of councillors to be elected for each ward shall be three.
- (4) Where a boundary is shown on the map as running along a road, railway line, footway, watercourse or similar geographical feature, it shall be treated as running along the centre line of the feature.

### **Elections of the council of the borough of St Helens**

**4.**—(1) Elections of all councillors for all wards of the borough shall be held simultaneously on the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2004(b)(c).

- (2) The councillors holding office for any ward of the borough immediately before 10th May 2004 shall retire on that date and the newly elected councillors for those wards shall come into office on that date.
- (3) Of the councillors elected in 2004 one shall retire in 2006, one in 2007 and one in 2008.
- (4) Of the councillors elected in 2004—
  - (a) the first to retire shall, subject to paragraphs (6) and (7), be the councillor elected by the smallest number of votes; and
  - (b) the second to retire shall, subject to those paragraphs, be the councillor elected by the next smallest number of votes.
- (5) In the case of an equality of votes between any persons elected which makes it uncertain which of them is to retire in any year, the person to retire in that year shall be determined by lot.
- (6) If an election of councillors for any ward is not contested, the person to retire in each year shall be determined by lot.
- (7) Where under this article any question is to be determined by lot, the lot shall be drawn at the next practicable meeting of the council after the question has arisen and the drawing shall be conducted under the direction of the person presiding at the meeting.

### **Wards of the parish of Bold**

**5.**—(1) The existing wards of the parish of Bold shall be abolished.

- (2) The parish shall be divided into four parish wards which shall bear the names Bold East, Bold North, Bold South and Bold West; and the wards shall comprise the areas designated on sheet 4 by reference to the name of the ward and demarcated by orange lines.
- (3) The number of councillors to be elected for each of the parish wards of Bold North and Bold West shall be four, for the parish ward of Bold East shall be three, and for the parish ward of Bold South shall be one.

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(a) See the Borough of St Helens (Electoral Arrangements) Order 1979 (S.I. 1979/1348).

(b) Article 4 provides for a single election of all the councillors and for reversion to the system of election by thirds, as established by articles 8 and 9(7) of S.I. 1979/1348.

(c) For the ordinary day of election of councillors of local government areas, see section 37 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (c.2), amended by section 18(2) of the Representation of the People Act 1985 (c.50) and section 17 of, and paragraphs 1 and 5 of Schedule 3 to, the Greater London Authority Act 1999 (c.29).

### **Wards of the parish of Seneley Green**

**6.** The parish of Seneley Green shall be divided into three parish wards which shall bear the names set out in column (1) of Schedule 2; each parish ward shall comprise the area of the borough ward specified in respect of the parish ward in column (2) of that Schedule, and the number of councillors to be elected for each parish ward shall be the number specified in respect of the parish ward in column (3) of that Schedule.

### **Wards of the parish of Windle**

**7.** The parish of Windle shall be divided into two parish wards which shall bear the names set out in column (1) of Schedule 3; each parish ward shall comprise the area of the borough ward specified in respect of the parish ward in column (2) of that Schedule, and the number of councillors to be elected for each parish ward shall be the number specified in respect of the parish ward in column (3) of that Schedule.

### **Numbers of parish councillors for the parish of Eccleston**

**8.** The number of parish councillors to be elected for the parish ward of Eccleston West shall be five, for the parish ward of Eccleston South shall be four, and for the parish ward of Eccleston East shall be three.

### **Maps**

**9.** St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council shall make a print of the map marked “Map referred to in the Borough of St Helens (Electoral Changes) Order 2003” available for inspection at its offices by any member of the public at any reasonable time.

### **Electoral registers**

**10.** The Electoral Registration Officer<sup>(a)</sup> for the borough shall make such rearrangement of, or adaptation of, the register of local government electors as may be necessary for the purposes of, and in consequence of, this Order.

### **Revocation**

**11.** The Borough of St Helens (Electoral Arrangments) Order 1979<sup>(b)</sup> is revoked, save for articles 8 and 9(7).

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(a) As to electoral registration officers and the register of local government electors, *see* sections 8 to 13 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (c.2).  
(b) S.I. 1979/1348.

Signed by the members of the Electoral Commission

Date *Pamela Gordon*  
Commissioner

Date *Glyn Mathias*  
Commissioner

Date *Neil McIntosh*  
Commissioner

Date *Karamjit Singh*  
Commissioner

Date *Sam Younger*  
Commissioner

Date *Graham Zellick*  
Commissioner

## SCHEDULE 1

article 3

### NAMES OF WARDS

Billinge and Seneley Green
Blackbrook
Bold
Earlestown
Eccleston
Haydock
Moss Bank
Newton
Parr
Rainford
Rainhill
Sutton
Thatto Heath
Town Centre
West Park
Windle

## SCHEDULE 2

article 6

### WARDS OF THE PARISH OF SENELEY GREEN

#### NAMES AND AREAS OF WARDS AND NUMBERS OF COUNCILLORS

<i>(1)</i> <i>Name of Ward</i>	<i>(2)</i> <i>Area of Ward</i>	<i>(3)</i> <i>Number of Councillors</i>
Seneley Green East	So much of the borough ward of Haydock as comprises the parish of Seneley Green	1
Seneley Green North	So much of the borough ward of Billinge and Seneley Green as comprises the parish of Seneley Green	8
Seneley Green South	So much of the borough ward of Blackbrook as comprises the parish of Seneley Green	1

## SCHEDULE 3

article 7

### WARDS OF THE PARISH OF WINDLE

#### NAMES AND AREAS OF WARDS AND NUMBERS OF COUNCILLORS

<i>(1)</i> <i>Name of Ward</i>	<i>(2)</i> <i>Area of Ward</i>	<i>(3)</i> <i>Number of Councillors</i>
Windle North	So much of the borough ward of Rainford as comprises the parish of Windle	1
Windle South	So much of the borough ward of Windle as comprises the parish of Windle	8

#### EXPLANATORY NOTE

*(This note is not part of the Order)*

This Order gives effect, [with modifications], to recommendations by the Boundary Committee for England, a committee of the Electoral Commission, for electoral changes in the borough of St Helens.

The modifications are *indicate the modifications*.

The changes have effect in relation to local government elections to be held on and after 6th May 2004.

Article 3 abolishes the existing wards of the borough and provides for the creation of 16 new wards. That article and the Schedule 1 also make provision for the names and areas of, and numbers of councillors for, the new wards.

Article 4 makes provision for a whole council election in 2004 and for reversion to the established system of election by thirds in subsequent years.

Articles 5 to 8 make electoral changes in the parishes of Bold, Seneley Green, Windle and Eccleston.

Article 10 obliges the Electoral Registration Officer to make any necessary amendments to the electoral register to reflect the new electoral arrangements.

Article 11 revokes the Borough of St Helens (Electoral Arrangements) Order 1979, with the exception of articles 8 and 9(7).

The areas of the new borough and parish wards are demarcated on the map described in article 2. Prints of the map may be inspected at all reasonable times at the offices of St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council and at the principal office of the Electoral Commission at Trevelyan House, Great Peter Street, London SW1P 2HW.