

Final recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Gateshead

Report to The Electoral Commission

October 2003

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Report no: 360

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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 Gateshead.

Summary

We began a review of Gateshead's electoral arrangements on 14 May 2002. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 25 February 2003, 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 Gateshead:

- **in nine of the 22 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10% from the average for the borough and two 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 12 wards and by more than 20% in one ward.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 123–124) are that:

- **Gateshead Borough Council should have 66 councillors, the same as at present;**
- **there should be 22 wards, the same as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 21 of the existing wards should be modified, and one ward 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 21 of the proposed 22 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 none of the wards expected to vary by more than 7% from the average for the borough in 2006.**

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 2 December 2003. The information in the representations will be available for public access once the Order has been made.

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Table 1: Final recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Large map reference
1	Birtley	3	<i>Unchanged</i> – the existing Birtley Central and Birtley South parish wards of Birtley parish	3
2	Blaydon	3	Blaydon ward; part of Winlaton ward	2
3	Bridges	3	Part of Bede ward; part of Bensham ward; part of Felling ward	3
4	Chopwell & Rowlands Gill	3	Part of Chopwell & Rowlands Gill ward	1 & 2
5	Chowdene	3	Chowdene ward; part of High Fell ward	3
6	Crawcrook & Greenside	3	Part of Chopwell & Rowlands Gill; part of Crawcrook & Greenside ward; part of Ryton ward	1 & 2
7	Deckham	3	Part of Bede ward; part of Deckham ward	3
8	Dunston & Teams	3	Part of Dunston ward; part of Teams ward	2 & 3
9	Dunston Hill & Whickham East	3	Part of Dunston ward; part of Whickham North ward	2
10	Felling	3	Part of Bede ward; part of Felling ward	3
11	High Fell	3	Part of High Fell ward; part of Leam ward; part of Low Fell ward	3
12	Lamesley	3	Birtley North parish ward of Birtley parish; part of High Fell ward; Lamesley parish; part of Teams ward	2 & 3
13	Lobley Hill & Bensham	3	Part of Bensham ward; part of Teams ward	2 & 3
14	Low Fell	3	Part of Low Fell ward; part of Saltwell ward	3
15	Pelaw & Heworth	3	Pelaw & Heworth ward; part of Wrekendyke ward	3
16	Ryton, Crookhill & Stella	3	Part of Ryton ward	1 & 2
17	Saltwell	3	Part of Bensham ward; part of Saltwell ward	3
18	Wardley & Leam Lane	3	Part of Wrekendyke ward	3
19	Whickham North	3	Part of Whickham North ward; part of Whickham South ward	2
20	Whickham South & Sunnyside	3	Part of Whickham South ward	2
21	Windy Nook & Whitehills	3	Part of Deckham ward; part of Leam ward; part of Wrekendyke ward	3
22	Winlaton & High Spen	3	Part of Chopwell & Rowlands Gill ward; part of Crawcrook & Greenside ward; part of Winlaton ward	1 & 2

Notes:

- 1) *The south-east is the only parished part of the borough and comprises the two wards indicated above.*
- 2) *The wards on the above table are illustrated on Map 2 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 Gateshead

	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	Birtley	3	6,454	2,151	-6	6,450	2,150	-6
2	Blaydon	3	7,591	2,530	10	6,932	2,311	1
3	Bridges	3	5,729	1,910	-17	6,755	2,252	-1
4	Chopwell & Rowlands Gill	3	7,391	2,464	7	7,300	2,433	7
5	Chowdene	3	7,396	2,465	7	7,213	2,404	5
6	Crawcrook & Greenside	3	6,658	2,219	-3	6,545	2,182	-4
7	Deckham	3	7,060	2,353	2	6,817	2,272	0
8	Dunston & Teams	3	6,257	2,086	-9	7,089	2,363	4
9	Dunston Hill & Whickham East	3	6,983	2,328	1	6,836	2,279	0
10	Felling	3	6,775	2,258	-2	6,507	2,169	-5
11	High Fell	3	7,010	2,337	2	6,739	2,246	-1
12	Lamesley	3	6,793	2,264	-1	6,767	2,256	-1
13	Lobley Hill & Bensham	3	7,310	2,437	6	7,065	2,355	3
14	Low Fell	3	7,149	2,383	4	6,994	2,331	2
15	Pelaw & Heworth	3	6,891	2,297	0	6,737	2,246	-1
16	Ryton, Crookhill & Stella	3	6,497	2,166	-6	6,727	2,242	-2
17	Saltwell	3	7,056	2,352	2	6,784	2,261	-1
18	Wardley & Leam Lane	3	6,568	2,189	-5	6,728	2,243	-2
19	Whickham North	3	6,658	2,219	-3	6,670	2,223	-2
20	Whickham South & Sunniside	3	7,108	2,369	3	6,947	2,316	2
21	Windy Nook & Whitehills	3	7,323	2,441	6	7,044	2,348	3
22	Winlaton & High Spen	3	6,878	2,293	0	6,813	2,271	0
	Totals	66	151,535	-	-	150,459	-	-
	Averages	-	-	2,296	-	-	2,280	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Gateshead 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. 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 Gateshead in Tyne & Wear. We are reviewing the five metropolitan boroughs in Tyne & Wear 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 Gateshead. Gateshead's last review was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which reported to the Secretary of State in October 1979 (Report no. 358).

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), i.e. 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;
- the general duty set out in section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1996 and the statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality (Commission for Racial Equality, May 2002), i.e. to have due regard to:
 - eliminate unlawful racial discrimination;
 - promote equality of opportunity; and
 - promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of Gateshead 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 district 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, or 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 that 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 14 May 2002, when we wrote to Gateshead Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Northumbria Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Northumberland Association of Local Councils, parish councils in the borough, Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, Members of the European Parliament for the North East Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Gateshead Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 16 September 2002. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

10 Stage Three began on 25 February 2003 with the publication of the report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Gateshead*, and ended on 22 April 2003. 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 Gateshead extends 12.6 miles along the south bank of the River Tyne. The borough's economy has experienced a trend away from traditional industries towards high-tech and service companies. It has good communication links in the form of Newcastle Central Station and Newcastle Airport, both of which can be reached from Gateshead using the Metro. The borough is in the process of redeveloping the Quays area with arts and music projects and the Gateshead Millennium Bridge, which opened to the public in September 2002, providing pedestrian access to Newcastle Quayside. The borough contains only two parishes situated to the south-east.

12 The electorate of the borough is 151,535 (December 2001). The Council presently has 66 members who are elected from 22 wards, the majority of which are relatively urban. All wards are three-member wards.

13 To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated, in percentage terms, 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'.

14 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,296 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will decrease to 2,280 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 nine of the 22 wards varies by more than 10% from the borough average and in two wards by more than 20%. The worst imbalances are in Bensham and Whickham South wards where each of the three councillors represents 25% fewer and 25% more electors respectively, than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing wards in Gateshead

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 Bede	3	5,659	1,886	-18	6,024	2,008	-12
2 Bensham	3	5,185	1,728	-25	5,597	1,866	-18
3 Birtley	3	6,454	2,151	-6	6,450	2,150	-6
4 Blaydon	3	6,642	2,214	-4	5,966	1,989	-13
5 Chopwell & Rowlands Gill	3	7,401	2,467	7	7,310	2,437	7
6 Chowdene	3	6,790	2,263	-1	6,635	2,212	-3
7 Crawcrook & Greenside	3	7,410	2,470	8	7,286	2,429	7
8 Deckham	3	6,170	2,057	-10	5,965	1,989	-13
9 Dunston	3	7,623	2,541	11	7,947	2,649	16
10 Felling	3	5,715	1,905	-17	5,640	1,880	-18
11 High Fell	3	6,102	2,034	-11	5,840	1,947	-15
12 Lamesley	3	6,309	2,103	-8	6,311	2,104	-8
13 Leam	3	7,567	2,522	10	7,261	2,420	6
14 Low Fell	3	7,762	2,587	13	7,592	2,531	11
15 Pelaw & Heworth	3	6,488	2,163	-6	6,337	2,112	-7
16 Ryton	3	7,265	2,422	5	7,494	2,498	10
17 Saltwell	3	6,628	2,209	-4	6,366	2,122	-7
18 Teams	3	7,432	2,477	8	7,652	2,551	12
19 Whickham North	3	8,089	2,696	17	8,014	2,671	17
20 Whickham South	3	8,593	2,864	25	8,405	2,802	23
21 Winlaton	3	6,297	2,099	-9	6,261	2,087	-8
22 Wrekendyke	3	7,954	2,651	15	8,106	2,702	19
Totals	66	151,535	-	-	150,459	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,296	-	-	2,280	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Gateshead 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 Bensham ward were relatively over-represented by 25%, while electors in Whickham South ward were significantly under-represented by 25%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 Draft recommendations

15 During Stage One, five representations were received, including three borough-wide schemes from Gateshead Borough Council, David Clelland MP (Tyne Bridge) and Councillor Tinnion representing Leam ward. We also received representations from Councillor Brain representing Blaydon ward and one local resident. 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 Gateshead*.

16 Our draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council's proposals, which we considered would provide a good balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. However, we moved away from the Borough Council's scheme in a number of areas, affecting 13 wards, using some of our own proposals. We proposed that:

- Gateshead Borough Council should be served by 66 councillors, the same as at present;
- the boundaries of 21 of the existing wards should be modified, while one ward should retain its existing boundaries.

Draft recommendation

Gateshead Borough Council should comprise 66 councillors, serving 22 wards.

17 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 21 of the 22 wards varying by no more than 10% from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 7% from the average in 2006.

4 Responses to consultation

18 During the consultation on the draft recommendations report, 16 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 Gateshead Borough Council.

Gateshead Borough Council

19 The Borough Council generally supported the draft recommendations. However, it submitted two minor amendments in order to better reflect community identity in Felling, High Fell and Leam South wards.

Member of Parliament

20 David Clelland MP for Tyne Bridge, asserted that his Stage One proposals would provide a better reflection of community identities in Gateshead than the draft recommendations, particularly in the Dunston and Whickham areas. He maintained that the latter are distinct communities, which should not be divided between wards.

21 Mr Clelland also put forward a minor amendment to his Stage One scheme to the boundary between Felling and Pelaw & Heworth wards. Finally, Mr Clelland also questioned the draft recommendation to retain the undefined ward boundary between Lamesley and Lobley Hill & Bensham wards, which currently dissects a trading estate.

Political Groups

22 Leam Branch Labour Party stated it would like the existing boundary along Rectory Road, between Felling and Leam South wards, to be retained in order to better reflect community identity and use a stronger boundary. It included a survey of 77 local residents, the majority of whom wished to be part of Leam South ward.

23 The Liberal Democrat Group put forward eight new ward names in order for the wards to better reflect their geographical areas and to make them more easily identifiable to electors.

Other representations

24 A further 11 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from local residents. A resident of Windy Nook opposed the draft recommendation to transfer the Windy Nook area into Felling ward.

25 We received 10 submissions from Dunston residents, all opposed to our draft recommendation to split Dunston between Dunston Hill & Whickham and Dunston & Teams wards.

5 Analysis and final recommendations

26 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Gateshead 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'.

27 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.

28 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.

29 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.

30 The recommendations do not affect county, district or parish external boundaries, local taxes, or result in changes to postcodes. Nor is there any evidence that these recommendations will have an adverse effect on house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. Our proposals do not take account of parliamentary boundaries, and we are not, therefore, able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

Electorate forecasts

31 Since 1975 there has been an 8% decrease in the electorate of Gateshead borough. At Stage One, the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting a decrease in the electorate of approximately 1% from 151,535 to 150,459 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the decline to be in Blaydon, High Fell and Leam wards. However, the Council expects there to be growth in the existing Bede, Bensham and Dunston wards. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to Unitary development plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. 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.

32 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

33 Gateshead Borough Council presently has 66 members. The Council adopted a leader and cabinet system in May 1999, along with various regulatory committees, overview and scrutiny panels and advisory groups. The Council stated that the number of members on these bodies had reached 'the optimum size' and that 'to reduce the number of members would be to risk its effectiveness'. We judged that the Council made a detailed study at Stage One, of the requirements of governance under its new political management structure to secure effective and convenient local government for Gateshead. No other alternative council size was proposed. Therefore, in the draft recommendations report we adopted the Council's proposal for a council of 66 members as we considered that it would achieve electoral equality and meet the statutory criteria.

34 During Stage Three, no representations regarding council size were received. Therefore, we propose to confirm our draft recommendation for a council of 66 members as final.

Electoral arrangements

35 We broadly based our draft recommendations on the Borough Council's proposals. However, we put forward our own proposals for new Dunston & Teams, Dunston Hill & Whickham and Lobley Hill & Bensham wards, as well as boundary amendments to 10 wards.

36 At Stage Three, the Borough Council commented on the boundaries for the proposed wards of Felling, High Fell and Leam South and put forward two minor amendments, one of which was supported by Leam Branch Labour Party and a Windy Nook resident.

37 In response to our draft recommendations report, a number of respondents expressed the view that the community of Dunston village should remain in one ward, and not be split between wards. David Clelland MP expressed surprise regarding the draft recommendations for the Dunston and Whickham areas, and stated that his Stage One proposals would still 'offer a viable option for preserving communities and achieving the objectives of greater equality and effective and convenient local government in the Gateshead area'. We also received representations from a councillor and 10 local residents, opposed to the draft recommendations for Dunston.

38 Mr Clelland also stated that he was 'astounded' that the draft recommendations did not take the opportunity to amend the undefined parish and ward boundary between Lamesley and Lobley Hill & Bensham wards, which dissects buildings. Aside from this amendment, Mr Clelland stated that his original proposals should be reconsidered.

39 The draft recommendations have been reviewed in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- i. Blaydon, Chopwell & Rowlands Gill, Crawcrook & Greenside, Ryton and Winlaton wards (pages 23-24);
- ii. Bensham, Dunston, Whickham North, Whickham South and Teams wards (pages 24-28);
- iii. Birtley and Lamesley wards (pages 28-30);
- iv. Bede, Deckham, Felling and Saltwell wards (pages 30-32);
- v. Chowdene, High Fell and Low Fell wards (pages 32-34);
- vi. Leam, Pelaw & Heworth and Wrekendyke wards (pages 34-36).

40 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.

Blaydon, Chopwell & Rowlands Gill, Crawcrook & Greenside, Ryton and Winlaton wards

41 These five wards comprise the area west of the River Derwent. The existing Blaydon, Chopwell & Rowlands Gill, Crawcrook & Greenside, Ryton and Winlaton wards have 4% fewer, 7% more, 8% more, 5% more and 9% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (13% fewer, 7% more, 7% more, 10% more and 8% fewer by 2006).

42 At Stage One, there was consensus between the Borough Council, Councillor Tinnion and David Clelland MP to broadly retain the existing Chopwell & Rowlands Gill ward. Mr Clelland also supported the Borough Council's proposals for Blaydon, Crawcrook & Greenside, Ryton and Winlaton wards. The Council proposed a small amendment to Crawcrook & Greenside ward in order to reflect community identity. The Council proposed a Ryton ward largely based on the existing ward and transferred part of the ward to Crawcrook & Greenside ward. It proposed to transfer High Spen village from the existing Crawcrook & Greenside ward to comprise part of its proposed Winlaton ward. It proposed broadly retaining the existing Blaydon ward, although it proposed to redefine the boundary between the existing Blaydon and Winlaton wards to achieve a better level of electoral equality.

43 Councillor Tinnion's proposals were broadly similar to the Borough Council's. However, his wards would differ slightly, in that his proposed Ryton ward would include part of Crawcrook transferred from Crawcrook ward, but would not include Stella, which would be transferred to his Blaydon ward. His Crawcrook ward would include High Spen, transferred from Winlaton ward.

44 We carefully considered the submissions we have received for this area. We did not propose to adopt Councillor Tinnion's proposals as they would divide Crawcrook and Rowlands Gill and we also considered he did not provide sufficient evidence and argumentation to support his proposals. We proposed to adopt the Council's proposed Blaydon, Chopwell & Rowlands Gill, Crawcrook & Greenside, Ryton and Winlaton wards as we judged that they would provide a good balance between the statutory criteria. We also noted the broad degree of consensus between the three borough-wide schemes submitted during Stage One for this area. However, we were concerned that a number of the Council's proposed boundaries would not be easily identifiable, particularly where they cross open countryside. Therefore we proposed three amendments, which would not affect any electors, to provide for more identifiable boundaries between the proposed wards of Chopwell & Rowlands Gill, Crawcrook & Greenside, Ryton and Winlaton. We were concerned that the proposed boundary between the proposed Blaydon and Winlaton wards would not secure a good level of effective and convenient local government, as we considered that the houses on either side of Jobling Avenue were of a similar type with a shared community identity. Officers from the Committee visited the area and proposed that the boundary run behind the properties of the western side of Cromwell Avenue and the southern side of Jobling Lane in order to better reflect community identity and secure a good level of effective and convenient local government.

45 Under our draft recommendations, our proposed Blaydon, Chopwell & Rowlands Gill, Crawcrook & Greenside, Ryton and Winlaton wards would have 10% more, 7% more, 3% fewer, 6% fewer and equal to the average number of electors per councillor for the borough respectively (1% more, 7% more, 4% fewer, 2% fewer and equal to the average by 2006).

46 At Stage Three, the Borough Council stated that the draft recommendations 'will, for the foreseeable future, produce an equitable electoral system that reflects community identities and secures effective and convenient local government'. The Liberal Democrat Group proposed two new ward names in order to 'more fully reflect their geographical areas' and help 'electors to more easily identify the ward in which they live'. It proposed that Ryton ward should be renamed Ryton, Crookhill & Stella. It also proposed that Winlaton ward should be renamed Winlaton & High Spen. No other representations were received.

47 We note the Liberal Democrat Group's proposed new ward names, which we consider would better reflect the constituent communities of the two wards in question. Therefore, we propose to move away from our recommended ward names for Ryton and Winlaton wards, and respectively rename them Ryton, Crookhill & Stella and Winlaton & High Spen. We have decided to endorse the remainder of our draft recommendations for Blaydon, Chopwell & Rowlands Gill, Crawcrook & Greenside, Ryton and Winlaton wards as we consider that they would achieve reasonable electoral equality.

48 Under our final recommendations, our proposed Blaydon, Chopwell & Rowlands Gill, Crawcrook & Greenside, Ryton, Crookhill & Stella and Winlaton & High Spen wards would have 10% more, 7% more, 3% fewer, 6% fewer and equal to the average number of electors per councillor for the borough respectively (1% more, 7% more, 4% fewer, 2% fewer and equal to the average by 2006). Our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and the large maps.

Bensham, Dunston, Whickham North, Whickham South and Teams wards

49 These five wards comprise the central area of the borough. The current Bensham, Dunston, Whickham North, Whickham South and Teams wards have 25% fewer, 11% more, 17% more, 25% more and 8% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (18% fewer, 16% more, 17% more, 23% more and 12% more by 2006).

50 At Stage One, the Council proposed to reconfigure these five wards. It noted that the existing Whickham North and Whickham South wards are significantly under-represented. The Council proposed to broadly retain the existing Whickham South ward, but proposed to transfer part of the ward to comprise part of its proposed Whickham North ward, in order to achieve a better level of electoral equality.

51 The Borough Council proposed to split the existing Whickham North, Dunston and Teams wards to form parts of four wards. It proposed a modified Whickham North ward comprising part of the existing Whickham North ward. It argued that the remaining part of Whickham North ward should join with part of the existing Dunston ward to form a new Dunston & Riverside ward. It proposed that the southern area of the existing Dunston ward join with the southern area of the existing Teams ward to form a new Dunston Hill ward. Finally, the Council proposed that the northern area of the existing Teams ward unite with parts of the existing Dunston and Bensham wards, to comprise a new Redheugh ward. The Council 'recognised that [its] proposals regarding Dunston did attract some adverse comment during the public consultation (although some people from the area said that they had no objection) and a number of letters of objection afterwards'. It argued that its 'proposal seems to be the most realistic way of addressing the problem posed by the surplus electorate in Whickham'.

52 David Clelland MP argued that the Council's proposal for the existing Dunston ward represented 'a controversial break up of the existing ward structure'. He contended that 'Dunston is very much a village community'. He proposed to broadly retain the existing Dunston and Teams wards. Mr Clelland proposed to transfer an area from the current Dunston ward to comprise part of his proposed Team Valley ward. This ward would comprise a western area of the current Teams ward. He proposed that the remainder of Teams ward should be combined with an area of the current Bensham ward to comprise a modified Bensham ward. He proposed to amend the current Teams ward's southern boundary to secure a more identifiable boundary.

53 David Clelland MP proposed a substantial reconfiguration of the existing Whickham South ward. He proposed to broadly retain the existing Whickham North ward, and to transfer part of the ward to comprise part of his proposed Whickham South ward. He proposed that this ward would comprise the majority of the existing Whickham South ward and proposed for the

Sunniside and Marley Hill settlements to be transferred to comprise the western area of his proposed Lamesley ward.

54 Mr Clelland forwarded 124 standard letters signed by local residents. The letter opposed the Council's proposals because they would 'entail unnecessarily radical changes that would result in the division of the community of Dunston, which is now cohesive and identifiable'.

55 Councillor Tinnion approached the development of his scheme for this area by deciding 'how to take account of the under-representation of the Whickham area'. He noted that 'somewhere the green belt [has] to be crossed'. He proposed to split the existing Whickham South and Teams wards to produce three new wards. He proposed that the Sunniside and Marley Hill settlements combine with the southern area of the existing Teams ward, to comprise his proposed Lobley Hill & Sunniside ward. He proposed to amend the existing boundary between Whickham North and Whickham South wards to transfer part of the existing Whickham North ward to comprise part of his proposed Whickham South ward. With this amendment he proposed to broadly retain the existing Whickham North ward.

56 Councillor Tinnion also proposed that the northern area of the existing Teams ward combine with an eastern area of the current Dunston ward, to comprise a modified Teams ward. With this amendment he proposed to broadly retain the existing Dunston ward, apart from amending the existing southern boundary by transferring part of Dunston ward into his proposed Sunniside & Lobley Hill ward. He proposed a modified Bensham ward to comprise part of the current Bede, Bensham, Deckham and Saltwell wards.

57 A local resident opposed the Council's proposals for Dunston. He argued that the Council's proposals 'would divide and split [the] village and community'.

58 We carefully considered all the submissions we received for this area during Stage One. We acknowledged that both David Clelland MP and Councillor Tinnion attempted to retain the existing Dunston ward as far as possible, as they judged that this would provide the best reflection of community identities. However, we were concerned that their proposals, in attempting to provide the most appropriate solution to the under-representation in the area, would not provide the best reflection of community identities or secure a high level of effective and convenient local government for the rest of the Whickham area. We noted that Mr Clelland proposed a Lamesley ward to the south of Whickham, which would include Sunniside and part of Birtley, areas which we considered had no community links. We did not consider that David Clelland MP or Councillor Tinnion provided sufficient evidence and argumentation to persuade us that their alternative proposals would provide a better balance between the statutory criteria than the Council's proposals. We also noted that there was considerable opposition to the Council's proposals for the existing Dunston ward. We were concerned that the Council's proposals would divide the existing Dunston ward to comprise part of three new wards and would divide the Swalwell area from the Whickham area, and therefore not provide the best reflection of community identities.

59 We appreciated that developing warding arrangements for this area is hindered by the need to provide the most appropriate solution to the issue of the significant under-representation of the existing wards while also taking account of the area's geography. Even so, due to the significant under-representation in the area, the existing three ward structure of Whickham South, Whickham North and Dunston wards must be revised to produce a four ward structure to provide the best balance between the statutory criteria. We were not persuaded that broadly retaining the existing Dunston ward would provide the best balance between the statutory criteria in the rest of this area, particularly Whickham. In light of our concerns that the warding arrangements submitted by the Council, David Clelland MP and Councillor Tinnion would not provide the best reflection of the statutory criteria and given the level of opposition to the Council's proposals, we considered alternative options for the area. Having visited the area, we considered that the Council's proposed Whickham South ward would provide a good reflection

of community identities, and therefore proposed to adopt the proposed ward as part of our draft recommendations. However, we made some minor amendments to Whickham South ward, as well as a small part of the existing boundary.

60 We proposed to divide the existing Dunston ward into north and south regions, using the A1 as a boundary to form two new wards. We judged that this would minimise the impact on the Dunston and Dunston Hill communities. We proposed that the south region should join with part of the existing Whickham North ward to comprise our proposed Dunston Hill & Whickham ward. With this amendment we proposed to broadly retain the existing Whickham North ward, which would also contain the area that the Council proposed be transferred from the existing Whickham South ward. We proposed that the northern region of the existing Dunston ward, broadly north of the A1, join with a northern area of the existing Teams ward to comprise our proposed Dunston & Teams ward. We proposed that the southern area of the existing Teams ward join with part of the existing Bensham ward, to comprise our proposed Lobley Hill & Bensham ward.

61 We noted that our proposals would use the Council's proposed Whickham South ward and its proposed Redheugh ward's eastern boundary for our proposed Lobley Hill & Bensham ward. Having visited the area, we judged that the use of the A1 and the railway line would provide clear demarcations between urban areas and that, on balance, our proposals would provide for the most appropriate solution to the issue of under-representation in the area while facilitating the development of a scheme in the remainder of the borough that would best reflect the statutory criteria.

62 Under our draft recommendations our proposed Dunston & Teams, Dunston Hill & Whickham, Lobley Hill & Bensham, Whickham North and Whickham South wards would have 9% fewer, 1% more, 6% more, 3% fewer, 3% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (4% more, equal to, 3% more, 2% fewer and 2% more by 2006).

63 At Stage Three, the Borough Council stated that the draft recommendations 'will, for the foreseeable future, produce an equitable electoral system that reflects community identities and secures effective and convenient local government'. In response to the draft recommendations, David Clelland MP commented on the recommendations for the Dunston and Whickham area. His Stage One proposals were not adopted under the draft recommendations, and he contended that the conclusions drawn in the report 'are misplaced and plain wrong'. He stated that Dunston and Whickham are 'separate communities' and that his proposals kept Whickham together in two wards rather than placing part of Whickham in a ward with part of Dunston. He stated that his original proposals should be looked at again, as he believed that they 'offer a viable option for preserving communities'.

64 We received 10 representations from local residents who all opposed the draft recommendations for a Dunston & Teams ward, and stated that Dunston and Teams are separate communities. All the local residents objected to the proposed division of Dunston between two wards and a resident of Dunston stated that the draft recommendations would create two new wards comprising areas which 'have no affinity at all with Dunston'. Two other Dunston residents stated that that the draft recommendations would result in 'identities ... being eroded', and another resident stated that by splitting the existing Dunston ward, the recommendation would destroy 'an identifiable community with natural boundaries'. He also stated that the draft recommendations would 'destroy the social inclusion we have been working towards' and requested that the proposed division of Dunston between wards should be reconsidered. Another Dunston resident questioned as to why the existing Dunston ward should be split and noted that the electorate of Dunston is projected to increase by approximately just 300 electors between 2001 and 2006. It was contended by another Dunston resident that residing in a ward comprising Dunston and Teams, 'would certainly increase insurance premiums and de-value my property'.

65 David Clelland MP also commented that the draft recommendations for Lobley Hill & Bensham ward 'produces a "strung out" inner city ward made up of several communities separated by the Team Valley, the East Coast Main Line and the Newcastle–Carlisle line and does not reflect community cohesion as well as my own proposals'.

66 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed three alternative ward names in order to better reflect the communities of the wards. It proposed to rename Dunston Hill & Whickham ward, Whickham East & Dunston Hill. It also proposed to rename Whickham North ward, Whickham North & Swalwell and Whickham South, Whickham South & Sunnside.

67 We have given careful consideration to the representations received during Stage Three. We note the concerns expressed by David Clelland MP regarding the draft recommendations for Dunston and have reconsidered his Stage One proposals. However, as stated in our draft recommendations, we considered that his Stage One proposals, in attempting to provide the most appropriate solution to the under-representation Dunston, would not provide the best reflection of community identities or secure a high level of effective and convenient local government for the rest of the Whickham area. We retain our concerns regarding the impact of his proposals for Dunston on the area south of Whickham. We note that in this area he proposed an elongated Lamesley ward, which would link the settlements Sunnside and Birtley and which we consider would not reflect community identity.

68 We note the concerns of 10 Dunston residents regarding the draft recommendations for Dunston, and note their concerns that the community of Dunston would be split between wards under the draft recommendations. As stated in our draft recommendations, owing to the current under-representation of the area, the existing three ward structure of Dunston, Whickham North and Whickham South wards must be revised into a four ward structure to provide the best balance between the statutory criteria. We concede that the draft recommendations to divide Dunston do not provide the best reflection of community identities, but consider that they provide the best boundaries in order to minimise the impact of the split, such as the A1, while realising the statutory criteria. We consider that our draft recommendations would provide the best levels of electoral equality as well as convenient and effective local government across the borough as a whole. We note that one Dunston resident noted that the electorate of Dunston is projected to increase by approximately 300 between 2001 and 2006; however, Dunston is currently under-represented by 11%, rising to 16% by 2006, which we consider to be too high an electoral variance. Furthermore, we note the concerns of another Dunston resident regarding a possible fall in house prices and increases in insurance premiums. However, there is no evidence that these recommendations will have an adverse effect on house prices, or car and house insurance premiums, and we do not take such factors into account when formulating our recommendations.

69 In producing our recommendations we have been constrained by the requirement for three-member wards, which the electorate of each community often do not fit. We cannot consider one area in isolation from the surrounding area, as any decisions regarding Dunston will have an effect on surrounding areas. We have looked into numerous alternative options for the ward boundaries in the Dunston area at both Stage Two and Stage Four, and have concluded that in view of the electorate in the Dunston and Whickham area being too numerous for three three-member wards, the geography and the consequent effect on neighbouring wards, our draft recommendations provide the best balance of the statutory criteria. We therefore propose to confirm our draft recommendations as final.

70 We note Mr Clelland's concerns regarding the draft recommendation to create a 'strung out' Lobley Hill & Bensham ward. However, we consider that our Lobley Hill & Bensham ward is united by Bensham Road and Lobley Hill Road, and in light of our decision to confirm our proposals for the Dunston area as final, it would not be possible to adopt Mr Clelland's proposal. Therefore, we propose to confirm our draft recommendations for Lobley Hill & Bensham ward as final.

71 We do propose however, to move away from our draft recommendations and broadly adopt the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal to rename Dunston Hill & Whickham ward, as Whickham East & Dunston Hill. However, we propose to rename the ward Dunston Hill & Whickham East, as we consider Dunston Hill to be the dominant settlement in the ward. We also propose to adopt the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal to rename Whickham South ward, as Whickham South & Sunnyside in order to more accurately reflect the constituent communities. We do not propose to adopt its proposal to rename Whickham North ward Whickham North & Swalwell. We consider that the ward name Whickham North correctly describes the ward, as Swalwell is so closely linked with the north of Whickham that it would be assumed that it is part of the Whickham North ward.

72 Under our final recommendations our proposed Dunston & Teams, Dunston Hill & Whickham East, Lobley Hill & Bensham, Whickham North and Whickham South & Sunnyside wards would have 9% fewer, 1% more, 6% more, 3% fewer, 3% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (4% more, equal to, 3% more, 2% fewer and 2% more by 2006). Our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and the large maps.

Birtley and Lamesley wards

73 These two wards comprise the south-eastern area of the borough. The existing Birtley ward comprises Birtley Central and Birtley South parish wards of Birtley parish and has 6% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average both now and by 2006. The existing Lamesley ward comprises Lamesley parish and Birtley North parish ward of Birtley parish and has 8% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average both now and in 2006.

74 At Stage One, the Council proposed broadly retaining the existing Lamesley ward, albeit with minor amendments to transfer part of the existing High Fell ward to comprise part of its proposed Lamesley ward. The Council proposed retaining the current Birtley ward.

75 David Clelland MP stated 'the current boundary between Teams ward and Lamesley ward dissects buildings and necessitates constant reference to detailed maps to determine who is the relevant MP or councillor at the margins of the boundary'. He proposed re-drawing the boundary along the Team Valley Trading Estate starting at the junction of Station Road and Eastern Avenue, to run west along Eastern Avenue to the roundabout on Kingsway, south along Kingsway to the junction with Sixth Avenue, west along Sixth Avenue to Dukesway, north along Dukesway to the A1 Western bypass pedestrian underpass, and west along the line of the underpass to join the current boundary.

76 In order to facilitate his proposals in the Whickham and Dunston areas, David Clelland MP proposed that the Sunnyside and Marley Hill area comprise the western part of his proposed Lamesley ward. He proposed modifying the boundary in the north of Birtley Ward.

77 Councillor Tinnion proposed an amendment to the existing Lamesley ward. He proposed to amend the northern boundary of Lamesley ward from where it intersects with Chowdene Bank. He also proposed an amendment to the northern boundary of Birtley ward. He argued that the development in the Northside area 'would compensate for any initial shortfall' in both of his proposed Lamesley and Birtley wards.

78 We considered carefully all the submissions we received for this area at Stage One. We considered that David Clelland MP's proposal for the Sunnyside, Marley Hill and Birtley settlements to comprise part of his proposed Lamesley ward would not provide a better reflection of community identities than the Council's proposals. We considered that Sunnyside and Birtley are not linked, and would create a ward spread over a wide area. We noted his proposal to amend the boundary through the Team Valley Trading Estate. However, although

we recognised that this amendment would not affect electors or necessitate the creation of parish wards, we were reluctant to propose such an amendment as we judged that effective and convenient local government might be better achieved by ensuring the parish and borough ward boundary remained coterminous. We were also of the opinion that utilising the A1 as both the parish and borough ward boundary would provide the most identifiable boundary and secure a better level of effective and convenient local government, as the Team Valley Trading Estate would not be divided between two wards. However, this would have created an unviable parish ward and it should be noted that it is outside our remit to amend external parish boundaries.

79 We considered Councillor Tinnion's proposal for an area within the current Lamesley ward to comprise part of his proposed Angel ward. However, in light of the consultation conducted by the Council, and as the proposal would necessitate the creation of a parish ward, we were reluctant to adopt this proposal.

80 We considered the amendments proposed by both David Clelland MP and Councillor Tinnion to the boundary between their proposed Lamesley and Birtley wards, but we considered that the existing arrangements provide for an identifiable boundary and clear delineation between urban areas. We considered that Binsby Gardens and Millbeck Gardens would identify with the communities comprising the existing Chowdene and High Fell wards, and were therefore of the view that Councillor Tinnion's proposal for this area to comprise part of his proposed Lamesley ward would not provide a good reflection of community identities. We were minded to agree with the Council that retaining the current Birtley ward and transferring an area from the current High Fell ward to comprise part of an amended Lamesley ward would provide a good level of electoral equality while reflecting community identities.

81 Under our draft recommendations our proposed Birtley and Lamesley wards would have 6% fewer and 1% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively both now and by 2006.

82 At Stage Three, the Borough Council stated that the draft recommendations 'will, for the foreseeable future, produce an equitable electoral system that reflects community identities and secures effective and convenient local government'. David Clelland MP stated that he was surprised that the draft recommendations had not 'taken the opportunity to correct' the undefined boundary between Lamesley and Lobley Hill & Bensham wards, which currently dissects the buildings of Team Valley Trading Estate. At Stage One, Mr Clelland had put forward a proposal to amend the boundary between the two wards, as detailed earlier. He urged that his original proposal should be reconsidered. Mr Clelland also contended that, compared with the draft recommendations, his Stage One proposals for Lamesley better reflected communities. He stated that his 'Lamesley ward also retained the identifiable communities of Kibblesworth and Lamesley but enclosed Eighton Banks within the continuous conurbation of Wreckenton with which it is most closely identified'.

83 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three. We note Mr Clelland's concerns regarding the draft recommendations for the boundary between Lamesley and Lobley Hill & Bensham wards. In our draft recommendations, we judged that the current boundary should be retained in order that the parish and ward boundaries were coterminous and could be adjusted at the same time under a full parish boundary review. We were also reluctant to include the whole of the trading estate in a rural ward. However, having re-examined the boundary and Mr Clelland's proposals, we are content to tie the boundary to clear ground detail, in order to provide a clearer boundary until a parish boundary review can be undertaken. However, we would strongly recommend a parish review is undertaken at the earliest opportunity under the 1997 Local Government & Ratings Act, as we note that the parish boundary is similarly undefined elsewhere. We also consider that having coterminous parish and ward boundaries provides more effective and convenient local government. Therefore we propose to adopt Mr Clelland's Stage One proposal for the boundary through the Teams Valley Trading Estate between Lamesley and Lobley Hill & Bensham wards as described above.

84 We note Mr Clelland's comment regarding his proposed Lamesley ward and its reflection of community identities. However, we again note that his proposed Lamesley ward would comprise Sunnyside and Birtley, and we have received no evidence of any community links between these two settlements. We note his statement that Eighton Banks identifies with Wreckenton; however, if Eighton Banks were to be transferred from Lamesley ward to High Fell ward, Lamesley parish would be split between borough wards, resulting in the creation of new parish wards and electoral equality would also be adversely affected. Both wards would have electoral variances of at least 20% if Eighton Banks were to be transferred from the draft Lamesley ward to the draft High Fell ward. Under the draft recommendations, High Fell ward would comprise parts of the existing Leam and Low Fell wards as well as the majority of the current High Fell ward, so any addition to that the ward would weaken electoral equality and require further boundary amendments elsewhere. Therefore, we do not propose to amend Lamesley ward, and propose to confirm our draft recommendations as final.

85 Under our final recommendations, Birtley and Lamesley wards would have 6% fewer and 1% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively, both now and by 2006. Under our final recommendations, Lamesley parish and Birtley North parish ward would fall under Lamesley ward. Birtley Central and Birtley South parish wards would fall under Birtley ward. Our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and the large maps.

Bede, Deckham, Felling and Saltwell wards

86 These four wards comprise part of the north-eastern area of the borough. The current Bede, Deckham, Felling and Saltwell wards have 18% fewer, 10% fewer, 17% fewer and 4% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (12% fewer, 13% fewer, 18% fewer and 7% fewer by 2006).

87 At Stage One, the Council proposed broadly to retain these four wards. It proposed a new Bridges ward comprising parts of the existing Bede and Bensham wards. The Council proposed to retain the current Felling ward's eastern boundary, but proposed to amend the existing southern boundary and western boundary in order that part of the existing Bede and Leam wards are transferred to comprise part of its modified Felling ward. The Council proposed a modified Deckham ward broadly based on the current ward and part of the existing Bede ward. It proposed a modified Saltwell ward comprising the existing ward and part of the current Bensham ward.

88 David Clelland MP proposed broadly to retain these four wards. He proposed a revised Bede ward, which would be broadly based on the existing ward, and part of Bensham ward. He proposed to amend the existing Felling ward's eastern boundary in order to include part of the current Pelaw & Heworth ward. He proposed to include part of the existing Low Fell ward to comprise part of a modified Deckham ward. He proposed to include part of the existing Bede ward in a modified Saltwell ward.

89 Councillor Tinnion proposed an alternative arrangement for this area. He proposed to divide the existing Saltwell ward to comprise parts of four wards. He proposed that the western area comprise part of his proposed Teams ward, while the northern part comprise his proposed Bensham ward. He proposed that the eastern area of the existing Saltwell ward combine with an area of the existing Deckham ward to form a new Shipley ward. He proposed a new Baltic & Sage ward to comprise the existing Bede ward and parts of the current Bensham and Felling wards. He proposed to broadly retain the existing Felling ward, proposing to amend the eastern boundary in order to transfer areas from the existing Pelaw & Heworth and Leam wards, into Felling ward.

90 We considered carefully all the submissions we received for this area at Stage One. We proposed to broadly adopt the proposals submitted by the Council for these four wards as we considered that they would provide for identifiable boundaries while securing a good level of electoral equality and reflect community identities. We considered that Mr Clelland's proposal to transfer parts of the existing Pelaw & Heworth ward to comprise part of his proposed Felling ward would not provide a better balance between the statutory criteria than the Council's proposal to retain the current boundary. We noted that both the Council and David Clelland MP proposed to broadly retain the current Deckham and Saltwell wards, but due to the level of consultation conducted by the Council we proposed to adopt its proposed Saltwell ward and we considered that the Council's proposed Deckham ward would provide a better reflection of community identities. Owing to our proposals for the existing Bensham and Teams wards we were unable to incorporate Councillor Tinnion's proposals to divide the existing Saltwell ward to comprise four new wards, nor were we convinced that his proposed Baltic & Sage, Deckham and Felling wards would provide a better reflection of the statutory criteria than the Council's proposals. We were minded to agree with the Council that its proposed Bridges ward would represent the centre of Gateshead and that its proposed Felling ward would comprise a distinct urban area.

91 Having visited the area during Stage Two, we were concerned that a number of the proposed boundaries would not be easily identifiable or would divide cul-de-sacs from their access routes. We were concerned that the Council's proposed boundary between the proposed Bridges and Felling wards would not be easily identifiable, and therefore proposed that the boundary continue along Allhusen Terrace to join with Sunderland Road. We were concerned that the proposal to utilise the centre of Hodkin Gardens for the proposed Deckham ward's eastern boundary would divide the estate, and therefore we proposed that the boundary run behind the houses on the western side. We were also concerned that the communities surrounding Ventnor Gardens may identify with the communities that comprise the proposed Low Fell ward, rather than the communities that comprise the proposed Saltwell ward. However, we noted that to transfer the whole of this area would have a detrimental effect on electoral equality, and therefore proposed that the boundary follow the rear of the properties on the south side of Ventnor Crescent in order that the area broadly south of Ventnor Crescent and east of the railway line comprised part of our proposed Low Fell ward. We were concerned that the Council's proposal for Felling ward's southern boundary to be Hopper Road would divide Robert Owen Gardens from its access route, and therefore proposed that the boundary follow the rear of these properties in order that this cul-de-sac comprised part of our proposed Leam South ward.

92 Under our draft recommendations our proposed Bridges, Deckham, Felling and Saltwell wards would have 17% fewer, 2% more, 2% more and 2% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1% fewer, equal to, 2% fewer and 1% fewer by 2006).

93 At Stage Three, the Borough Council opposed the draft recommendation to transfer electors south of Rectory Road from Leam South ward into Felling ward. The Council proposed that the existing boundary along Rectory Road should be retained, as it 'believes that Rectory Road provides a clear and well understood demarcation between the two wards'. Leam Branch Labour Party also opposed the same draft recommendation, and noted that the 'areas involved are traditionally part of Windy Nook'. It proposed that the current boundary should be reinstated in order 'to facilitate effective and convenient local government'. Leam Branch Labour Party also submitted a survey of electors affected by the proposal, of which 70 were opposed to the proposal, five wished to be part of Felling ward, and three did not know, or had no opinion. A resident of Windy Nook opposed the draft recommendation to transfer part of Windy Nook into Felling ward, and stated that they would like 'to remain in Windy Nook and not be transferred to Felling ward'.

94 David Clelland MP put forward an amendment to his Stage One proposals for Felling and Pelaw & Heworth wards. Having accepted that his proposal for Pelaw & Heworth ward would

split Pelaw, he therefore supported the draft recommendation for the western boundary of Pelaw & Heworth ward. Mr Clelland proposed to transfer part of his Pelaw & Heworth ward into Felling ward in order 'to make up the numbers'. He proposed that the boundary should run 'from High Heworth Lane along Colegate West to the footpath going north along the edge of the playing field' then west along Sunderland Road to Shields Road and the existing boundary. The area to the west of the playing field and south of Sunderland Road would be transferred from Pelaw & Heworth ward into Felling ward, while the area of his Felling ward east of Stoneygate Lane would be transferred into Pelaw & Heworth ward.

95 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three. We propose to confirm the draft recommendations for Bridges, Deckham and Saltwell wards as final, as we consider that they provide the best balance of the statutory criteria. We note the concerns of the Borough Council, Leam Branch Labour Party and the local resident of Windy Nook regarding the draft recommendation to transfer part of the Windy Nook area south of Rectory Road, from Leam South ward into Felling ward. We previously expressed concern that the existing Leam ward's northern boundary following Rectory Road divided cul-de-sacs. However, in light of the representations received, we propose to retain the existing boundary of Rectory Road, as we consider that in light of local community arguments, that residents are part of Windy Nook, which should be contained in one ward. We consider that this would better reflect community identity, would make use of a clearer more easily identifiable boundary and would have no significant effect on electoral equality. We therefore propose to adopt the Borough Council's proposal to transfer part of the Windy Nook area from Felling ward, back into Leam South ward.

96 We note David Clelland MP's proposal to amend his Stage One proposal for Felling ward, and transfer part of his Pelaw & Heworth ward into Felling ward and vice versa. We do not consider that it would improve the reflection of community identity to transfer the area south of Sunderland Road into Felling ward, as the area would not have better road links to Felling ward. Additionally, any amendments would have a knock-on effect on neighbouring wards, including Wardley Leam ward, which would have an electoral variance of 26% below the borough average. We also consider that the electoral variance would be adversely affected if his Pelaw & Heworth ward were to be adopted, as it would result in an electoral variance of 12% above the borough average by 2006. We therefore do not propose to adopt this proposal.

97 Under our final recommendations, Bridges, Deckham, Felling and Saltwell wards would have 17% below, 2% above, 2% below and 2% above the borough average (1% below, equal to, 5% below and 1% below by 2006). Our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and the large maps.

Chowdene, High Fell and Low Fell wards

98 These three wards comprise part of the north-eastern area of the borough. The existing Chowdene, High Fell and Low Fell wards have 1% fewer, 11% fewer and 13% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (3% fewer, 15% fewer and 11% more by 2006).

99 At Stage One, the Council put forward a warding arrangement broadly based on the existing wards. It proposed to amend the boundary between the existing High Fell and Low Fell wards to transfer an area from the current Low Fell ward to comprise part of its proposed High Fell ward. The Council proposed further amendments to the existing High Fell ward to incorporate part of the current Leam ward. It also proposed that two other parts of the existing High Fell ward be transferred to comprise part of its proposed Chowdene and Lamesley wards.

100 David Clelland MP proposed a revised warding arrangement for this area. He proposed to broadly retain the existing Low Fell ward, proposing to amend the boundary so that part of the ward would be transferred to his proposed Deckham ward. He proposed a modified High Fell ward, proposing that part of the existing ward combine with the existing Chowdene ward to

comprise a modified Chowdene ward. He proposed that the Eighton Banks area of Lamesley parish be transferred from the existing Lamesley ward to comprise the southern area of his proposed High Fell ward.

101 Councillor Tinnion also proposed revised warding arrangements for this area. He proposed a modified Low Fell ward comprising part of the existing Saltwell ward and the majority of the existing Low Fell ward. He also proposed to include parts of the current Deckham and Low Fell wards in his proposed High Fell ward. He further proposed to amend the existing High Fell ward's southern boundary so that an area of the ward would be transferred to his proposed Lamesley ward. He proposed to broadly retain the existing Chowdene ward and rename it Angel ward, but proposed to slightly revise the existing southern boundary.

102 We carefully considered the submissions we received for this area during Stage One. We proposed to broadly adopt the proposals submitted by the Council as we judged that its proposed Chowdene, High Fell and Low Fell wards would provide the best balance between the statutory criteria. We considered that the Council's proposal for the Springwell Estate to comprise part of its proposed High Fell ward would provide a good reflection of community identities, as we were minded to agree that this area would identify with the other communities comprising the proposed High Fell ward. We considered Councillor Tinnion's proposal for part of the existing Lamesley ward to comprise part of his proposed Angel ward, but in light of the consultation conducted by the Council and as the proposal would necessitate the creation of a parish ward we were reluctant to adopt this proposal. We considered Mr Clelland's proposal for Eighton Banks to comprise part of his proposed High Fell ward, but as this would place Lamesley parish in two borough wards, and in light of the consultation conducted by the Council, we judged that this proposal would not secure a good level of convenient and effective local government. We considered Mr Clelland's alternative arrangement for a modified Low Fell ward, but in light of the consultation conducted by the Council, we judged that the Council's proposed Low Fell ward would be the most appropriate solution to the under-representation with the existing ward. We considered that Binsby Gardens and Millbeck Gardens would identify with the surrounding communities, rather than the communities that comprise the existing Lamesley ward, and therefore we considered that Councillor Tinnion's proposal for this area to comprise part of his proposed Lamesley ward would not provide a good reflection of community identities.

103 We considered that the Council's proposal for the area broadly south of Easedale Gardens and east of Seaham Gardens to comprise part of its proposed Lamesley ward would not provide the best reflection of community identity. However, after officers from the Committee visited the area we were minded to agree that this proposal would contain the whole of the Eighton Banks and Long Banks areas in a single ward. We considered that Binsby Gardens and Millbeck Gardens and the properties on the eastern side of Easedale Gardens, which the Council proposed to comprise part of the proposed High Fell ward, would identify with the communities that comprise the proposed Chowdene ward. We therefore proposed to transfer this area into our proposed Chowdene ward to better reflect community identities in this area.

104 Under our draft recommendations our proposed Chowdene, High Fell and Low Fell wards would have 7% more, 2% more and 4% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (5% more, 2% fewer and 2% more by 2006).

105 At Stage Three, the Borough Council put forward a minor amendment to the boundary between High Fell and Leam South wards in order to better reflect community identity. It stated that under the draft recommendations, a small section of the Meadow Rise estate would be in Leam South ward, while the majority of the estate would be in High Fell ward. It proposed that 'in the interests of effective and convenient local government, the boundary between high Fell and Leam South wards should be adjusted so that the whole of Meadow Rise is in High Fell' ward. It stated that 'there is no road communication with Leam South' and that only 27 electors (by 2006) would be affected. No other representations were received regarding this area.

106 We have carefully considered the representation received from the Borough Council. We note that the electors in the area of Meadow Rise estate in question would be isolated from the remainder of Leam South ward. Therefore, in order to better reflect community identity and ensure effective and convenient local government, we propose to adopt the Borough Council's proposal to transfer this area into High Fell ward. We propose to adopt the remainder of our draft recommendations as final.

107 Under our final recommendations, Chowdene, High Fell and Low Fell wards would have 7% more, 2% more and 4% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (5% more, 1% fewer and 2% more by 2006). Our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and the large maps.

Leam, Pelaw & Heworth and Wreckendyke wards

108 These three wards comprise the eastern area of the borough. The current Leam, Pelaw & Heworth and Wreckendyke wards have 10% more, 6% fewer and 15% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (6% more, 7% fewer and 19% more by 2006).

109 The Council proposed a warding arrangement for this area broadly based on the existing warding pattern. It proposed a Leam South ward, which would broadly comprise the existing Leam ward. However, the Council proposed to amend the boundary between the existing Leam and Wreckendyke wards, thereby transferring part of the existing Wreckendyke ward into the proposed Leam South ward. The Council's proposed Wardley Leam ward would broadly comprise the existing Wreckendyke ward. It proposed that part of Wreckendyke ward should combine with the existing Pelaw & Heworth ward to comprise a revised Pelaw & Heworth ward. The Council argued that the name Leam South 'was preferred in order to distinguish it from the Leam Lane area that forms part' of the proposed Wardley Leam ward. While the name Wardley Leam is 'the preferred name', as the current name of Wreckendyke risks being confused with the area of Wreckenton in High Fell ward.

110 David Clelland MP proposed revised arrangements for the existing Pelaw & Heworth and Wreckendyke wards, but proposed to retain the existing Leam ward. His Pelaw & Heworth ward would broadly comprise the northern part of Wreckendyke ward and the existing Pelaw & Heworth ward less the north-west part, which would be transferred to Felling ward. His Wreckendyke ward would broadly be based on the existing ward, less the very northern part to be transferred to Pelaw & Heworth ward. Councillor Tinnion proposed to broadly retain the existing Leam ward less the area he proposed to include in Felling ward, and that it be renamed Windy Nook ward. He proposed revised arrangements for the existing Wreckendyke and Pelaw & Heworth wards. He proposed a Wreckendyke ward broadly based on the existing ward, less the area north of the A184, and part of Pelaw & Heworth ward. He proposed a Pelaw & Heworth ward based on the northern half of the existing ward and part of Wreckendyke ward, using the A184 as the southern boundary.

111 Councillor Tinnion opposed the Council's 'proposed division of the Nursery Lane Estate', arguing that it is 'undeniably Windy Nook' and that the 'boundary between Windy Nook and Felling is remarkably clear ... running along Brettanby Road, Rectory Road and Rectory Road East'.

112 We carefully considered all the submissions we received for this area during Stage One. We proposed to broadly adopt the Council's proposed Leam South, Pelaw & Heworth and Wardley Leam wards. We judged that the Council's proposals for these wards would provide a good reflection of community identities. We considered Councillor Tinnion's argument that the Council's proposal would divide the Nursery Lane Estate, but, in light of the consultation conducted by the Council, we judged that we did not receive sufficient evidence to be persuaded that the Council's proposal would not provide a good reflection of community identity in the area. We considered Mr Clelland's alternative proposals, but we considered that they would not

provide a better balance between the statutory criteria. In particular we were concerned that his proposal to amend the existing Pelaw & Heworth ward's eastern and western boundary would not provide an accurate reflection of community identity in the Pelaw area. We considered the alternative arrangements submitted by Councillor Tinnion. However, we were not persuaded that his proposals should be adopted, as we judged that in light of the consultation conducted by the Council, he had not provided sufficient evidence to contend that his proposed Pelaw and Wrekendyke wards would better reflect community identity and provide a better balance between the statutory criteria than the Council's proposals. We also judged that retaining the Springfield Estate in his proposed Windy Nook ward would not provide a better reflection of community identity than the Council's proposal for the estate to comprise part of its proposed High Fell ward.

113 Having visited the area, we were concerned that the existing Leam ward's northern boundary following Rectory Road divides cul-de-sacs, and therefore proposed that the boundary follow the rear of the properties on the south side of Rectory Road, in order that the residential roads of Fleming Gardens, Hall Gardens, Squires Gardens and Sunningdale Close would be transferred into our proposed Felling ward. We noted Councillor Tinnion's argument that the use of Rectory Road provides a clear demarcation between two urban areas, but we considered that our amendment would secure an improved level of effective and convenient local government.

114 Under our draft recommendations our proposed Leam South, Pelaw & Heworth and Wardley Leam wards would have 3% more, equal to and 5% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (equal to, 1% fewer and 2% fewer by 2006).

115 At Stage Three, the Borough Council put forward a minor amendment to the boundary between High Fell and Leam South wards in order to better reflect community identity, as described earlier. It proposed that the whole of Meadow Rise estate should be in one ward, and the small section of the estate currently in Leam South ward should be transferred into High Fell ward. The Borough Council, Leam Branch Labour Party and a Windy Nook resident, proposed that the electors south of Rectory Road to be transferred from Felling ward to Leam South ward, as described earlier. The Leam Branch Labour Party also submitted a survey of electors affected by the proposal, of which 70 were opposed to the proposal, five wished to be part of Felling ward, and three did not know, or had no opinion.

116 David Clelland MP proposed an amendment to the boundary of his Stage One Pelaw & Heworth ward with Felling ward, as described earlier, in order to better reflect the Pelaw community and also balance electoral equality.

117 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed that Leam South ward should be renamed Windy Nook & Whitehills ward, and Pelaw & Heworth ward should be renamed Bill Quay, Pelaw & Heworth in order to better reflect their geographical areas. For the same reason, it also proposed that Wardley Leam ward should be renamed Wardley & Leam Lane.

118 We have carefully considered all the representations at Stage Three, and broadly propose to confirm the draft recommendations as final. We note the Borough Council's proposal to transfer 27 electors from Leam South ward to High Fell ward so that the whole of Meadow Rise is in one ward. We consider this proposal to be sensible, as it would better reflect community identity and allow convenient and effective local government. We therefore propose to adopt it as part of the final recommendations. As stated earlier, we propose to adopt the Borough Council, Leam Branch Labour Party and the Windy Nook resident's proposal to transfer the area south of Rectory Road back into Leam South ward. In light of the representations received, we propose to retain the existing boundary of Rectory Road, as we consider that in light of local community arguments, that residents are part of Windy Nook, which should be contained in one ward. We consider that this would better reflect community identity, would make use of a clearer more easily identifiable boundary and would have no significant effect on electoral equality.

119 We note the amendment put forward by Mr Clelland to his Stage One proposal for Pelaw & Heworth ward. As stated earlier, we do not propose to adopt his proposal as we consider that it would have an adverse effect on electoral equality and, overall would not improve the reflection of community identities.

120 We note the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal to rename Leam South ward as Windy Nook & Whitehills and Wardley Leam ward as Wardley & Leam Lane. We consider that these alternative ward names would better reflect their constituent communities, and therefore we propose to adopt them. We do not propose to adopt the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal to rename Pelaw & Heworth ward as Bill Quay, Pelaw & Heworth, as we consider that the existing ward name is the most suitable name to describe the ward.

121 Under our final recommendations, Pelaw & Heworth, Wardley & Leam Lane and Windy Nook & Whitehills wards would have equal to, 5% below and 6% more electors than the borough average respectively (1% below, 2% below and 3% above by 2006). Our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and the large maps.

Electoral cycle

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

Conclusions

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

- we propose an amendment to the boundary between Felling and Leam South wards in order to better reflect community identity and use a strong boundary;
- we propose an amendment to the boundary between High Fell and Leam South wards in order to better reflect community identity and provide a more clearly defined boundary;
- we propose an amendment to the boundary between Lamesley and Lobley Hill & Bensham wards in order to provide a more clearly defined boundary, tied to ground detail;
- we propose six new ward names in order to better reflect the constituent communities.

124 We conclude that, in Gateshead:

- a council of 66 members should be retained;
- there should be 22 wards, the same as at present;
- the boundaries of 21 of the existing wards should be modified;

125 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	66	66	66	66
Number of wards	22	22	22	22
Average number of electors per councillor	2,296	2,296	2,280	2,280
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	9	1	12	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	2	0	1	0

126 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 nine to one, with no wards varying by more than 20% from the borough average. This level of electoral equality would improve further by 2006, with no wards forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 7% from the average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the statutory criteria.

Final recommendation

Gateshead Borough Council should comprise 66 councillors serving 22 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

127 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. Consequently we propose a minor modification to the warding arrangements of Birtley parish.

128 Under the current arrangements, Birtley parish is split into three parish wards, two of which (Birtley Central and Birtley South parish wards) are in Birtley ward and one of which (Birtley North parish ward), is in Lamesley ward. The whole of Lamesley parish is within the current Lamesley ward.

129 Under our draft recommendations we proposed minor amendments to the borough ward boundary between the proposed Birtley and Lamesley borough wards in order that the boundary is attached to ground detail, and is therefore easily identifiable. This will not affect any electors. As a consequence we proposed to amend the parish ward boundary between the existing Birtley Central and Birtley North parish wards to reflect the borough ward boundary. We did not propose any further amendments to Birtley Parish Council's electoral arrangements.

130 No further comments were received at Stage Three regarding this recommendation. Having considered all the evidence received, and in light of the confirmation of our proposed borough wards in the area, we confirm the draft recommendation for warding of Birtley parish as final.

Final recommendation

Birtley Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors as at present, representing three parish wards: Birtley Central parish ward (returning 4 councillors as at present), Birtley North parish ward (returning 5 councillors as at present) and Birtley South parish ward (returning 6 councillors as at present). The parish ward boundaries would reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as detailed in Tables 1 and 2 and illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map (sheet 3).

Map 2: Final recommendations for Gateshead

6 What happens next?

131 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Gateshead 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).

132 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 2 December 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.

133 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

Appendix A

Final recommendations for Gateshead:

Detailed mapping

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for the Gateshead 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 Gateshead.

Map A1: Final recommendations for Gateshead: Key map

Appendix B

Guide to interpreting the first draft of the Electoral Change Order

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 Gateshead

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 Gateshead

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 Gateshead Borough Council to make a print of the map available for public inspection.

Electoral Registers

This requires Gateshead 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

First Draft of the Electoral Change Order for Gateshead

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

2003 No.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT, ENGLAND

The Borough of Gateshead (Electoral Changes) Order 2003

Made - - - - - *2003*

Coming into force in accordance with articles 1(2) and 1(3)

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 October 2003 on its review of the borough(d) of Gateshead:

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 Gateshead (Electoral Changes) Order 2003.
- (2) This Order, with the exception of article 5, shall come into force –
 - (a) for the purpose of proceedings preliminary or relating to any election to be held on the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2004, on the day after that on which it is made;

-
- (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 (c.19), 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 Gateshead 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.

(b) for all other purposes, on the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2004.

(3) Article 5 shall come into force –

(a) for the purpose of proceedings preliminary or relating to the election of a parish councillor for the parish of Birtley to be held on the ordinary day of elections in 2007, on 15th October 2006

(b) for all other purposes, on the ordinary day of elections in 2007.

Interpretation

2. In this Order –

“borough means the borough of Gateshead;

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

any reference to the map is a reference to the map marked “Map referred to in the Borough of Gateshead (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 Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council.

Wards of the borough of Gateshead

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

(2) The borough shall be divided into twenty-two wards which shall bear the names set out in column (1) of the Schedule.

(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 Gateshead

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 the fourth day after the ordinary day of election of councillors in 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.

(a) See the Borough of Gateshead (Electoral Arrangements) Order 1980 (S.I. 1980/1069).

(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 section 7 of the Local Government Act 1972 (c.70).

(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).

SCHEDULE

article 3

NAMES OF WARDS

Birtley	Lamesley
Blaydon	Lobley Hill and Bensham
Bridges	Low Fell
Chopwell and Rowlands Gill	Pelaw and Heworth
Chowdene	Ryton, Crookhill and Stella
Crawdock and Greenside	Saltwell
Deckham	Wardley and Leam Lane
Dunston and Teams	Whickham North
Dunston Hill and Whickham East	Whickham South and Sunnyside
Felling	Windy Nook and Whitehills
High Fell	Winalton and High Spen

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 Gateshead.

The modifications are *indicate the modifications*.

The changes have effect in relation to local government elections to be held on and after the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2004.

Article 3 abolishes the existing wards of the borough and provides for the creation of twenty-two new wards. That article and the Schedule 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 makes electoral changes in the parish of Birtley.

Article 7 obliges the Electoral Registration Officer to make any necessary amendments to the electoral register to reflect the new electoral arrangements.

Article 8 revokes the Borough of Gateshead (Electoral Arrangements) Order 1980, 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 Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council and at the principal office of the Electoral Commission at Trevelyan House, Great Peter Street, London SW1P 2HW.