

Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Bolton

February 2003

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What is The Boundary Committee for England?

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

Members of the Committee are:

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

Archie Gall (Director)

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

Summary

We began a review of the electoral arrangements for Bolton on 14 May 2002.

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

We found that the current arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Bolton:

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

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 137-138) are that:

- **Bolton Borough Council should have 60 councillors, the same as at present;**
- **there should be 20 wards, the same as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified.**

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.

- **The number of electors per councillor in none of the proposed 20 wards would vary by more than 10% from the borough average.**
- **An improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 10% from the average for the borough in 2006.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and an increase in the number of councillors for the parishes of Horwich and Westhoughton.**

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

- **We will consult on these proposals for eight weeks from 25 February 2003. We take this consultation very seriously. We may decide to move away from our draft recommendations in the light of comments or suggestions that we receive. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission which will be responsible for implementing change to local authority electoral arrangements.**
- **The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. It will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to us at the address below by 22 April 2003:

**Team Leader
Bolton Review
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

Table 1: Draft recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Large Map reference
1	Astley Bridge	3	Astley Bridge ward; part of Central ward.	2
2	Bradshaw	3	Part of Bradshaw ward; part of Breighmet ward.	2
3	Breighmet	3	Part of Bradshaw ward; part of Breighmet ward.	2 and 4
4	Bromley Cross	3	Part of Bromley Cross ward; part of Bradshaw ward.	2
5	Crompton	3	Part of Central ward; part of Halliwell ward.	2 and 4
6	Farnworth East	3	Part of Farnworth ward; part of Harper Green ward.	4
7	Farnworth West	3	Part of Burden ward; part of Harper Green ward.	4
8	Great Lever	3	Part of Burden ward; part of Derby ward.	4
9	Halliwell	3	Part of Central ward; part of Halliwell ward.	2 and 4
10	Horwich and Blackrod	3	Part of Blackrod ward; the parish of Blackrod; the proposed Horwich South West parish ward.	1 and 3
11	Horwich North East	3	The proposed Horwich North East parish ward.	1
12	Hulton	3	Part of Daubhill ward; part of Deane-cum-Heaton ward; part of Hulton Park ward.	3 and 4
13	Kearsley	3	Part of Farnworth ward; part of Kearsley ward.	4
14	Little Lever	3	Part of Burden ward; part of Little Lever ward.	4
15	Lostock with Heaton	3	Part of Blackrod ward; part of Deane-cum-Heaton ward; part of Westhoughton ward.	1, 2, 3 and 4
16	Rumworth	3	Part of Daubhill ward; part of Deane-cum-Heaton ward; part of Derby ward.	4
17	Smithills	3	Part of Deane-cum-Heaton ward; part of Halliwell ward; Smithills ward.	1, 2 and 4
18	Tonge with the Haugh	3	Part of Bradshaw ward; part of Bromley Cross ward; Tonge ward.	2 and 4
19	Westhoughton North	3	Part of Blackrod ward; part of Hulton Park ward; the proposed Westhoughton North parish ward.	1 and 3
20	Westhoughton South	3	The proposed Westhoughton South parish ward.	3

Table 2: Draft recommendations for Bolton

	Ward name	No. of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Astley Bridge	3	10,440	3,480	0	10,498	3,499	0
2	Bradshaw	3	10,425	3,381	-1	10,227	3,409	-2
3	Brightmet	3	10,342	3,545	3	10,634	3,545	1
4	Bromley Cross	3	9,881	3,456	1	10,991	3,664	5
5	Crompton	3	10,348	3,449	1	10,380	3,460	-1
6	Farnworth East	3	10,435	3,478	1	10,644	3,548	2
7	Farnworth West	3	10,320	3,440	0	10,387	3,462	-1
8	Great Lever	3	10,204	3,401	-1	10,389	3,463	-1
9	Halliwell	3	10,335	3,445	0	10,567	3,522	1
10	Horwich and Blackrod	3	9,549	3,202	-7	10,379	3,460	-1
11	Horwich North East	3	10,269	3,423	0	10,427	3,476	-1
12	Hulton	3	10,570	3,523	3	10,701	3,567	2
13	Kearsley	3	10,315	3,438	0	10,396	3,465	-1
14	Little Lever	3	9,764	3,255	-5	10,282	3,427	-2
15	Lostock with Heaton	3	10,262	3,600	5	10,887	3,629	4
16	Rumworth	3	10,479	3,493	2	10,479	3,493	0
17	Smithills	3	10,676	3,559	4	10,761	3,587	3
18	Tonge with the Haugh	3	10,562	3,521	3	10,562	3,521	1
19	Westhoughton North	3	9,864	3,270	-5	10,004	3,335	-5
20	Westhoughton South	3	9,742	3,247	-5	10,050	3,350	-4
	Totals	60	205,818	-	-	209,645	-	-
	Average	-	-	3,430	-	-	3,494	-

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

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

1 Introduction

1 This report contains our proposals for the electoral arrangements for the borough of Bolton, on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the ten metropolitan borough/cities in Greater Manchester 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 Bolton. Bolton's last review was carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission, which reported to the Secretary of State in September 1978 (Report no.289).

3 In carrying out these metropolitan reviews we must have 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.

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of Bolton is being conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Periodic Electoral Reviews* (Published by the Electoral Commission in July 2002). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review.

5 Our task is to make recommendations to The Electoral Commission 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 and town councils in the borough.

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

7 We are not prescriptive on council size. However, we believe that any proposals relating to council size, whether these are for an increase, a reduction or no change, should be supported by evidence and argumentation. Given the stage now reached in the introduction of new political management structures under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, it is important that, whatever council size interested parties may propose to us they can demonstrate that their proposals have been fully thought through, and have been developed in the context of a review of internal political management and the role of councillors in the new structure. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified. In particular, we do not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a 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 on the number of councillors which can be returned from each metropolitan borough ward. However, the figure must be divisible by three. In practice, all metropolitan borough wards currently return three councillors. Where our recommendation is for multi-member wards, we believe that the number of councillors to be returned from each ward should not exceed three, other than in very exceptional circumstances. Numbers in excess of three could result in an unacceptable dilution

of accountability to the electorate and we have not, to date, prescribed any wards with more than three councillors.

9 The review is in four stages (see Table 3).

Table 3: Stages of the review

Stage	Description
One	Submission of proposals to us
Two	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	Final deliberation and report to The Electoral Commission

10 Stage One began on 14 May 2002, when we wrote to Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Greater Manchester Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Greater Manchester Local Councils Association, parish and town councils in the borough, Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, Members of the European Parliament for the North - West Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Bolton Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 16 September 2002.

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

12 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 25 February 2003 and will end on 22 April 2003, involves publishing the draft proposals in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.***

13 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to modify them, and submit final recommendations to The Electoral Commission. It will then be for the Commission to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If The Electoral Commission accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, it will make an Order. The Electoral Commission will determine when any changes come into effect

2 Current electoral arrangements

14 The borough of Bolton lies on the north-western edge of Greater Manchester. Comprising a mix of urban towns and rural villages, Bolton has good road and rail links with the rest of Greater Manchester and the north. The borough contains three parishes.

15 The electorate of the borough is 205,823 (December 2001). The Council presently has 60 members who are elected from 20 wards, all of which are three-member wards.

16 At present, each councillor represents an average of 3,430 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 3,492 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 seven of the 20 wards varies by more than 10% from the borough average, three wards by more than 20% and one ward by more than 30%. The worst imbalance is in Deane-cum-Heaton ward where each councillor represents 33% more electors than the borough average.

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

Map 1: Existing wards in Bolton

Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements

	Ward name	No. of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Astley Bridge	3	11,312	3,771	10	11,370	3,790	9
2	Blackrod	3	10,479	3,493	2	11,251	3,750	7
3	Bradshaw	3	10,964	3,655	7	11,046	3,682	5
4	Brightmet	3	10,331	3,444	0	10,331	3,444	-1
5	Bromley Cross	3	11,159	3,720	8	11,789	3,930	13
6	Burnden	3	9,921	3,307	-4	10,219	3,406	-2
7	Central	3	8,389	2,796	-18	8,590	2,863	-18
8	Daubhill	3	9,038	3,013	-12	9,038	3,013	-14
9	Deane-cum-Heaton	3	13,699	4,566	33	13,835	4,612	32
10	Derby	3	9,938	3,313	-3	9,970	3,323	-5
11	Farnworth	3	9,811	3,270	-5	10,019	3,340	-4
12	Harper Green	3	10,542	3,514	2	9,779	3,260	-7
13	Halliwell	3	9,716	3,239	-6	10,608	3,536	1
14	Horwich	3	11,550	3,850	12	11,562	3,854	10
15	Hulton Park	3	13,174	4,391	28	13,453	4,484	28
16	Kearsley	3	10,291	3,430	0	10,372	3,457	-1
17	Little Lever	3	9,357	3,119	-9	9,729	3,243	-7
18	Smithills	3	8,646	2,882	-16	8,730	2,910	-17
19	Tonge	3	8,038	2,679	-22	8,038	2,679	-23
20	Westhoughton	3	9,468	3,156	-8	9,775	3,258	-7
	Totals	60	205,823	-	-	209,504	-	-
	Averages	-	-	3,430	-	-	3,492	-

Source: *Electorate figures are based on information provided by Bolton 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 Deane-cum-Heaton ward were relatively over-represented by 33%, while electors in Tonge ward were relatively under-represented by 22%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.*

3 Submissions received

18 At the start of the review, members of the public and other interested parties were invited to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

19 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the BCFE visited the area and met officers and members from the Borough Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 13 representations during Stage One, including three borough-wide schemes from Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council, the Conservative Group on the Council and the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the Borough Council.

Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council

20 The Borough Council proposed a council of 60 members, the same as at present, serving 20 wards. This scheme was approved by a majority of the council at its meeting in August 2002. The Council's proposals would provide good electoral equality throughout the borough, with no wards having a variance over 10% by 2006.

The Liberal Democrat Group

21 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed a borough - wide scheme comprising a council of 60 members, serving 20 wards. These proposals would provide good electoral equality throughout the borough with no ward having a variance over 10% by 2006.

The Conservative Group

22 The Conservative Group put forward a scheme proposing a council size of 60. Under their proposals no wards would have a variance over 10% by 2006. They opposed the proposals submitted by both Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council and the Liberal Democrat Group.

Parish and town councils

23 Representations were received from Westhoughton Town Council and Horwich Town Council regarding parishing arrangements for their respective areas. Horwich Town Council strongly urged retaining the name Horwich in any ward that includes a part of Horwich.

Other representations

24 Bolton North - East, Bolton South East, Bolton West, Horwich & Blackrod, Deane-cum-Heaton & Smithills, and Westhoughton & Hulton Park branches of the Bolton Liberal Democrats sent submissions offering their support for the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals and a mixture of support and opposition for the Council's proposals for their respective areas. The Liberal Democrats Bolton Area Party submitted general comments on the Borough Council's proposals.

25 A local resident also strongly urged retaining the name Horwich in any ward that includes a part of Horwich.

4 Analysis and final recommendations

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

27 As described earlier, the prime aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Bolton 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'.

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

29 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.

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

Electorate forecasts

31 Since 1978 there has been a 7% increase in the electorate of Bolton borough. The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of 2% from 205,823 to 209,504 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in Halliwell ward, although a significant amount is also expected in the more rural Blackrod ward. The Liberal Democrat Group also project an increase in electorate of 2% from 205,818 to 209,645 over the five year period from 2001 to 2006. The Conservative Group also projects a 2% increase in the electorate from 205,907 to 210,411. 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. We notice the different projected figures submitted, but we know that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having considered the Borough Council's figures, accept theirs as the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council size

32 The Borough Council proposed a council of 60 members as at present. In considering the appropriate size for the Council, taking into account maintaining effective local government, the Borough Council considered the Council's structure and the variety and extent of roles that councillors are required to undertake. The Borough Council regards that the Council is currently finely balanced and that any reduction in the overall number could have an impact on the efficiency of the Council's political management processes, as there would be a reduced number of members to undertake the non-executive functions of the Council. The Council explained that for a large number of members, Council duties will continue to be a part time voluntary addition to their other roles and therefore if the burden is to be shared equitably, then it is important that it does not fall on a reduced number of volunteers.

33 All three political parties agreed that 60 is the optimum number of members for Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council to provide efficient and effective local government which is sensitive to the needs of the local community. The Liberal Democrat Group also considered the Council's structure and the variety and extent of roles that councillors are required to undertake and agreed with the Borough Council that the Council has operated fairly and effectively for the last 22 years with a council size of 60. They also argued that the new systems of political management are still evolving, but that the workload of non-executive councillors has not reduced. Whilst the Liberal Democrat Group do not consider that there is enough evidence yet to argue that there should be an increase in Council size, they also believe that there is no evidence to support a reduction in Council size either. The Conservative Group also supported a council size of 60, but did not submit any detailed argumentation.

34 Having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we conclude that the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 60 members.

Electoral arrangements

35 After careful consideration of all the evidence received at Stage One we have decided to base our recommendations on the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals, as we consider these proposals better reflect community identities than the current arrangements or other schemes submitted at Stage One. These proposals have also received a level of local support. However, to improve electoral equality further and having regard to local community identities and interests, we have decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposals in the Horwich and Blackrod ward combined with amendments to the boundaries in Bromley Cross, Bradshaw, Brightmet and Little Lever wards. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- a) Blackrod, Horwich, Hulton Park and Westhoughton wards;
- b) Astley Bridge, Bradshaw and Bromley Cross wards;
- c) Burnden, Central, Halliwell and Tonge wards;
- d) Brightmet, Kearsley and Little Lever wards;
- e) Daubhill, Farnworth and Harper Green wards;
- f) Derby, Lostock with Heaton and Smithills wards.

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

Blackrod, Horwich, Hulton Park and Westhoughton wards

37 The existing wards of Blackrod, Horwich, Hulton Park and Westhoughton cover the western area of the borough. In addition to comprising the unparished areas of Blackrod, Horwich and

Westhoughton, Blackrod ward comprises the parish of Blackrod, Horwich ward comprises the parish of Horwich. Hulton Park and Westhoughton wards comprise the parish of Westhoughton. Under the current arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in the four wards varies from the borough average by 2%, 12%, 28% and 8% respectively (7%, 10%, 28% and 7% by 2006).

38 At Stage One the Liberal Democrat Group proposed that this area should be covered by four wards, with the proposed Horwich North East, Horwich & Blackrod, Westhoughton North and Westhoughton South wards being represented by three members each. The Liberal Democrat Group proposed slightly revised warding arrangements based predominantly on the existing warding arrangements. Starting where Scholes Bank meets the borough boundary, the proposed Horwich North East ward would follow the borough boundary north-east to Winter Hill, then south-east to the footpath which forms the boundary with the town of Horwich. It would continue along this boundary to High Rid Reservoir, then continue to follow the Town boundary of Horwich east, south and west to Chorley New Road. From here the boundary would follow Chorley New Road west and north west to Fox Street, proceeding in a north easterly direction to Victoria Road, northwards to Church Street, then continue west and north west to Lee Lane, towards Scholes Bank.

39 The proposed Horwich and Blackrod ward would have the borough boundary as its boundary to the north and west. In the south of the ward, the boundary would follow the northern boundary of Westhoughton Wingates Town Council ward north east to the M61. The boundary would proceed along the M61 south east to where Wingates Lane crosses it, then follows Wingates Lane and its eastern branch extension and the path to where it crosses the railway at the southern extension of Mill Lane. From here the boundary would continue north east along Mill Lane, following field boundaries and the access road to Water board land to emerge on Chorley New Road where it would continue along the boundary shared with the proposed Horwich North East ward described above.

40 The proposed Westhoughton North ward would have the borough boundary as its western boundary and shares part of its northern boundary with Horwich and Blackrod ward's southerly boundary, as described above. The remainder of the northern boundary would follow the railway line just south of Mill Lane in a north easterly direction to Lostock Station, before continuing along Rumworth Road towards Rumworth Lodge and on towards Knutshaw Brook. From Knutshaw Brook the boundary would follow the disused railway line towards the M61 and Punch Lane, south along the track to Manchester Road and continue south along the western edge of Back o' th' Lawn Wood, Dog Kennel Wood and New Park Wood.

41 In the proposed Westhoughton South ward, starting where the railway meets the borough boundary east of Daisy Hill Station, the boundary would follow the borough boundary south-west and north-west until it meets the railway line at Hart Common and would continue north east to where it crosses Church Street. The boundary would then follow the boundary between the current Westhoughton and Hulton Park wards south to Washacre, continuing east to Leigh Road, then south along Leigh Road to the railway at Daisy Hill Station.

42 Under the Liberal Democrat's proposals there would be good levels of electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average in the proposed Horwich & Blackrod, Westhoughton North ward and Westhoughton South wards by 7%, 4% and 5% respectively. In the proposed Horwich North East ward the electoral variance would be equal to the borough average (1%, 1%, 4% and 4% in 2006).

43 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that this area should be covered by four wards, with the proposed Blackrod, Horwich, Westhoughton North and Westhoughton South wards being represented by three members each. The proposed Blackrod ward would comprise the borough boundaries to the north and west. In the south of the ward, the boundary follows the northern boundary of Westhoughton Wingates Town Council parish ward, north and east to the

M61 towards Lostock Road. The boundary would then continue northwards to the railway line following the railway line to Gibraltar Farm and northwards along the footpath to just west of St Andrews Road. From here the boundary would follow Chorley New Road west and north-west to Fox Street, proceeding in a north easterly direction to Victoria Road, northwards to Church Street, then west and north-west to Lee Lane, towards Scholes Bank.

44 Starting where Scholes Bank meets the borough boundary, the proposed Horwich ward would follow the borough boundary north-east to Winter Hill, then south-east to the footpath which forms the boundary of the Horwich Town Council. It would continue along this boundary to High Rid Reservoir, then continue to follow the Town Council boundary east, south and west to Chorley New Road. From here the boundary would follow Chorley New Road west and north west to Fox Street, proceeding in a north easterly direction to Victoria Road, northwards to Church Street, then west and north-west to Lee Lane, towards Scholes Bank.

45 The proposed Westhoughton North ward would comprise the borough boundaries to its north and west and the southern boundary would follow Wigan Road and the rear of the houses on Southfield Drive to Pine Grove, then would continue in a northerly direction into Bolton Road. From here the boundary would continue in an easterly direction along Manchester Road to where Newbrook Road crosses the M61 and then would continue along the existing Hulton Park ward boundary, towards Knutshaw Bridge along to Hunger Hill continuing along the M61 motorway before proceeding north towards Mill Bridge west along the railway towards Lostock Lane Bridge.

46 The proposed Westhoughton South ward would comprise the existing borough boundaries to its south and west. To the east the boundary would follow behind Kearsley Plantation, north along Newbrook Road and continue behind the houses on Newland Drive onto Manchester Road. From here the boundary would continue north and west along Manchester Road continuing south along Bolton Road and west behind the rear of the houses on Southfield Drive and along Wigan Road towards the borough boundary and Westhoughton Greyhound Stadium.

47 Under the Borough Council's proposals there would be good levels of electoral equality with the number of electors per councillor equalling the borough average in Horwich and Westhoughton South wards and varying from the borough average by 7% and 1% in Blackrod and Westhoughton North respectively (2%, 1%, equal to and 1% in 2006).

48 At Stage One the Conservative Group proposed that this area should be covered by four wards, with the proposed Horwich, Hulton Park, Middlebrook and Westhoughton wards being represented by three members each. The proposed Horwich ward would comprise the existing Horwich ward, minus the polling districts QC and QD transferred to the proposed Heaton ward.

49 The proposed Hulton Park ward is based on the existing Hulton Park ward less the polling districts RF and RI transferred to the proposed Beaumont ward, plus the area of the existing Daubhill ward to the south of the M61 motorway.

50 The proposed Middlebrook ward would comprise the existing Blackrod ward less the polling district NI being the Wingates ward of the Westhoughton Parish.

51 The proposed Westhoughton ward would include the existing Westhoughton ward and the Westhoughton Parish ward of Wingates, transferred from the existing Blackrod ward.

52 Under the Conservative Group's proposals the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Horwich, Hulton Park, Middlebrook and Westhoughton wards would vary from the borough average by 6%, 1%, 11% and 5% respectively (6%, 4%, 2% and 9% by 2006).

53 We also received representations from the Bolton Liberal Democrats Horwich & Blackrod branch and the Bolton West Liberal Democrats Westhoughton & Hulton Park branch which

commented on the Borough Council's proposals. The Horwich & Blackrod branch support the Council's proposals for Westhoughton North and Horwich North East wards. The Westhoughton & Hulton Park branch agreed with the Borough Council's proposals in the Hunger Hill and Wingates and Fourgates area, but argued against the proposals in the Hulton Lane and Chew Moor areas for reasons of community identity. They also considered that the boundary between Westhoughton North and South wards would split communities as well as not providing a satisfactory boundary.

54 Having considered all the representations received at Stage One we propose adopting the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals in the proposed Horwich North East, Westhoughton North and Westhoughton South wards and the Borough Council's proposals in the proposed Horwich and Blackrod ward. The Liberal Democrats' proposals were the same as those submitted by the Borough Council and the Conservative Group for Horwich North East ward and similar to the Borough Council's proposals for Horwich and Blackrod ward and Westhoughton North and South wards, where there are slight differences in the south of the wards. It is in these areas that the Borough Council has received criticism from the Liberal Democrats, the Westhoughton & Hulton Park branch of the Liberal Democrat Group and the Conservative Group, who all argued that there was a lack of community interest in the proposed wards. The Westhoughton & Hulton Park branch of the Liberal Democrats also consider that the boundary between Westhoughton North and South wards would split communities as well as not providing a satisfactory boundary.

55 We consider that the Liberal Democrat's proposals in this area would provide improved levels of electoral equality and strong and easily identifiable boundaries in each of the proposed wards, as well as reflecting community identity in the proposed Westhoughton wards. The Borough Council's proposals for the Horwich and Blackrod ward would provide improved levels of electoral equality and strong and easily identifiable boundaries.

Astley Bridge, Bradshaw and Bromley Cross wards

56 The existing wards of Astley Bridge, Bradshaw and Bromley Cross wards cover the northern area of the borough. Under the current arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in the three wards varies from the borough average by 10%, 7% and 8% respectively (9%, 5% and 13% by 2006).

57 At Stage One the Liberal Democrat Group proposed that this area should be covered by three wards with the proposed Astley Bridge, Bradshaw and Bromley Cross wards being represented by three members each. In this area the Liberal Democrats proposed slightly revised warding arrangements based predominantly on the existing warding arrangements. In the proposed Astley Bridge ward the boundary would follow Astley Brook west, then north-west Scout Road. It would then continue along the boundary of the existing Astley Bridge ward to the borough boundary, continuing along the borough boundary north-east towards Eagley Brook. From Eagley Brook the boundary would continue in a south-easterly direction until it crosses Crompton Way and continues towards Blackburn Road.

58 In the proposed Bradshaw ward, starting where Thicketford Road crosses Bradshaw Brook, the boundary would follow Bradshaw Brook northwards until it reaches a point east of Scope o' th' Lane. From here the boundary continues east to Bradshaw Brow, north-east to Turton Road, then north-west to opposite Turton Heights. The boundary would continue south-east to rejoin Bradshaw Brook and would continue north to the Jumbles Reservoir, before following the west bank of the reservoir to the borough boundary, where it proceeds north, east and then south to just east of Dry Hillock. From here the boundary would continue in a north-westerly direction to Stitch-mi-Lane, proceeding west past the Christ Church CE School and Earls Farm to meet Greenroyd Avenue. The boundary would then continue south along Greenroyd Avenue and Rochester Avenue to Winchester Way.

59 The proposed Bromley Cross ward comprises the existing Bromley Cross ward boundaries with a slight amendment in the south of the ward. Here the boundary would follow a footpath just south of Oaks Lane, across the playing fields, across the railway and south of Canon Slade School to Bradshaw Brow.

60 Under the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals there would be good levels of electoral equality with the number of electors per councillor equalling the borough average in the proposed Astley Bridge ward and varying from the borough average in the proposed Bradshaw and Bromley Cross wards by 1% and 1% respectively (equal to, 3% and 4% by 2006).

61 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that this area should be covered by three wards, with the proposed Astley Bridge, Bradshaw and Bromley Cross wards being represented by three members. The proposed Astley Bridge ward would comprise the existing Astley Bridge ward boundaries to the north and east. In the south of the proposed ward the boundary follows Astley Brook towards Moss Bank Way and north-westerly to Raveden Brook towards Horrocks Moor. The proposed Bradshaw ward would comprise the existing Bradshaw ward boundaries.

62 The proposed Bromley Cross ward would comprise the existing Bromley Cross ward boundaries with a slight modification in the south of the ward, where the boundary would follow Sharples Hall Drive, Thornham Drive, eastwards along Ashworth Lane, across field boundaries, the railway line and just north of Ryeburn Drive to the existing Bromley Cross ward boundary.

63 Under the Borough Council's proposals there would be good levels of electoral equality with the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Astley Bridge ward equalling the borough average and the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Bradshaw and Bromley Cross wards varying from the borough average by 2% and 2% respectively (1%, 1% and 2% by 2006).

64 At Stage One the Conservative Group proposed that this area should be covered by three wards, with the proposed Bradshaw, Bromley Cross and Sharples wards being represented by three members. Under the Conservative Group's proposals the proposed Bradshaw ward would comprise the existing Bradshaw ward less the polling district BD transferred to the proposed Brightmet ward, plus the area of the existing Tonge ward to the north and west of Crompton Way and Thicketford Road.

65 The proposed Bromley Cross ward would comprise the existing Bromley Cross ward less the area bounded by and to the west and south of Eagley Way, Hough Lane, Darwen Road and the unnamed slip road at Dunscair War Memorial to be transferred to the proposed Sharples ward.

66 The proposed Sharples ward would comprise the existing Astley Bridge ward, minus the area of polling districts AA and AB to the south of Crompton Way and Moss Bank Way, plus the area of the existing Bromley Cross ward, to the west and south of Eagley Way, Hough Lane, Darwen Road and the unnamed slip road to the south of the Dunscair War Memorial.

67 Under the Conservative Group's proposals the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Bradshaw, Bromley Cross and Sharples wards would vary from the borough average by 3%, 2% and 3% respectively (2%, 4% and 3% by 2006).

68 In addition we received a submission from Bolton North East Liberal Democrats, which opposed the Borough Council's proposals in Astley Bridge, Bradshaw and Brightmet wards for reasons of community identity.

69 Having considered all the representations received at Stage One we propose adopting the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals for this area subject to boundary amendments in Bradshaw and Bromley Cross wards. In the south of Bradshaw ward we propose that the boundary would

follow Stitch-mi-Lane and continue behind the houses on Rusland Drive to meet with the existing boundary, and in Bromley Cross ward we propose that in the south-east of the ward the boundary would follow Bradshaw Brook behind Rigby Lane and the cricket ground to meet with the existing boundary on Bolton Road.

70 The Borough Council's proposals for this area received opposition from both the Conservatives and the Bolton North-East branch of the Liberal Democrats, which believe that the Council's proposals would divide areas of community interest as well as providing poorly defined boundaries in the Bromley Cross ward. The Conservative Group also consider that the Borough Council's proposals for the proposed Bradshaw ward are unclear. It is for reasons of community identity that we have decided to adopt the Liberal Democrat's proposals in this area as we consider that these revised wards would balance the need to reflect local communities, while providing improved levels of electoral equality and strong and easily identifiable boundaries.

Burnden, Central, Halliwell, and Tonge wards

71 These four wards are situated in the centre of the borough. Under the current arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Burnden, Central, Halliwell and Tonge wards varies from the borough average by 4%, 18% 6% and 22% respectively (2%, 18%, 1% and 23% by 2006).

72 At Stage One the Liberal Democrat Group proposed that this area should be covered by four wards with the proposed Crompton, Great Lever, Halliwell and Tonge with the Haulgh wards being represented by three members. In this area the Liberal Democrat's proposed slightly revised warding arrangements based predominantly on the existing warding arrangements. The proposed Halliwell ward would comprise part of the existing Halliwell and Central wards. Starting where Bridge Street meets Deansgate, the boundary would follow Deansgate westwards to the junction with Oxford Street. It would then go south along Oxford Street, Victoria Square and Newport Street to Great Moor Street, before continuing south-west to the railway. From here the boundary would continue to a point south of Cemetery Lodge, then north to Gilnow Road. The boundary would then continue north-west along Tudor Avenue to Chorley New Road then east to Morningson Road, north to Chorley Old Road and north-west to Ivy Road. The boundary would continue northwards to Vallets Lane towards the junction with Elgin Street, eastwards to Eskrick Street to the junction with Tennyson Street. From Tennyson Street the boundary would follow Brownlow Way north to Halliwell Road towards Higher Bridge Street and Bridge Street.

73 The proposed Crompton ward would comprise part of the existing Halliwell and Central wards. The boundary would follow Crompton Way westwards to Blackburn Road, then south to Astley Brook and west to Moss Bank Way. From here the boundary would continue south-west to follow Harpers Lane and south along Bennets Lane to Elgin Street. From Elgin Street the boundary would continue east to Eskrick Street, south towards Tennyson Street and along Tennyson Street to Brownlow Way before proceeding north to Halliwell Road. It would then follow Halliwell Road to Higher Bridge Street and Bridge Street southwards to Deansgate. The boundary would then continue east along Deansgate, Churchgate and Churchbank to St Peters Way until it meets the railway line. The boundary would follow the railway line north-east to where a path crosses it north of Castle Hill School, then follow the path to Glaisdale Road. At the end of Glaisdale Road it would continue east to the rear boundaries of the houses on the east side of Le Gendre Street, following on to St Bees Road and Crompton Way. The boundary would continue south-east, then east along the footpath to the south of Firwood school, then north along another footpath until it reaches Bradshaw Brook where it would follow the southern boundary of the proposed Bromley Cross ward detailed above.

74 The proposed Great Lever ward would comprise part of the existing Derby and Burnden wards. The boundary would follow where the extension of Churchbank meets St Peters Way

and continue south across Manchester Road to the railway line west of Ivanhoe Street, then south-east along the railway line to the southern boundary of the existing Burnden ward. It would then follow that boundary in a westerly direction to Bradford Road, north to Green Lane, then west to the southern boundary of the existing Derby ward. From here it would continue west and north along that boundary to Bridgeman Street, north-east along Bridgeman Street to High Street, north-west to Derby Street, then north-west along College Way and Mayor Street to the railway line. The boundary would continue east along the railway line to Great Moss Street, east to Newport Street, then north along Newport Street, Victoria Square and Oxford Street to Deansgate, then east along Deansgate, Churchgate and Churchbank.

75 The proposed Tonge with the Haulgh ward boundary would follow the A666, St Peters Way, north-west to where the railway crosses it near Castle Street, then continues north and north-east along the railway to where a path crosses it to the north of Castle Hill School. The boundary would follow this path eastwards to Tonge Moor Road and east along Glaisdale Road. At the end of Glaisdale Road it would continue east to the rear boundaries of the houses on the east side of Le Gendre Street, following on to St Bees Road and Crompton Way. The boundary would continue south-east, then east along the footpath to the south of Firwood school, then north along another footpath until it reaches Bradshaw Brook. The boundary would follow Bradshaw Brook southwards until it joins the River Tonge, south along the River Tonge until it joins the River Croal and then south along the River Croal.

76 Under the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals there would be good levels of electoral equality with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average in the proposed Crompton, Great Lever and Tonge with the Haulgh wards by 1%, 1% and 3% respectively and equalling the borough average in Halliwell ward (1%, 1%, 1% and 1% by 2006).

77 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that this area should be covered by four wards, with the proposed Burnden, Central, Halliwell and Tonge wards being represented by three members each. Under the Borough Council's proposals the proposed Burnden ward would comprise the existing Burnden ward boundary to the east and slight modifications to the rest of the ward. The southern boundary would follow Egerton Street south towards Emlyn Street towards Campbell Street and along Campbell Street to where the existing ward boundary meets Doe Hey Road. From here the proposed boundary would follow the existing boundary as far as Green Lane, where it will proceed westwards along Lever Ledge Lane, as far as Nugent Road and then north along Nugent Road where it meets up with the existing boundary continuing towards Rose Hill. From Rose Hill the boundary would continue north to Bolton Station and continue along Bradford Street, south along the A666 before proceeding east then south down Bromwich Street, east along Hollins Street, south along High End Brow towards Bradford Park.

78 The proposed Central ward would comprise the existing Central ward boundaries to the east, south and west with slight modifications in the north and north-west of the proposed ward. This boundary would follow Crompton Way and Moss Bank Way as far as the junction with Harpers Lane, south along Smith Hills Dean Road to where it meets the existing boundary.

79 The proposed Halliwell ward would comprise the existing Halliwell ward boundaries to the south, east and west, with slight modifications in the north of the ward. This boundary would follow Smith Hills Dean Road north towards Moss Bank Way and then along Moss Bank Way to where it meets Harpers Lane and then proceed south to Captains Clough. From here the boundary would follow Ivy Road north before continuing east along Church Road where it would meet with the existing boundary.

80 The proposed Tonge ward would comprise the existing Tonge ward with a slight modification in the north of the ward. From Eagley Brook Bridge the boundary would follow Eagley Brook northwards to just north of Oaks Lane. From here the boundary would proceed in an easterly direction across field boundaries and a railway line towards the existing Bradshaw

ward boundary just north of Ryeburn Drive. From here the boundary would continue south along the existing Bradshaw ward boundary as far as Danesbury Road continuing along the weir towards the cricket ground and Firwood Lane.

81 Under the Borough Council's proposals there would be good levels of electoral equality with the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Burnden, Central, Halliwell and Tonge wards equalling the borough average in Central ward and varying from the borough average by 2%, 1% and 1% in Burnden, Halliwell and Tonge wards respectively. By 2006 this level of electoral equality is projected to stay the same in Burnden and Central wards and improve slightly in Halliwell and Tonge wards to equal the borough average (2%, equal to, equal to and equal to the borough average by 2006).

82 At Stage One the Conservative Group proposed that this area should be covered by four wards, with the proposed Gilnow, Great Lever, Halliwell and Tonge with the Haulgh wards being represented by three members each. The proposed Gilnow Ward would comprise part of polling district GA, north of Bridgeman Place and polling district EH of the existing Central ward as well as polling districts IA, IE and IF of the existing Derby ward, excluding the area to the west of Quebec Street included in the proposed Daubhill ward. The proposed Gilnow ward would also include polling districts PC1, PC2, PD and PF of the existing Halliwell ward and polling district SD2 of the existing Smithills ward.

83 The proposed Great Lever ward would comprise the polling districts GA, excluding the area to the north of Bridgeman Place, GC, GD, GE and GF of the existing Burnden ward excluding areas to the south of Green Lane. The proposed ward would also include polling districts IB1, IB2, IC and ID of the existing Derby ward, excluding the area of polling district ID, to the west of Swan Lane.

84 The proposed Halliwell ward would comprise the polling districts AA and AB of the existing Astley Bridge ward to the south of Crompton Way and Moss Bank Way and east of the rear of the properties on the west of Berkley Road. It would also include polling districts EA, EB, EC, ED, EE, EF and EG of the existing Central ward, plus polling district PA of the existing Halliwell ward and part of polling district PB of the existing Halliwell ward to the east of Shepherd Cross Street.

85 The proposed Tonge with the Haulgh ward would include the existing Tonge ward, less the area to the north of Crompton Way and west of Thicketford Road, transferred to the Bradshaw ward and would also include the area of the existing Burnden ward to the east of the A666, St Peter's Way.

86 Under the Conservative Group's proposals the number of electors per councillor would equal the borough average in Great Lever ward and vary from the borough average by 4% 3% and 4% in the proposed Gilnow, Halliwell and Tonge with the Haulgh wards respectively (2%, 4%, 3% and 4% by 2006).

87 In addition to these submissions we also received a representation from the Liberal Democrats Bolton South-East branch which opposed the Borough Council's proposals in the Burnden area as they believe that the areas proposed to be included have little in common. We also received a representation from the Liberal Democrats Bolton North-East branch who believe that the Borough Council's proposals in the Halliwell ward would split communities.

88 In Halliwell ward both the Liberal Democrat Group and the Conservative Group opposed the Borough Council's proposals, arguing that they split two current Astley Bridge polling districts and that the proposed ward, like the existing Halliwell ward, lacks any physical links. In Tonge with the Haulgh ward, the Conservative Group opposed the Borough Council's proposals in the north of the ward, stating that they split an area of long standing community of interest, which was formerly a part of the Turton UDC and which has always been a part of Bromley Cross. The

Conservative Group's own proposals, like the Liberal Democrats recreate the historical linkages of Tonge with the Haulgh. The Conservative Group's proposals in the proposed Great Lever ward are very similar to the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals in this ward and unlike the Borough Council's proposals take into consideration community identity; both the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives argue that the Borough Council's proposals do not reflect community interest and that the Haulgh area has more in common with parts of Tonge. Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One and having visited the area ourselves and identified these areas of community interest, we propose adopting the Liberal Democrat's proposals in this area without modification as we consider that the revised wards would balance the need to reflect local communities, while providing good levels of electoral equality as well as strong and easily identifiable boundaries.

Brightmet, Kearsley and Little Lever wards

89 These three wards are situated in the east of the borough. Under the current arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Brightmet and Kearsley wards are equal to the borough average and the electoral variance in Little Lever ward varies from the borough average by 9% (1%, 1%, and 7% by 2006).

90 At Stage One the Liberal Democrat Group proposed that this area should be covered by three wards with the proposed Brightmet, Kearsley and Little Lever wards being represented by three councillors each. In this area the Liberal Democrat Group proposed slightly revised warding arrangements based predominantly on the existing warding arrangements. The proposed Brightmet ward boundary would follow the borough boundary north to where a path leaves it east of Dry Hillock. The boundary would then follow the path north-westward to Stitchmi-Lane, proceeding west past the Christ Church CE School and Earls Farm to meet Greenroyd Avenue. The boundary then continues south along Greenroyd Avenue and Rochester Avenue to Winchester Way, then north-west to where it crosses Bradshaw Brook. From here it would follow south along Bradshaw Brook to where a path crosses it by Leverhulme Park, then follow the path north-east until it joins another path and continues to Long Lane. From Long Lane the boundary continues south behind the houses on Beechcroft Avenue and Hollycroft Avenue to the dismantled railway.

91 The proposed Kearsley ward boundary would follow the current boundary of the existing Kearsley ward, except that it would run along the rear boundaries of numbers 19-71 Church Road as far as Presto Street, south along Presto Street to Church Road, to rejoin the existing boundary.

92 The proposed Little Lever ward boundary would follow the boundary of the current Little Lever ward westwards and north-westwards along the Rivers Irwell and Croal until it meets the boundary of the current Farnworth ward. It would then follow that boundary westwards until it meets the railway line, then follow the railway line north-west, then north to rejoin the River Croal. The boundary would continue north along the River Croal, River Tonge and Bradshaw Brook to where a path crosses it by Leverhulme Park, then would follow the path north-east until it joins another path and continues to Long Lane. From Long Lane the boundary continues south behind the houses on Beechcroft Avenue and Hollycroft Avenue to the dismantled railway, then east along the railway to the borough boundary, continuing east and south-east along the borough boundary.

93 Under the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals there would be good levels of electoral equality with the number of electors per councillor equalling the borough average in the proposed Brightmet, Kearsley and Little Lever wards (varying from the borough average by 8%, 1% and 10% by 2006).

94 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that this area should be covered by three wards, with the proposed Brightmet, Kearsley and Little Lever wards being represented by three members each. The proposed Brightmet ward would comprise the existing Brightmet ward unchanged. The proposed Kearsley ward would comprise the existing Kearsley ward unchanged.

95 The proposed Little Lever ward would comprise the existing Little Lever ward with a slight modification in the south-west of the ward. Here the boundary would follow the A666 St Peters Way northwards to where this road meets the A575 Manchester Road at Smiths Road where it would then follow the River Croal until it meets with the existing boundary just south of the cricket ground.

96 Under the Borough Council's proposals there would be good levels of electoral equality with the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Brightmet, Kearsley and Little Lever wards equalling the borough average in Brightmet and Kearsley wards and varying from the borough average by 4% in Little Lever ward (1%, 1% and 2% by 2006).

97 At Stage One the Conservative Group proposed that this area should be covered by three wards, with the proposed Brightmet, Kearsley and Little Lever wards being represented by three members. The Conservative Group's proposed Brightmet ward would comprise the existing Brightmet ward less the polling district CD transferred to the proposed Little Lever ward, plus polling district MD of the existing Little Lever ward.

98 The proposed Kearsley ward would comprise the existing Kearsley ward less the polling district LH, transferred to the proposed Farnworth ward and the polling district JB, transferred from the existing Farnworth ward.

99 The proposed Little Lever ward would consist of the existing Little Lever ward, minus the polling district MD, transferred to the proposed Brightmet ward, and including the polling district CD of the existing Brightmet ward.

100 Under the Conservative Group's proposals the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Brightmet, Kearsley and Little Lever wards would vary from the borough average by 1%, 1% and 5% respectively (5%, 1% and 5% by 2006).

101 We also received a representation from the Bolton South-East branch of the Liberal Democrats, which commented on the Borough Council's proposals for the proposed Kearsley and Little Lever wards. They agreed with the Borough Council that Kearsley should form the basis of a ward and also agree with the proposal to add numbers 19-71 Church Road, which historically formed part of the Kearsley Urban District. In the proposed Little Lever ward, the Bolton South-East branch of the Liberal Democrats considered that the proposal to add part of the current Burnden ward is sensible.

102 The Borough Council and Liberal Democrat Group's proposals for Brightmet ward are similar and their proposals for Kearsley ward are the same. Each of the parties identifies Little Lever as a distinct community. However the Conservative Group opposes the Borough Council and Liberal Democrat Group's proposals as they consider that Darcy Lever has no community of interest with Little Lever.

103 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One we propose adopting the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals subject to a boundary modification in Brightmet and Little Lever wards. In Brightmet ward we propose that the boundary in the south of the ward would follow the existing boundary, to include the area of Darcy Lever within Brightmet ward, as having visited the area we feel that this modification would better reflect community identity in the area. In Little Lever ward, the boundary in the south-west of the ward would follow the existing boundary along the River Croal. We consider that these revised wards

would balance the need to reflect local communities, while providing good levels of electoral equality and utilise strong and easily identifiable boundaries.

Daubhill, Farnworth and Harper Green wards

104 These three wards are situated in the south of the borough. Under the current arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Daubhill, Farnworth and Harper Green ward varies from the borough average by 12%, 5% and 2% respectively (14%, 7%, and 4% by 2006).

105 At Stage One the Liberal Democrat Group proposed that this area should be covered by three wards with the proposed Hulton, Farnworth East and Farnworth West wards being represented by three councillors each. In this area the Liberal Democrats proposed slightly revised warding arrangements based predominantly on the existing ward arrangements. The proposed Hulton ward boundary would follow the borough boundary in a south-westerly and westerly direction to the western edge of New Park Wood, then north along the edge of the wood, the western edge of Dog Kennel Wood, field boundaries and the western edge of Back o' th' Lawn Wood. From here the boundary would continue east and north along the track to Manchester Road, continuing west to Punch Lane then north to the M61. The boundary would then continue north-east along the disused railway line to where it crosses the stream to the south-west of Herman Bank Farm, then follow the stream to where it meets Wigan Road at Knutshaw Bridge. It would then follow Wigan Road to its junction with Deane Church Lane, then continue south-east to St Helens Road, then east along the disused railway line to the eastern boundary of the current Daubhill ward.

106 The proposed Farnworth East ward boundary would be the same as the current Farnworth ward boundary, with the removal of Church Road to Kearsley and the addition of the part of current Harper Green ward bounded by Plodder Lane and Marsh Lane.

107 The proposed Farnworth West ward would be the same as the current Harper Green ward with the removal of the area of Marsh Lane and south of Plodder Lane to Farnworth East ward, and the addition of the area west of Bradford Road and south of Green Lane from Burnden ward.

108 Under the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals there would be good levels of electoral equality with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average in the proposed Farnworth East and Hulton wards by 1% and 3% respectively and equalling the borough average in Farnworth West ward (2%, 5% and 1% respectively by 2006).

109 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that this area should be covered by two wards, with the proposed Farnworth and Morris Green wards being represented by three members. The proposed Farnworth ward would comprise the existing boundaries to the south and east with slight modifications in the north, north-east and west. In the south-west of the proposed ward the boundary would follow the existing boundary as far as Highfield Road and would continue along Marsh Lane northwards to the rear of the houses on Bishops Road behind Higher Doe Hey Reservoir. From here the boundary would proceed south down Boscobel Road, east along Campbell Street towards the junction with Cawdor Avenue, west along Emlyn Street before proceeding north along Egerton Street across the railway onto St Peters Way where it would continue south towards the proposed northern boundary with Kearsley ward, as mentioned previously.

110 The proposed Morris Green ward would comprise the borough boundary to the south. To the east the boundary would follow the existing Farnworth ward boundary as far as Highfield Road and would continue along Marsh Lane northwards towards the rear of the houses on Bishops Road. From here the boundary would follow the river south-eastwards towards the path just south of the Great Lever & Farnworth Golf Club, along the existing Harper Green ward

boundary. The boundary would continue north along Morris Green Lane, west along Peveril Street, north along Haynes Street and west along the A579 St. Helens Road, to meet the existing Harper Green ward boundary.

111 Under the Borough Council's proposals there would be good levels of electoral equality with the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Farnworth and Morris Green wards varying from the borough average by 3% and 1% respectively (3% and equal to the borough average by 2006).

112 At Stage One the Conservative Group proposed that this area should be represented by three wards, with the proposed Daubhill, Farnworth and Harper Green ward being represented by three members.

113 The Conservative Group's proposed Daubhill ward would comprise the area of the polling district HA of the existing Daubhill ward to the north of the central line of Morris Green Lane and polling districts HC, HD and HE of the existing Daubhill ward plus polling districts OF1 and OF2 of the existing Deane-cum-Heaton ward. It would also consist of the part of polling district IC of the existing Derby ward to the north and west of Swan Lane and Bridgeman Street, as well as part of polling district IF of the existing Derby ward to the west of Canon Street and part of polling district KD of the existing Harper Green ward to the south and west of Lever Edge Lane and Swan Lane.

114 The proposed Farnworth ward would comprise the existing Farnworth ward, minus polling district JB which would be transferred to the proposed Kearsley ward and including the area containing polling district LH of the existing Kearsley ward and the area of polling district KB of the existing Harper Green ward, south of Plodder Lane and east of Marsh Lane.

115 The proposed Harper Green ward would include polling districts KA, KB, KC and KD of the existing Harper Green ward, less the area of polling district KB to the south of Plodder Lane and east of Marsh Lane, and the area of polling district KD, north of Lever Edge Lane and east of Swan Lane, as well as the area of polling districts GD and GE of the existing Burnden ward, south of Green Lane.

116 Under the Conservative Group's proposals the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Daubhill, Farnworth and Harper Green wards would equal the borough average in Farnworth ward and vary from the borough average by 3% and 1% respectively (2%, 2% and equal to the borough average by 2006).

117 We also received a representation from the Bolton South-East branch of the Liberal Democrats which commented on the Borough Council's proposals for the proposed Farnworth and Morris Green wards. They agreed with the principle of focusing a ward or wards on Farnworth, but believe that Farnworth is too big to form one ward. With regard to the proposed Morris Green ward, the Bolton South-East branch of the Liberal Democrats considered this to be a grouping of three unrelated areas which have little in common and are geographically distant.

118 The Conservative Group considers that the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals for Farnworth East and Hulton wards would not be unreasonable and argued that the Borough Council's proposals in Hulton ward does not reflect community identity. In the proposed Farnworth West ward both the Conservatives and the South-East branch of the Bolton Liberal Democrats believe that the Council's proposed Morris Green ward has "no logic in relation to community links and geography". Having considered all the representations received at Stage One and having visited the area and identified the areas of community interest within these proposed wards, we propose adopting the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals in this area without modification. We consider that the revised wards would balance the need to reflect local

communities, while providing good levels of electoral equality and strong and easily identifiable boundaries.

Deane-cum-Heaton, Derby and Smithills wards

119 These three wards are situated in the centre of the borough. Under the current arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Deane-cum-Heaton, Derby and Smithills wards varies from the borough average by 33%, 3% and 16% respectively (5%, 32%, and 17% by 2006).

120 At Stage One the Liberal Democrat Group proposed that this area should be covered by three wards with the proposed Lostock with Heaton, Rumworth and Smithills wards being represented by three councillors each. In this area the Liberal Democrat's proposed slightly revised warding arrangements based predominantly on the existing warding arrangements. The proposed Lostock with Heaton ward would follow Chorley Old Road to Old Kiln Lane, then south-east and east along Old Kiln Lane, Markland Hill Lane and Whitecroft Road to rejoin Chorley Old Road, before continuing to Devonshire Road. From here the boundary would proceed south to Chorley New Road, then east to Tudor Avenue, south-east to just east of the Cemetery Lodge and south to the railway line. It would then continue west along the railway line to the rear of the properties on the western side of Grange Road, continuing to Wigan Road. The boundary would then follow Wigan Road south-west to where a stream meets it at Knutshaw Bridge. From here the boundary would continue north-west along Knutshaw Brook and field boundaries to the southern shore of Rumworth Lodge, then north and north-west towards the railway line. It would then follow the railway line north-east to Lostock Junction Station, then follow the other railway line west until it meets the bridge which carries the southern extension of Mill Lane. The boundary would then continue north-east to Chorley New Road where it would then follow the Horwich Town Council boundary east and north.

121 The proposed Rumworth ward would go south east along Mayor Street and College Way to Derby Street, then south-west along Derby Street to its junction with High Street. From High Street the boundary would follow Bridgeman Street to the western boundary of the current Derby ward, continuing south-west along that boundary to the disused railway line. From here the boundary will proceed in a westerly direction to St Helens Road, north-west along Deane Church Lane to Wigan Road, then north-east along Wigan Road to the rear boundaries of the properties on the western side of Grange Road, before continuing north towards the railway line.

122 The proposed Smithills ward would follow Chorley Old Road east to Old Kiln Road, then south-east and east along Old Kiln Lane, Markland Hill Lane, and Whitecroft Road to rejoin Chorley Old Road. From here the boundary would continue eastwards to Devonshire Road, then south to Chorley New Road and east to Mornington Road. It would then continue north to Chorley Old Road, west along Chorley Old Road to Ivy Road, where it would proceed north along Valletts Lane and Bennetts Lane to Harpers Lane. Once at Harpers Lane the boundary would continue north-east along Moss Bank Way, then east along Moss Bank Way to where it crosses Astley Brook, then north-east to the current constituency boundary. It would then follow the constituency boundary north-east to the borough boundary, then follow that boundary north-east to the boundary with Horwich Town Council, where it would continue along this boundary in a southerly direction.

123 Under the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals there would be good levels of electoral equality with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average in the proposed Lostock with Heaton, Rumworth and Smithills wards by 5%, 2% and 4% respectively (4%, 3% and equal to the borough average by 2006).

124 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that this area should be covered by four wards, with the proposed Daubhill, Derby, Doffcocker and Lostock with Ladybridge wards being

represented by three members. The proposed Daubhill ward would follow the existing Daubhill ward boundary along Hulton Lane, continuing east along Chip Hill Road, behind the houses on Malton Avenue before continuing northwards again along Hulton Lane as far as the railway line. The boundary would continue in an easterly direction along the railway line, where it would then continue southwards along the existing Derby ward boundary as far as Pennington Road where the boundary would continue southwards as far as the dismantled railway.

125 The proposed Derby ward would include existing boundaries to the south, west and east with a slight modification to the ward boundary in the north. Here the boundary would follow the railway line eastwards towards Newport Street and northwards along Knowsley Street before proceeding east along Bury Road as far as Tonge Bridge where the boundary would continue south along the existing Tonge ward boundary to just behind Bradford Park.

126 The proposed Doffcocker ward would comprise existing boundaries to the east and north. From Barrow Bridge the boundary continues south towards Captains Clough Road. From here the boundary would follow Ivy Road north before continuing east along Church Road where it would meet with the existing Halliwell ward boundary as far as Chorley New Road. It would proceed west along Chorley New Road, north along New Hall Lane, west along Longdale Road and continue west along Old Kiln Lane and High Rid Lane.

127 The proposed Lostock with Ladybridge ward would use existing boundaries in the north-west with slight modifications to the rest of the ward. The northern boundary would proceed west along Chorley New Road, north along New Hall Lane, west along Longdale Road and continue west along Old Kiln Lane and High Rid Lane. In the south of the ward the boundary would follow the railway line from the station just north of Mill Bridge continuing east along the railway line and northeast behind the rear of the houses on Winslow Road and Hornby Drive towards Knutshaw Bridge. From here the boundary would follow the existing Hulton Park & Daubhill ward boundaries just east of Hawkshead Drive. The boundary would continue along Hulton Lane, east onto Eldercot Road behind the houses on Malton Avenue and continue north along Hulton Lane and the track behind Junction Road towards the railway line.

128 Under the Borough Council's proposals there would be good levels of electoral equality with the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Daubhill, Derby, Doffcocker and Lostock with Ladybridge wards equalling the borough average in Derby and Doffcocker wards and varying from the borough average by 1% and 2% in Daubhill and Lostock with Ladybridge wards respectively (1%, equal to, 2% and 2% by 2006).

129 At Stage One the Conservative Group proposed that this area should be covered by three wards. The proposed Deane with Middle Hulton, Heaton and Smithills wards being represented by three members each. The Conservative Group's proposed Deane with Middle Hulton ward would consist of the area comprising polling districts HA and HB of the existing Daubhill ward, less the area to the south of the M61 motorway and the area east of Morris Green Lane, as well as the area comprising polling district OE of the existing Deane-cum-Heaton ward and polling districts RF and RI of the existing Hulton Park ward.

130 The Conservative Group's proposed Heaton ward would include the polling districts OA, OB, OC and OD of the existing Deane-cum-Heaton ward, plus polling districts QC and QD of the existing Horwich ward. It would also comprise the area of polling district SC of the existing Smithills ward bounded by Chorley Old Road and Old Kiln Lane and Whitcroft Road, and part of polling district SD1 of the existing Smithills ward bounded by Chorley Old Road, less the part of polling district OA north of Cinder Lane and east of the rear of First Street.

131 The proposed Smithills ward would comprise part of polling district AB of the existing Astley Bridge ward, south of Moss Bank Way and west of the rear of Berkley Road. It would also include part of polling districts PB of the existing Halliwell ward, west of Shepherd Cross Street and polling district PE of the existing Halliwell ward and part of polling district OA north of

Cinder Lane and east of the rear of First Street. The proposed Smithills ward would also contain the polling districts SA, SB, SC and SD of the existing Smithills ward, minus the area bounded by Chorley Old Road and Old Kiln Lane and Whitecroft Road and the area to the south of Chorley Old Road transferred to the proposed Heaton ward.

132 Under the Conservative Group's proposals the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Deane with Middle Hulton, Heaton and Smithills wards would vary from the borough average by 4%, 2% and 1% respectively (3%, 3% and 1% by 2006).

133 In addition to these submissions, we also received a representation from the Bolton Liberal Democrats Deane-cum-Heaton & Smithills branch which objected to the Borough Council's proposals in the proposed Doffcocker, Lostock with Ladybridge and Smithills wards for reasons of community identity.

134 In response to the Borough Council's proposals in the proposed Lostock with Heaton ward the Conservative Group stated that, having studied the Council's submission, they are confused as to where the proposed boundaries are going to go. The Liberal Democrat Group's proposals for this area would allow parts of Lostock that are now united in different wards to be united in one ward. The Conservative Group and Liberal Democrat Group have similar boundaries for the proposed Rumworth ward and the Conservative Group consider the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals for this area to be not unreasonable, providing good strong boundaries. Both the Conservatives and the Bolton Liberal Democrats Deane-cum-Heaton & Smithills branch oppose the Borough Council's proposals for the Smithills ward, as Smithills is a recognised community within Bolton, and has been the basis of a ward for many years. They also argue that the Council's proposals would split the distinct and longstanding community of Barrow Bridge.

135 Therefore, having considered all the representations received at Stage One and having visited this area of Bolton ourselves and identified the areas of community interest within these proposed wards, we propose adopting the Liberal Democrat's proposals in this area without modification. We consider that the revised wards would balance the need to reflect local communities, while providing improved levels of electoral equality and strong and easily identifiable boundaries.

Electoral cycle

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

Conclusions

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

- a council of 60 members should be retained;
- there should be 20 wards;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified.

138 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the Liberal Democrat's proposals, but propose to depart from them in the following areas:

- we propose adopting the Borough Council's proposals in the Horwich and Blackrod ward combined with amendments to the boundaries in Bromley Cross, Bradshaw, Brightmet and Little Lever wards in order to group single communities in similar wards and to improve the boundaries.

139 Table 5 shows how our draft recommendations will effect electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements (based on 2001 electorate figures) and with forecast electorates for the year 2006.

Table 5: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	2001 Electorate		2006 Electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	60	60	60	60
Number of wards	20	20	20	20
Average number of electors per councillor	3,430	3,430	3,492	3,492
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	7	7	0	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	3	3	0	0

140 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for Bolton Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from seven to none. By 2006 no wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10%.

Draft recommendation

Bolton Borough Council should comprise 60 councillors serving 20 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A and the large maps.

Parish and town council electoral arrangements

141 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different borough wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Horwich and Westthoughton to reflect the proposed borough wards.

142 The parish of Horwich is currently served by 12 councillors representing four wards: North, East, Central and South. At Stage One Horwich Town Council suggested that the parish should be served by 14 councillors representing six wards. They also object strongly to any part of Horwich being represented by a ward that did not include the word Horwich in its title. As a result of adopting the Liberal Democrats proposals in the proposed Horwich North East ward and the Borough Council's proposals for the proposed Horwich and Blackrod ward, we are proposing new parishing arrangements for the parish of Horwich. The proposed Horwich North East Parish ward, comprising the proposed Horwich North East borough ward, should be represented by nine parish councillors. Horwich South West Parish ward, part of the proposed Horwich and Blackrod borough ward, should be represented by five parish councillors.

Draft recommendation

Horwich Town Council should comprise 14 councillors, representing two wards: Horwich North East returning nine parish councillors and Horwich South West returning five parish councillors. The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A1 in Appendix A.

143 The parish of Westhoughton is currently served by 12 councillors representing five wards: Wingates, Central, Cherquerbent, White Horse and Daisy Hill. At Stage One Westhoughton Town Council supports the proposal put forward by all the political parties on Bolton MBC to consolidate the Westhoughton Town Council area within two Bolton wards rather than three, but wish to increase the number of councillors serving the parish to 18. As a result of adopting the Liberal Democrats proposals in the proposed Westhoughton North and Westhoughton South wards, we are proposing new parishing arrangements for the parish of Westhoughton. The proposed Westhoughton North Parish ward, part of the proposed Westhoughton North borough ward should be represented by eight councillors. Westhoughton South Parish ward, comprising the proposed Westhoughton South borough ward, should be represented by 10 councillors.

Draft recommendation

Westhoughton Town Council should comprise 18 councillors, representing two wards: Westhoughton North returning eight parish councillors and Westhoughton South, returning 10 parish councillors. The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundary, as illustrated and named on Map A1 in Appendix A.

Map 2: Draft recommendations for Bolton

5 What happens next?

144 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Bolton contained in this report. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 22 April 2003. Any received *after* this date may not be taken into account. All responses may be inspected at our offices and those of the Borough Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

145 Express your views by writing directly to us:

**Team Leader
Bolton Review
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

146 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, ***whether or not*** they agree with our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to The Electoral Commission, which cannot make the Order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after it receives them.

Appendix A

Draft recommendations for Bolton: Detailed mapping

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for the Bolton 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 existing and proposed warding arrangements for Bolton.

Map A1: Draft recommendations for Bolton: Key map

Appendix B

Code of practice on written consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm, requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Public bodies, such as The Boundary Committee for England, are encouraged to follow the Code.

The Code of Practice applies to consultation documents published after 1 January 2001, which should reproduce the criteria, give explanations of any departures, and confirm that the criteria have otherwise been followed.

Table B1: Boundary Committee for England's compliance with Code criteria

Criteria	Compliance/departure
Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process for a policy (including legislation) or service from the start, so that it has the best prospect of improving the proposals concerned, and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage.	We comply with this requirement.
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose.	We comply with this requirement.
A consultation document should be as simple and concise as possible. It should include a summary, in two pages at most, of the main questions it seeks views on. It should make it as easy as possible for readers to respond, make contact or complain.	We comply with this requirement.
Documents should be made widely available, with the fullest use of electronic means (though not to the exclusion of others), and effectively drawn to the attention of all interested groups and individuals.	We comply with this requirement.
Sufficient time should be allowed for considered responses from all groups with an interest. Twelve weeks should be the standard minimum period for a consultation.	We consult on draft recommendations for a minimum of eight weeks, but may extend the period if consultations take place over holiday periods.
Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed, and reasons for decisions finally taken.	We comply with this requirement.
Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated.	We comply with this requirement.