

LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND

FINAL
RECOMMENDATIONS
ON THE FUTURE
ELECTORAL
ARRANGEMENTS FOR
SPELTHORNE
IN SURREY

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

September 1998

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for Spelthorne in Surrey.

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Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)

Helena Shovelton (Deputy Chairman)

Peter Brokenshire

Professor Michael Clarke

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Local Government Commission for England

1 September 1998

Dear Secretary of State

On 2 September 1997 the Commission commenced a periodic electoral review of the borough of Spelthorne under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in March 1998 and undertook an eleven week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have for the most part confirmed our draft recommendations, although some modifications have been made in the light of further evidence (see paragraph 59). This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Spelthorne.

We recommend that Spelthorne Borough Council should be served by 39 councillors, one fewer than at present, representing 13 wards, rather than the present 15, and that some changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that the Council should continue to be elected together every four years.

We note that you have now set out in the White Paper *Modern Local Government - In Touch with the People* (Cm 4014, HMSO), legislative proposals for a number of changes to local authority electoral arrangements. However, until such time as that new legislation is in place we are obliged to conduct our work in accordance with current legislation, and to continue our current approach to periodic electoral reviews.

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

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Spelthorne on 2 September 1997. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 17 March 1998, after which we undertook an eleven-week period of consultation.

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

We found that the existing electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Spelthorne because:

- **in three of the 15 wards, the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough;**
- **electoral equality is not expected to improve over the five-year period to 2002.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figure 1 and paragraphs 59 and 60) are that:

- **Spelthorne Borough Council should be served by 39 councillors, one fewer than at present;**
- **the boundaries of 13 of the existing 15 wards should be modified;**
- **there should be 13 wards, two fewer than at present;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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

- **In all 13 wards, the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 9 per cent from the average for the borough.**

- **This degree of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 9 per cent by 2002.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 13 October 1998:

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

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

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1 Ashford Common	3	Ashford Common ward (part); Ashford East ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
2 Ashford East	3	Ashford East ward (part); Ashford Town ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
3 Ashford North & Stanwell South	3	Ashford North ward (part); Stanwell South ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
4 Ashford Town	3	Ashford North ward (part); Ashford Town ward (part); Ashford West ward	Map 2 and large map
5 Halliford & Sunbury West	3	Halliford & Sunbury West ward (part)	Map 2, Map A1 and large map
6 Laleham & Shepperton Green	3	Ashford Common ward (part); Ashford Town ward (part); Laleham ward (part); Shepperton Green ward	Map 2 and large map
7 Riverside	3	Laleham ward (part); Staines Town ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
8 Shepperton Town	3	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2 and large map
9 Staines	3	Ashford North ward (part); Staines East ward (part); Staines Town ward (part); Stanwell North ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
10 Staines South	3	Laleham ward (part); Staines Town ward (part); Staines East ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
11 Stanwell North	3	Stanwell North ward (part); Stanwell South ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
12 Sunbury Common	3	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2 and large map
13 Sunbury East	3	Halliford & Sunbury West ward (part); Sunbury East ward	Map 2, Map A1 and large map

Note: The borough of Spelthorne is entirely unparished.

1. INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Spelthorne in Surrey.

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

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

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

4 The review was in four stages. Stage One began on 2 September 1997, when we wrote to Spelthorne Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Surrey County Council, the Surrey Police Authority, the Metropolitan Police, the local authority associations, the Member of Parliament and the Member of the European Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, and the headquarters of the main political parties. At the start of the review and following publication of our draft recommendations, we published a notice in the local press, issued a press release and other publicity, and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review more widely. The closing date for receipt of representations was 25 November 1997. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

5 Stage Three began on 17 March 1998 with the publication of our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Spelthorne*

in Surrey, and ended on 1 June 1998. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2. CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

⁶ Spelthorne Borough is bounded to the south by the River Thames and to the north and east by the London Boroughs of Hillingdon, Hounslow and Richmond-upon-Thames. The borough is relatively densely populated, with a population of some 90,000 covering 5,138 hectares giving a population density of just over 17 people per hectare. Sixty five per cent of the borough is designated Green Belt, with 18 per cent covered by reservoirs. The M3 and M25 motorways cross the borough, connecting Spelthorne with London and southern England. Heathrow Airport abuts the northern boundary of the borough and is a significant local employer.

⁷ 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'.

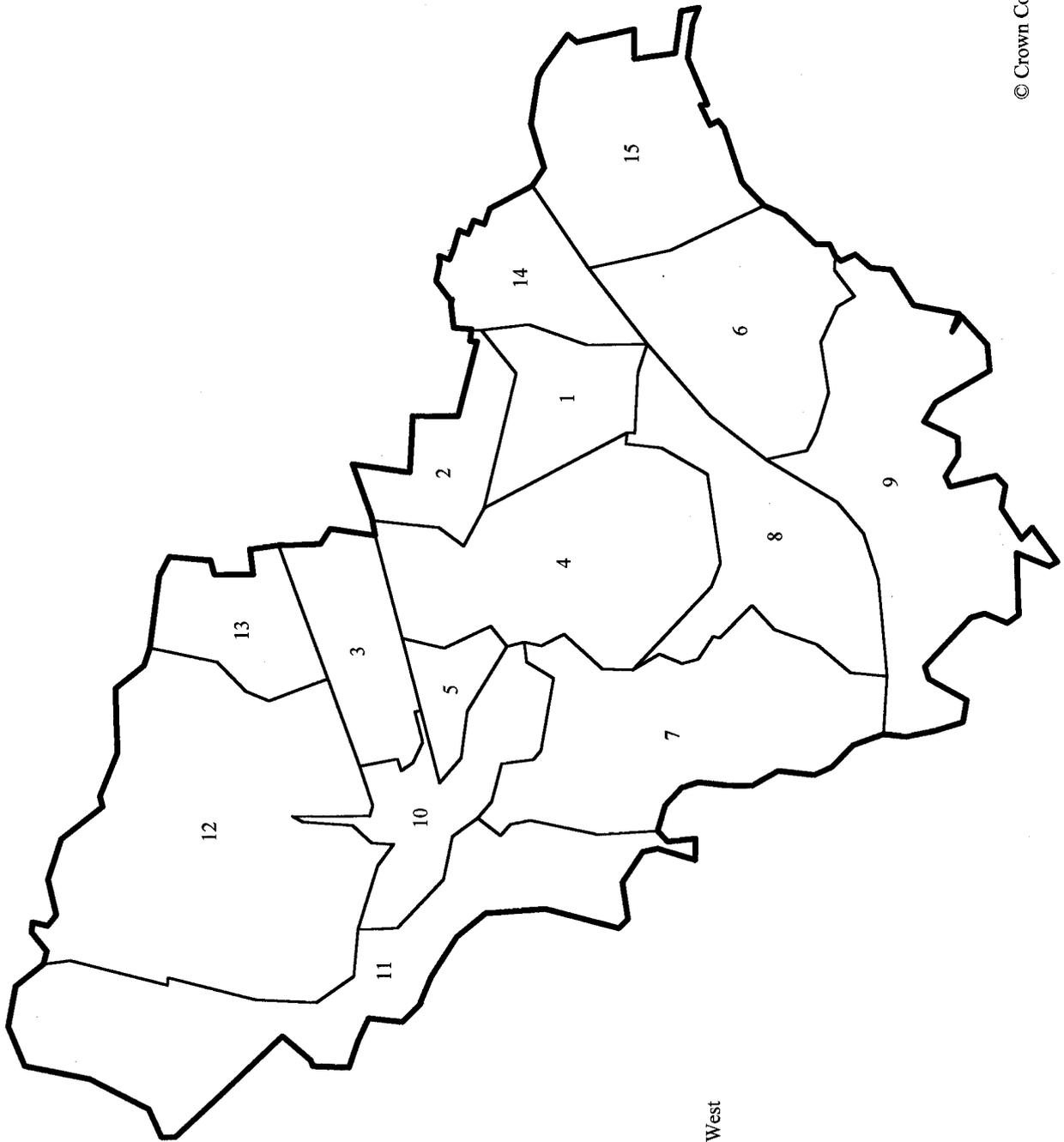
⁸ The electorate of the borough (February 1997) is 70,354. The Council presently has 40 councillors who are elected from 15 wards (Map 1 and Figure 2). Eleven wards are each represented by three councillors, three wards elect two councillors each, while the remaining ward, Ashford West, is a single-member ward. The whole council is elected together every four years.

⁹ Since the last electoral review two decades ago, there has been a very slight reduction in the size of the electorate (less than 1 per cent) excluding the Colnbrook area which was transferred to Berkshire in 1995. The Borough Council forecasts a further 2 per cent decrease in electorate by 2002, distributed throughout the borough.

¹⁰ At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,759 electors, which the Council forecasts would decrease to 1,725 by the year 2002

if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in three of the 15 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average. The worst imbalances are in Ashford East ward, where the number of electors per councillor is 15 per cent below the borough average and Shepperton Green ward, where the number of electors per councillor is 15 per cent above the average.

Map 1:
Existing Wards in Spelthorne



- Key to Wards
- 1 Ashford Common
 - 2 Ashford East
 - 3 Ashford North
 - 4 Ashford Town
 - 5 Ashford West
 - 6 Halliford and Sunbury West
 - 7 Laleham
 - 8 Shepperton Green
 - 9 Shepperton Town
 - 10 Staines East
 - 11 Staines Town
 - 12 Stanwell North
 - 13 Stanwell South
 - 14 Sunbury Common
 - 15 Sunbury East

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Figure 2:
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1997)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Ashford Common	3	4,823	1,608	-9	4,700	1,567	-9
2 Ashford East	3	4,508	1,503	-15	4,300	1,433	-17
3 Ashford North	2	3,354	1,677	-5	3,350	1,675	-3
4 Ashford Town	3	5,636	1,879	7	5,450	1,817	5
5 Ashford West	1	1,931	1,931	10	1,850	1,850	7
6 Halliford & Sunbury West	3	5,012	1,671	-5	5,050	1,683	-2
7 Laleham	3	5,888	1,963	12	5,500	1,833	6
8 Shepperton Green	2	4,029	2,015	15	4,050	2,025	17
9 Shepperton Town	3	5,303	1,768	1	5,000	1,667	-3
10 Staines East	3	5,583	1,861	6	5,850	1,950	13
11 Staines Town	3	5,363	1,788	2	4,900	1,633	-5
12 Stanwell North	3	4,994	1,665	-5	5,100	1,700	-1
13 Stanwell South	2	3,382	1,691	-4	3,650	1,825	6
14 Sunbury Common	3	5,564	1,855	5	5,600	1,867	8
15 Sunbury East	3	4,984	1,661	-6	4,650	1,550	-10
Totals	40	70,354	—	—	69,000	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,759	—	—	1,725	—

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1997, electors in Shepperton Green ward were relatively under-represented by 15 per cent, while electors in Ashford East ward were relatively over-represented by 15 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

¹¹ During Stage One we received a submission from Spelthorne Borough Council on electoral arrangements for the whole borough, and representations from the Spelthorne Borough Council Labour Group and the Spelthorne Constituency Labour Party. We also heard directly from the Hospital Alert Spelthorne Group and two local residents. In the light of these representations and the evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Spelthorne in Surrey*. We proposed that:

- (a) Spelthorne Borough Council should be served by 39 councillors, one fewer than at present;
- (b) there should be 13 wards, two fewer than at present;
- (c) the boundaries of all existing wards should be modified;
- (d) elections should continue to be held on a whole-council basis

Draft Recommendation

Spelthorne Borough Council should comprise 39 councillors serving 13 wards. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections.

¹² Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from three to zero. This degree of electoral equality was expected to continue over the five-year period to 2002.

¹³ Our draft recommendations are summarised at Appendix B.

4. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

14 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, eight representations were received. A list of respondents is available on request from the Commission.

Spelthorne Borough Council

15 The Borough Council accepted the basis of our draft recommendations but proposed a number of amendments, affecting nine of the 13 proposed wards, which it believed would create stronger boundaries and better reflect local community identities. It suggested that the boundary between the proposed Shepperton Town and Halliford & Sunbury West wards should follow the River Ash, which it considered to be a natural divide. It argued that using the river as a boundary (as it is at present) would better reflect local community identities. The Council also suggested that the boundary between the proposed Sunbury Common and Halliford & Sunbury West wards should follow the M3 motorway, rather than the A308 trunk road, as it believed the former to be more of a natural boundary.

16 As a consequence of the Council's proposal to use the M3 as a ward boundary, it recommended that the boundary between the proposed Sunbury Common and Ashford Common wards should follow along the centre of Cadbury Road (which is the present boundary) as it considered that road to be the natural divide between the wards. The Council also suggested amendments between the proposed Halliford & Sunbury West and Sunbury East wards which would include properties on both sides of Green Street in Sunbury East ward. It believed that this would better reflect community identities while securing reasonable electoral equality, as Green Street, it argued, is the natural boundary between the two wards. The Council proposed a change to the boundary between the proposed Ashford Common and Ashford East wards, which would include Coolgardie Road and St Paul's Close in the Ashford East ward. It argued that this area, together with Lyngrove Avenue and Sundown Road, forms a community supported by a Residents' Association and a Neighbourhood Watch scheme.

17 In addition to these amendments which would impact on the level of electoral equality in each affected ward, the Council recommended two further but relatively minor changes. First, it suggested that the proposed Staines ward be modified to include an area known as Staines Moor, using the line of Bone Head Ditch and the River Colne as the new boundary. The Council informed us that Staines Moor is historically connected with the town of Staines and that a Staines Councillor represents the borough on the Staines Moormasters Committee. Second, the Council pointed out an anomaly in our draft recommendations in respect of the north western boundary of the proposed Ashford Town ward. Our recommendations would produce a boundary line which placed a local fish farm and an adjoining property at the end of Queen's Walk in the Staines ward. It stated that this area shared links with neighbouring properties which are proposed to be included in the Ashford Town ward, and that the Council's original option, upon which the Commission based its proposals, had not placed the fish farm and adjoining property in Staines ward. This amendment, therefore, would reflect the Council's original intention.

Staines & Laleham Labour Party

18 The Staines & Laleham Labour Party considered our draft recommendations and were "supportive in the majority of" them. It also expressed a preference for elections by thirds, which it believed to be "far more democratic" than whole-council elections, and expressed its wish to see the proposals implemented as soon as possible.

Spelthorne Labour Party

19 The Spelthorne Labour Party did not offer an opinion on our draft recommendations, apart from expressing a preference for elections by thirds. It believed that "the yearly change would give greater democracy locally".

Member of Parliament

20 Mr David Wilshire (Member of Parliament for the Spelthorne constituency) asked us to consider points made by one of his constituents in a letter which he forwarded to the Commission. The local resident expressed concerns over aspects of the proposed boundaries between the Ashford Town, Ashford North & Stanwell South and Stanwell North wards, which he argued did not follow major topographical features. He noted that our draft recommendation for the northern boundary of the proposed Ashford Town ward did not follow the Staines/Waterloo railway line, and instead ran “down the middle of a number of roads in the [present] Ashford North ward”. He also observed that the remainder of the present Ashford North ward was to be joined with most of the present Stanwell South ward, areas which are currently “separated” by the A30 trunk road. In addition, the constituent commented that the boundary between the proposed Stanwell North and Ashford North & Stanwell South wards would “follow tortuous paths through residential estates, generally along the centre of roads and indeed between houses in order to try to meet the requisite numbers of voters in the given wards”. He further expressed a preference for whole-council elections.

affecting the fish farm and adjoining property at the end of Queen’s Walk. The suggested boundary amendment was the same as that detailed by the Council. Another local resident supported our proposal for a 39-member council size but opposed the continuation of whole-council elections. He wished to see our recommendations implemented “prior to the year 2003”.

Other Representations

21 We received a further four representations in response to our draft recommendations, two of which were from borough councillors. Councillor Smith-Ainsley put forward amendments to the boundaries of the proposed wards of Shepperton Town, Halliford & Sunbury West, Sunbury East, Sunbury Common and Ashford Common. The amendments he suggested were identical to those submitted by the Council, as described earlier. He also supported our recommendation to maintain whole-council elections every four years. Councillor Blampied opposed part of our suggested boundary between the proposed Riverside & Laleham and Laleham & Shepperton Green wards as he believed it would divide the village of Laleham. He put forward an amended boundary which would follow the water intake channel leading to the Queen Mary Reservoir, stating that it would “make [local] people feel that they are still part of the village in which they and their families have voted for many years”.

22 We also received a representation from a local resident regarding the boundary between the proposed Ashford Town and Staines wards

5. ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

25 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which provides for exactly the same number of electors per councillor in every ward of an authority. There must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach is that such flexibility must be kept to a minimum, consistent with the statutory criteria.

26 Our *Guidance* states that, while we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, such an objective should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of absolute electoral equality and only then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates. We will require particular justification for schemes which result in, or retain, an imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent and over should arise only in the most exceptional

circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

Electorate Projections

27 During Stage One Spelthorne Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2002, projecting an overall decrease in the electorate of some 2 per cent from 70,354 to 69,000 over the five-year period from 1997 to 2002. Changes in the electorate were forecast to be reasonably evenly spread throughout the borough with the electorate increasing in some wards but decreasing in others, with the net result being a marginal decrease in total electorate.

28 The electorate forecasts reflected assumptions as to rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries was obtained. We accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the Borough Council's forecast electorates, which were based on advice from Surrey County Council, we were content that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

29 During Stage One the Spelthorne Constituency Labour Party expressed concern over the projected decrease in population and electorate in the borough. However, we received no further comments on the Council's electorate projections during Stage Three, and remain satisfied that they provide the best estimates presently available.

Council Size

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

31 Spelthorne Borough Council is at present served by 40 councillors. During Stage One, the Borough Council did not propose any change to

council size, whilst the Spelthorne Borough Council Labour Group, the Spelthorne Constituency Labour Party and three other respondents proposed a council size of 39 members. In our draft recommendations report we considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received. We concluded that the statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would best be met by a council size of 39 members.

32 During Stage Three the Council agreed with our draft recommendations in respect of council size. Further support for a 39-member council size was received from a local resident. Having reconsidered our draft recommendations, and in light of the representations received, we remain of the view that 39 would be an appropriate council size for the Borough Council.

Electoral Arrangements

33 Having considered all the representations received during Stage Three of the review, we have reviewed our draft recommendations. The following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Ashford Common, Ashford East, Ashford Town, Ashford West and Sunbury Common wards;
- (b) Ashford North, Stanwell North and Stanwell South wards;
- (c) Sunbury East, Halliford & Sunbury West and Shepperton Town wards;
- (d) Staines East, Staines Town, Laleham and Shepperton Green wards.

Ashford Common, Ashford East, Ashford Town, Ashford West and Sunbury Common wards

34 The wards of Ashford Common and Ashford East are both relatively over-represented at present (by 9 per cent and 15 per cent respectively), while the wards of Ashford Town, Ashford West and Sunbury Common are relatively under-represented (by 7 per cent, 10 per cent and 5 per cent respectively). Our draft recommendations would have provided for four three-member wards to cover the majority of this area (generally north of the A308) and part of the current Ashford North ward. The number of electors per councillor in the modified ward of Ashford East would have been 1

per cent below the borough average, whilst the number in the proposed wards of Ashford Common, Ashford Town and Sunbury Common would have been almost equal to the average.

35 In response to our draft proposals the Borough Council put forward a number of amendments to our proposed boundaries. The Council argued that the boundary between the Sunbury Common and Halliford & Sunbury West wards should follow the M3 motorway, which it considered to be more of a natural boundary than the A308 (Staines Road West). As a result, an area to the north of the M3 bordered by the A308, Windmill Road and the motorway, containing 737 electors, would be included in Sunbury Common ward. This proposed amendment to our draft recommendations was also put forward by Councillor Smith-Ainsley. Officers from the Commission have visited the area concerned, and we agree with the Council's assertion that the M3 is a distinct and natural boundary which separates these two areas.

36 This change, if made in isolation, would result in the number of electors per councillor being 13 per cent above the borough average in Sunbury Common ward. In order to improve the level of electoral equality, both the Borough Council and Councillor Smith-Ainsley suggested that the proposed boundary between the Sunbury Common and Ashford Common wards should run along the middle of Cadbury Road, which was seen as being the natural divide between the two areas. This amendment would result in 576 electors in the pocket of land bordered to the east by Cadbury Road, to the north by Feltham Hill Road and to the south by Staines Road West being transferred from the proposed Sunbury Common ward into the proposed Ashford Common ward.

37 Whilst we do not consider Cadbury Road to be as distinct a boundary as the A308 or the M3, we agree with the Council and Councillor Smith-Ainsley that the modification proposed is necessary to accommodate the 'knock-on' effect of altering the southern boundary of Sunbury Common ward to follow the M3. In conclusion, the two changes suggested would result in the number of electors per councillor in Sunbury Common ward being 3 per cent above the average (6 per cent above in 2002).

38 Under this arrangement, electoral equality would slightly deteriorate in relation to our draft recommendations, but we believe it to be justified in this case by the strength of the argument that the M3 is a more distinct and identifiable boundary. In

the light of the representations we have received, and with officers from the Commission having visited the area, we wish to put forward the above amendments to our proposed Sunbury Common ward, as shown in the map at the back of this report. Our final recommendation for the boundaries of Sunbury Common ward would, in fact, retain the present ward.

39 The Borough Council also put forward an amendment to the proposed boundary between Ashford Common and Ashford East wards, which was to include the whole of Coolgardie Road and the neighbouring St Paul's Close in Ashford East ward. The Council informed us that the residents in these roads, together with those of Lyngrove Avenue and Sundown Road, form a community which is linked by a Residents' Association and a Neighbourhood Watch scheme. This proposed change would unite the residents in one ward (Ashford East) and would result in 84 electors being transferred. The cumulative effect on Ashford Common ward, of losing these 84 electors and gaining the 576 electors from Sunbury Common ward, would result in the number of electors per councillor being 9 per cent above the average (7 per cent above in 2002). In contrast, the number of electors per councillor in the modified Ashford East ward would remain at 1 per cent above the borough average (1 per cent below in 2002).

40 Whilst we acknowledge this deterioration in electoral equality from our draft recommendations for the proposed Ashford Common ward, we are aware that this would mainly occur as a result of the 'knock on' effect of the use of the M3 as the southern boundary of Sunbury Common ward, as described earlier. In the light of the submissions received from the Council and Councillor Smith-Ainsley supporting these modifications on the basis of community identity, and officers from the Commission having viewed the area, we wish to put forward these modified boundaries for the proposed Ashford Common and Ashford East wards as our final recommendations, as shown in the map at the back of this report.

41 In response to our draft recommendation for the proposed Ashford Town ward we received two representations from local residents. The first pointed out an anomaly in our draft recommendations which placed the western boundary of the proposed Ashford Town ward in front of a fish farm and adjoining property at the end of Queen's Walk. This is discussed under the section on Staines later in this report.

42 The second representation from a local resident was forwarded to the Commission by Mr David Wilshire, Member of Parliament for Spelthorne. The resident opposed the proposed northern boundary of Ashford Town ward as it would be placed along roads north of the London/Staines railway line rather than remain on the railway line. This, he argued, would not follow a major topographical feature, and had been proposed "simply for the sake of change". Having reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of this representation, we remain of the view that realigning the boundary between the proposed Ashford Town and Ashford North & Stanwell South wards as per our draft recommendations would best meet our criteria.

43 If we were to leave the present ward boundary (along the railway line) in place, thus increasing the number of electors in the proposed Ashford North & Stanwell South ward, electoral equality would deteriorate to unacceptable levels: the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Ashford North & Stanwell South ward would be 10 per cent above the average initially, 16 per cent above by the year 2002. In the proposed Ashford Town ward the number of electors per councillor would be 11 per cent below the average initially, 12 per cent below in 2002. We believe that including electors from both sides of the railway line in the same ward, notwithstanding the concerns expressed by Mr Wilshire's constituent, is the most favourable option in this instant, given the improvements to electoral equality that would result.

44 With the implementation of our draft recommendations for Ashford Town ward (although with one minor boundary alteration described under the section on Staines) the number of electors per councillor would be almost equal to the borough average initially (2 per cent below in 2002). See the large map at the back of this report for further details.

Ashford North, Stanwell North and Stanwell South wards

45 These three wards, in the north of the borough, are all currently over-represented, Ashford North by 5 per cent, Stanwell North by 5 per cent and Stanwell South by 4 per cent (although this latter ward is forecast to be under-represented by 6 per cent by 2002 due to population growth in the area). Our draft recommendations proposed that the majority of this area be covered by two three-member wards as opposed to the present two two-

member wards and one three-member ward. This would provide for the number of electors per councillor in the proposed ward of Ashford North & Stanwell South being almost equal to the average (6 per cent above by 2002), whilst the proposed Stanwell North ward would vary by 1 per cent above the average (8 per cent by 2002).

46 Mr Wilshire's constituent, who as detailed above opposed the proposed northern boundary of Ashford Town ward, also opposed moving the ward boundary away from the A30 and consequently joining parts of Ashford and Stanwell in a single ward. However, as detailed in our *Draft Recommendations*, the Stanwell area as a whole warrants between four and five councillors, and in order to achieve good electoral equality whilst also taking into account the population growth expected in the area, moving away from the A30 as a ward boundary is necessary. Given the improvement in electoral equality that would result and in the absence of other views, we wish to confirm our draft recommendations for these three wards as final, subject to one minor boundary modification (affecting no electors) to the Stanwell North ward, detailed in the section on Staines below.

Sunbury East, Halliford & Sunbury West and Shepperton Town wards

47 The number of electors per councillor in these three present wards, which lie to the south of the M3 motorway, is 6 per cent below the average in Sunbury East ward, 5 per cent below the average in Halliford & Sunbury West ward and 1 per cent above the average in Shepperton Town ward. Our draft recommendations proposed that this area should continue to be served by three three-member wards, but additionally including an area to the north of the M3, currently in Sunbury Common ward, in the proposed Halliford & Sunbury West ward. The Council's Stage Three submission opposed the inclusion of the land to the north of the M3 in Halliford & Sunbury West ward, as detailed earlier in this report, stating that the M3 was a natural boundary between the two wards.

48 Additionally, the Council proposed two further amendments to the proposed Halliford & Sunbury West ward, which were supported by Councillor Smith-Ainsley. First, it argued that the south-western boundary of the ward should follow the River Ash, as this "is a natural boundary" between the Upper Halliford and Shepperton areas. This change would affect 106 electors. Officers from the Commission have visited the area and concur with

the Council's assertion that there is a distinct boundary between these two communities, which is further emphasised by the Upper Halliford By-Pass, and that this modification would better reflect community identities.

49 The level of electoral equality in Shepperton Town ward would slightly deteriorate (compared to our draft recommendations) to 2 per cent below the average (6 per cent below in 2002) as a result of this modification. However, we believe this to be justified in view of the natural division between the two areas and the artificiality of the boundary put forward in the draft recommendations. Our final recommendation therefore is that the present three-member Shepperton Town ward remain unaltered, with the River Ash forming its north-eastern boundary.

50 The Council also proposed modifications to the boundary between the proposed Halliford & Sunbury West and Sunbury East wards, to incorporate the properties on Green Street in Sunbury East, as it considered Green Street to be the natural boundary between the two wards. This proposal was partly based on electoral equality considerations, as the M3 was being put forward by the Council as Halliford & Sunbury West ward's northern boundary (as discussed earlier in relation to Sunbury Common ward). The proposal would include all properties in Green Street and the flats fronting it, but not any properties in side roads such as Bridgefoot, and would involve transferring 199 electors into Sunbury East ward.

51 The number of electors per councillor in the revised Halliford & Sunbury West ward would be 9 per cent below the average, improving to 4 per cent below in 2002. In Sunbury East ward, the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent below, 9 per cent below in 2002. We consider that, in this instance, the arguments put forward in favour of these boundary amendments, based on acknowledging the M3 as a strong boundary and having regard to community identities, justify the marginally higher levels of electoral inequality. We therefore put forward these amended wards, as shown in the large map and on Map A1, as our final recommendations.

Staines East, Staines Town, Laleham and Shepperton Green wards

52 These four wards are situated in the south and west of the borough and presently return 11 councillors between them. The number of electors per councillor is 6 per cent above the average in the current Staines East ward, 2 per cent above the

average in Staines Town ward, 12 per cent above the average in Laleham ward and 15 per cent above the average in Shepperton Green ward. Our draft recommendations proposed four new three-member wards covering the majority of this area, which would have resulted in the number of electors per councillor in each proposed ward being within 2 per cent of the borough average.

53 The Borough Council submitted two modifications to the boundary of the proposed Staines ward. First, it proposed to modify the boundary to include an area known as Staines Moor (currently part of the Stanwell North ward) in Staines ward. The Council proposed that the amended boundary should follow the line of Bone Head Ditch and the River Colne. Second, it pointed out an anomaly in our draft recommendations which had placed the eastern boundary of Staines ward in front of a fish farm and adjoining property at the end of Queen's Walk, Ashford. The Council confirmed that the option contained in its Stage One submission had placed the boundary behind this property, thus intending to include the electors within the proposed Ashford Town ward. One local resident also contacted us directly to point out this anomaly. We agree with the Council's view that the correct boundary between the proposed Staines ward and Ashford Town ward should run behind the fish farm.

54 No further submissions were received in relation to the proposed Staines and Staines South wards. As both the Council's modifications to the proposed boundary of Staines ward would effectively be simply 'tidying up' the boundaries, we accept its proposed modifications. We therefore put forward a final recommendation for Staines ward as modified by the Borough Council, and confirm our draft recommendation for Staines South ward as final. The proposed boundaries of both wards are shown on the large map at the back of this report.

55 In respect of the proposed wards of Riverside & Laleham and Laleham & Shepperton Green, we received a representation from Councillor Blampied. He opposed the proposed boundary between the two wards as he believed it would divide the village of Laleham and break local ties. He proposed a modified boundary which would follow the water intake channel leading to the Queen Mary Reservoir. Officers from the Commission have visited the village of Laleham and surveyed the area where Councillor Blampied's amended boundary would cross the Staines Road, and we agree that his suggestion would better reflect local community identities. Furthermore, this modification would

provide for an effective and convenient boundary, as it would coincide with the northern boundary of the village as indicated by the signpost located on the Staines Road.

56 This modification would result in 184 electors being transferred from the proposed Riverside & Laleham ward into the proposed Laleham & Shepperton Green ward. As a result of this modification the number of electors per councillor in Riverside & Laleham ward would be 2 per cent below the average for the borough (7 per cent below in 2002), whilst in Laleham & Shepperton Green ward it would be 4 per cent above the borough average (4 per cent above in 2002). We are of the view that the impact upon electoral equality in comparison with our draft recommendations is justified in this instance, given the better reflection of community identity and the better boundary that would result. We wish to confirm the modified boundary between these two wards (as shown on the large map at the back of this report) as our final recommendation.

57 In addition, we wish to put forward an amendment to the proposed ward name for Riverside & Laleham. As the boundary modification described above would result in the whole of the village of Laleham being included in the proposed Laleham & Shepperton Green ward, the reference to Laleham in the 'Riverside & Laleham' ward would become superfluous. We are therefore recommending that the proposed ward comprising part of the current Laleham ward and part of the current Staines Town ward should be named 'Riverside' ward.

Electoral Cycle

58 In our draft recommendations report we proposed that the present system of whole-council elections should continue. During Stage Three, the Borough Council, Councillor Smith-Ainsley and one local resident expressed their support for this proposal. However, the Spelthorne Labour Party, the Staines & Laleham Labour Party and one local resident proposed to change to elections by thirds. Whilst we recognise that there is some support for a change to the current electoral cycle, we do not consider that the level of support is strong enough to merit such a change at this stage. In view of the Borough Council's support for whole-council elections and given the lack of demonstrated widespread support for a change to the electoral cycle, we wish to confirm our draft recommendation in favour of the continuation of whole-council elections as final.

Conclusions

59 Having considered all the evidence and representations we have received in response to our consultation report, we have decided to substantially endorse our draft recommendations, although we propose to make modifications to the boundaries of the following wards put forward in our draft recommendations report:

- (a) The boundary between Sunbury Common and Halliford & Sunbury West wards should be modified to follow along the centre of the M3 motorway;
- (b) The boundary between Sunbury Common and Ashford Common wards should be modified to run along the centre of Cadbury Road;
- (c) The boundary between Ashford Common and Ashford East wards should be modified to include the whole of Coolgardie Road and St Paul's Close in Ashford East ward;
- (d) The boundary between Halliford & Sunbury West and Shepperton Town wards should be modified to follow the course of the River Ash;
- (e) The boundary between Halliford & Sunbury West and Sunbury East wards should be modified to include the whole of Green Street in Sunbury East ward;

- (f) The boundary between Staines and Stanwell North wards should be modified to include Staines Moor in Staines ward;
- (g) The boundary between Staines and Ashford Town wards should be modified to include the fish farm and adjoining property at the end of Queen's Walk in Ashford Town ward;
- (h) The boundary between the proposed Riverside & Laleham and Laleham & Shepperton Green wards should be modified to follow along the course of the water intake channel leading to the Queen Mary reservoir.

Additionally, the ward name for the proposed Riverside & Laleham ward should be amended to be 'Riverside' ward.

60 We have concluded that there should be a council size of 39, one fewer than at present; that there should be 13 wards, two fewer than at present, that the boundaries of 13 of the 15 existing wards should be modified; and that elections should continue to take place every four years.

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

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

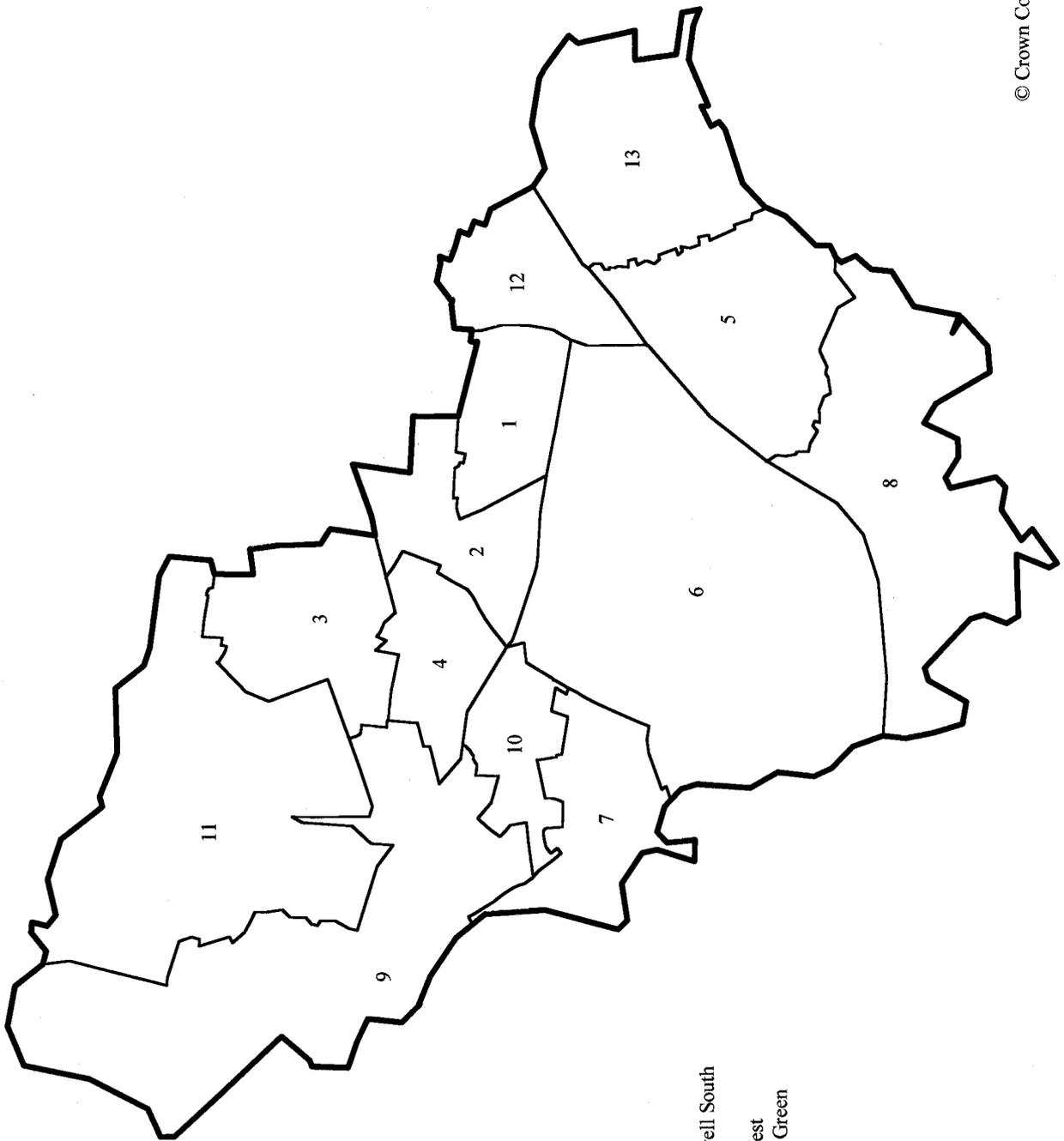
	1997 electorate		2002 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	40	39	40	39
Number of wards	15	13	15	13
Average number of electors per councillor	1,759	1,804	1,725	1,769
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	3	0	3	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	0	0	0	0

62 As shown in Figure 3, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the district average from three to zero. This degree of electoral equality is forecast to continue over the five-year period to 2002. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Spelthorne Borough Council should comprise 39 councillors serving 13 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 4, and illustrated in Map 2 and in the large map at the back of this report. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections.

Map 2:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Spelthorne



- Key to Wards
- 1 Ashford Common
 - 2 Ashford East
 - 3 Ashford North and Stanwell South
 - 4 Ashford Town
 - 5 Halliford and Sunbury West
 - 6 Laleham and Shepperton Green
 - 7 Riverside
 - 8 Shepperton Town
 - 9 Staines
 - 10 Staines South
 - 11 Stanwell North
 - 12 Sunbury Common
 - 13 Sunbury East

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Figure 4:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Spelthorne

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1997)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Ashford Common	3	5,895	1,965	9	5,693	1,898	7
2 Ashford East	3	5,455	1,818	1	5,274	1,758	-1
3 Ashford North & Stanwell South	3	5,411	1,804	0	5,610	1,870	6
4 Ashford Town	3	5,397	1,799	0	5,220	1,740	-2
5 Halliford & Sunbury West	3	4,934	1,645	-9	5,077	1,692	-4
6 Laleham & Shepperton Green	3	5,655	1,885	4	5,504	1,835	4
7 Riverside	3	5,326	1,775	-2	4,946	1,649	-7
8 Shepperton Town	3	5,303	1,768	-2	5,000	1,667	-6
9 Staines	3	5,412	1,804	0	5,230	1,743	-1
10 Staines South	3	5,366	1,789	-1	5,280	1,760	-1
11 Stanwell North	3	5,453	1,818	1	5,710	1,903	8
12 Sunbury Common	3	5,564	1,855	3	5,600	1,867	6
13 Sunbury East	3	5,183	1,728	-4	4,856	1,619	-9
Totals	39	70,354	—	—	69,000	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,804	—	—	1,769	—

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

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

6. NEXT STEPS

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

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

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

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

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for Spelthorne: Detailed Mapping

Map A1 illustrates the proposed boundary changes between the Halliford & Sunbury West and Sunbury East wards.

The **large map** inserted at the back of the report illustrates the Commission's proposed warding arrangements for Spelthorne, and indicates the area shown in more detail in Map A1.

APPENDIX B

Draft Recommendations for Spelthorne

Figure B1:

The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Constituent Areas

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1	Ashford Common	3	Ashford Common ward (part); Ashford East ward (part)
2	Ashford East	3	Ashford East ward (part); Ashford Town ward (part)
3	Ashford North & Stanwell South	3	Ashford North ward (part); Stanwell South ward (part)
4	Ashford Town	3	Ashford North ward (part); Ashford Town ward (part); Ashford West ward (part)
5	Halliford & Sunbury	3	Halliford & Sunbury West ward (part); Sunbury Common West ward (part)
6	Laleham & Shepperton Green	3	Ashford Common ward (part); Ashford Town ward (part); Laleham ward (part); Shepperton Green ward
7	Riverside & Laleham	3	Laleham ward (part); Staines Town ward (part)
8	Shepperton Town	3	Halliford & Sunbury West ward (part); Shepperton Town ward
9	Staines	3	Ashford West ward (part); Staines Town ward (part); Staines East ward (part)
10	Staines South	3	Laleham ward (part); Staines Town ward (part); Staines East ward (part)
11	Stanwell North	3	Stanwell North ward; Stanwell South ward (part)
12	Sunbury Common	3	Ashford East ward (part); Sunbury Common ward (part)
13	Sunbury East	3	Halliford & Sunbury West ward (part); Sunbury East ward

Note: Spelthorne borough is entirely unparished.

Figure B2:
The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Spelthorne

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1997)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Ashford Common	3	5,403	1,801	0	5,210	1,737	-2
2 Ashford East	3	5,371	1,790	-1	5,190	1,730	-2
3 Ashford North & Stanwell South	3	5,411	1,804	0	5,610	1,870	6
4 Ashford Town	3	5,397	1,799	0	5,220	1,740	-2
5 Halliford & Sunbury West	3	5,421	1,807	0	5,480	1,827	3
6 Laleham & Shepperton Green	3	5,471	1,824	1	5,320	1,773	0
7 Riverside & Laleham	3	5,510	1,837	2	5,130	1,710	-3
8 Shepperton Town	3	5,409	1,803	0	5,190	1,730	-2
9 Staines	3	5,412	1,804	0	5,230	1,743	-1
10 Staines South	3	5,366	1,789	-1	5,280	1,760	-1
11 Stanwell North	3	5,453	1,818	1	5,710	1,903	8
12 Sunbury Common	3	5,403	1,801	0	5,430	1,810	2
13 Sunbury East	3	5,327	1,776	-2	5,000	1,667	-6
Totals	39	70,354	—	—	69,000	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,804	—	—	1,769	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Spelthorne 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.

