

# Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Sunderland

*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 Sunderland 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 Sunderland:

- **in 12 of the 25 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10% from the average for the city, and six wards vary by more than 20% from the average;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10% from the average in 11 wards and by more than 20% in seven wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 89–90) are that:

- **Sunderland City Council should have 75 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 25 wards, as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 24 of the existing wards should be modified, and one ward should retain its existing boundaries.**

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

- **In 22 of the proposed 25 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10% from the city average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 10% from the average for the city by 2006.**

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  
Sunderland 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	Barnes	3	Part of Pallion ward; part of St Michael's ward; part of Thorney Close ward; part of Thornholme ward	2
2	Castle	3	Part of Castletown ward; part of Town End Farm ward	1 and 2
3	Copt Hill	3	Warden Law parish; part of Hetton parish (the existing Hetton Downs parish ward); part of Eppleton ward; part of Shiney Row ward	1, 2 and 3
4	Doxford	3	Burdon parish; part of Ryhope ward; part of St Chad's ward; part of Silksworth ward	2 and 3
5	Fulwell	3	Part of Colliery ward; Fulwell ward	2
6	Hendon	3	Part of Central ward; part of Hendon ward; part of Thornholme ward	2
7	Hetton	3	<i>Unchanged</i> – part of Hetton parish (the existing Easington Lane, East Rainton & Moorsley and Hetton Le Hole parish wards)	3
8	Houghton	3	Part of Eppleton ward; Houghton ward; part of Shiney Row ward	1 and 3
9	Millfield	3	Part of Central ward; part of St Michael's ward; part of Thornholme ward	2
10	Pallion	3	Part of Central ward; part of Pallion ward; part of South Hylton ward	2
11	Redhill	3	Part of Castletown ward; part of Southwick ward; part of Town End Farm ward	1 and 2
12	Ryhope	3	Part of Hendon ward; part of Ryhope ward; part of St Michael's ward	2
13	St Anne's	3	Part of Grindon ward; part of South Hylton ward	1 and 2
14	St Chad's	3	Part of St Chad's ward; part of Silksworth ward	1 and 2
15	St Michael's	3	Part of Hendon ward; part of St Michael's ward; part of Thornholme ward	2
16	St Peter's	3	Part of St Peter's ward	2
17	Sandhill	3	Part of Grindon ward; part of St Chad's ward; part of Thorney Close ward	1 and 2
18	Shiney Row	3	Part of Shiney Row ward	1
19	Silksworth	3	Part of Ryhope ward; part of St Michael's ward; part of Silksworth ward; part of Thorney Close ward	2
20	Southwick	3	Part of Castletown ward; part of Colliery ward; part of St Peter's ward; part of Southwick ward	2

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Large map reference</b>
21	Washington Central	3	Part of Washington East ward; part of Washington South ward	1
22	Washington East	3	Part of Shiney Row ward; part of Washington East ward; part of Washington South ward	1
23	Washington North	3	Washington North ward; part of Washington West ward	1
24	Washington South	3	Part of Washington South ward; part of Washington West ward	1
25	Washington West	3	Part of Washington West ward	1

**Notes:**

- 1) *The district contains three civil parishes: Burdon, Hetton and Warden Law.*
- 2) *The wards on the above table are illustrated on Map 2 and the large maps.*
- 3) *We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors.*

Table 2: Draft recommendations for Sunderland

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Barnes	3	8,897	2,966	2	9,236	3,079	3
2 Castle	3	8,985	2,995	3	8,985	2,995	0
3 Copt Hill	3	9,707	3,236	11	9,753	3,251	9
4 Doxford	3	8,736	2,912	0	8,856	2,952	-1
5 Fulwell	3	9,159	3,053	5	9,159	3,053	2
6 Hendon	3	8,604	2,868	-2	8,684	2,895	-3
7 Hetton	3	8,885	2,962	1	9,005	3,002	1
8 Houghton	3	9,039	3,013	3	9,325	3,108	4
9 Millfield	3	8,187	2,729	-7	8,256	2,752	-8
10 Pallion	3	8,351	2,784	-5	8,399	2,800	-6
11 Redhill	3	9,028	3,009	3	9,028	3,009	1
12 Ryhope	3	7,688	2,563	-12	8,918	2,973	0
13 St Anne's	3	7,728	2,576	-12	8,604	2,868	-4
14 St Chad's	3	8,531	2,844	-3	8,287	2,762	-7
15 St Michael's	3	8,077	2,692	-8	8,873	2,958	-1
16 St Peter's	3	8,773	2,924	0	8,817	2,939	-2
17 Sandhill	3	8,866	2,955	1	8,610	2,870	-4
18 Shiney Row	3	9,233	3,078	5	9,831	3,277	10
19 Silksworth	3	8,798	2,933	0	8,798	2,933	-2
20 Southwick	3	9,018	3,006	3	9,180	3,060	3
21 Washington Central	3	9,404	3,135	7	9,476	3,159	6
22 Washington East	3	8,739	2,913	0	8,973	2,991	0
23 Washington North	3	9,135	3,045	4	9,135	3,045	2
24 Washington South	3	8,305	2,768	-5	8,455	2,818	-6
25 Washington West	3	9,229	3,076	5	9,229	3,076	3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>219,102</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>223,872</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,921</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,985</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on Sunderland City 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 city. 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 city of Sunderland, on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the five metropolitan districts in Tyne and Wear as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. The programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to finish in 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Sunderland. Sunderland's last review was carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission, which reported to the Secretary of State in October 1979 (Report No. 359).

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 Sunderland 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 city.

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

7 We are not prescriptive on council size. However, we believe that any proposals relating to council size, whether these are for an increase, a reduction or no change, should be supported by evidence and argumentation. Given the stage now reached in the introduction of new political management structures under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, it is important that whatever council size interested parties may propose to us they can demonstrate that their proposals have been fully thought through, and have been developed in the context of a review of internal political management and the role of councillors in the new structure. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified. In particular, we do not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, or that changes should be made to the size of 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 who can be returned from each metropolitan city ward. However, the figure must be divisible by three. In practice, all metropolitan city 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 Sunderland City Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Northumbria Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Durham Association of Local Councils, parish and town councils in the city, Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the city, Members of the European Parliament for the North East Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Sunderland City 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 it 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 city of Sunderland is the largest in the north-east region, and shares borders with the metropolitan boroughs of South Tyneside and Gateshead to the north, and the county of Durham to the south. The city comprises a mixture of settlements, including the core metropolitan area straddling the River Wear in the east of the authority, the former new town of Washington to the west, and the more rural towns of Hetton and Houghton in the south.

15 Since 1975 there has been an increase in electorate of just under 3%, from 212,985 to the current electorate of 219,102. The electorate is forecast to increase further, to 223,872, by 2006. The Council presently has 75 members who are elected from 25 wards, all of which are three-member wards. The city contains three civil parishes: Burdon, Hetton and Warden Law.

16 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,921 electors, which the City Council forecasts will increase to 2,985 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 12 of the 25 wards varies by more than 10% from the city average. The worst imbalance is in Washington South ward, where each councillor represents 63% more electors than the city 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 city 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 Sunderland*

Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Castletown	3	7,843	2,614	-11	7,843	2,614	-12
2 Central	3	8,002	2,667	-9	8,082	2,694	-10
3 Colliery	3	7,112	2,371	-19	7,082	2,361	-21
4 Eppleton	3	9,753	3,251	11	9,799	3,266	9
5 Fulwell	3	8,317	2,772	-5	8,317	2,772	-7
6 Grindon	3	7,214	2,405	-18	7,630	2,543	-15
7 Hendon	3	8,163	2,721	-7	8,223	2,741	-8
8 Hetton	3	8,891	2,964	1	9,011	3,004	1
9 Houghton	3	8,031	2,677	-8	8,317	2,772	-7
10 Pallion	3	8,463	2,821	-3	8,463	2,821	-5
11 Ryhope	3	10,711	3,570	22	11,941	3,980	33
12 St Chad's	3	8,261	2,754	-6	8,261	2,754	-8
13 St Michael's	3	8,690	2,897	-1	9,150	3,050	2
14 St Peter's	3	8,317	2,772	-5	8,577	2,859	-4
15 Shiney Row	3	10,995	3,665	25	11,593	3,864	29
16 Silksworth	3	9,684	3,228	10	9,804	3,268	9
17 South Hylton	3	7,493	2,498	-15	7,977	2,659	-11
18 Southwick	3	6,559	2,186	-25	6,535	2,178	-27
19 Thorney Close	3	7,684	2,561	-12	7,428	2,476	-17
20 Thornholme	3	8,129	2,710	-7	8,593	2,864	-4
21 Town End Farm	3	6,817	2,272	-22	6,817	2,272	-24
22 Washington East	3	11,338	3,779	29	11,586	3,862	29
23 Washington North	3	8,915	2,972	2	8,915	2,972	0
24 Washington South	3	14,271	4,757	63	14,479	4,826	62
25 Washington West	3	9,449	3,150	8	9,449	3,150	6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>219,102</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>223,872</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,921</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,985</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Sunderland City 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 city. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Southwick ward were relatively over-represented by 25%, while electors in Washington South ward were relatively under-represented by 63%. 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 Sunderland City Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

19 During this initial stage of the review, officers from The Boundary Committee visited the area and met officers and members from the City Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 11 representations during Stage One, including a city-wide scheme from the City Council, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the City Council.

#### Sunderland Borough Council

20 The City Council proposed retaining the existing council size of 75, and respecting the significant geographic boundaries of the River Wear and the A19 trunk road around the city. The Council conducted a thorough public consultation before submitting its proposals to us. Its scheme achieved a good level of electoral equality, with no ward forecast to vary by more than 10% from the city average by 2006.

#### The Liberal Democrat Group on the Council

21 The Liberal Democrat Group on the Council supported the City Council's scheme, with one minor amendment to the eastern boundary of Barnes ward. It also proposed renaming Washington East ward as Washington Wear ward.

#### Political parties

22 Sunderland North Constituency Labour Party made proposals regarding the wards to the north of the river and east of the A19, and two wards to the south of the river. Most of these proposals were similar to the City Council's scheme. Sunderland South Constituency Conservative Association made proposals regarding the 11 wards to the south of the River Wear and east of the A19, which, it claimed, 'strived to keep communities together as far as possible'. Ryhope Labour Party supported the City Council's proposals for Ryhope ward, subject to a boundary amendment to retain Tunstall Bank Estate in Ryhope ward. Houghton and Washington East Conservative Association supported the City Council's proposals for the Washington wards but argued that the Council's proposals for Houghton and Copt Hill wards were divisive towards the village of Newbottle. It further suggested that these wards be renamed Houghton-le-Spring West and Houghton-le-Spring East.

#### Other representations

23 Grindon Village Residents' Association opposed the renaming of Grindon ward as Sandhill ward. St Peter's Riverside Forum stated it had no strong objections to the Council's proposals. Councillor Donnelly made comments regarding the accuracy of the City Council's proposals for Silksworth ward, claiming that the properties on a number of roads cited in its proposals had been demolished. Councillor Dent supported the City Council's proposals for the whole of the city, but suggested that St Michael's ward be renamed Backhouse ward. A local resident of Newbottle argued that the village had no connection with Eppleton and looked more towards Houghton for its services.



## 4 Analysis and draft recommendations

**24 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Sunderland 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.**

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

26 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.

27 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.

28 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 identities 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

29 Since 1975 there has been an increase of just under 3% in the electorate of the city of Sunderland. The City Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 2%, from 219,102 to 223,872, over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in Ryhope ward, although a significant amount is also expected in Shiney Row, South Hylton and Grindon wards. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the City Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

30 We know that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having considered the City Council's figures, accept that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

## Council size

31 Sunderland City Council presently has 75 members. The City Council proposed retaining the existing council size, arguing that the success of the current council size since the modernisation in May 2002 was justification for the retention of 75 councillors. It also compared Sunderland's councillor:elector ratio with other similarly sized councils. After considering the argumentation provided in its original submission, the Committee requested further more detailed justification as to the exact workings of the political management structure in Sunderland and why a 75-member council would work more effectively than other council sizes.

32 The Council subsequently provided further evidence as to why retaining the current council size was its preferred option, detailing the roles of councillors, committee and partnership body structures and attendance, and therefore their workload. It considered the 'three main areas of demand on councillors – that arising from staffing the new structure, a representational role on behalf of both the Council and a particular ward and its constituents and that part to be played as a member of a political group'. It concluded that 'the existing 75 councillors was the most appropriate number to support the new political arrangements'.

33 We received one further comment regarding council size during Stage One. Sunderland North Constituency Labour Party supported the Council's proposal to retain the existing council size, stating, 'we have been convinced of the arguments put forward by the City Council that the new modernised structure of cabinet and scrutiny, together with the number of posts of responsibility, have been written with this number of elected members in mind'.

34 Having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the general consensus for retaining 75 councillors within the responses received, we conclude that the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 75 members.

## Electoral arrangements

35 In formulating our draft recommendations for Sunderland, we have noted and have had regard to the fact that the city contains two significant geographic barriers, the River Wear and the A19, as well as a large area of relatively rural land, a mixture of parished and unparished areas and a dispersed configuration of communities to the west of the A19, all of which inhibit the achievement of higher levels of electoral equality which might be expected in the more urban metropolitan districts. The submissions received during Stage One achieved some levels of consensus in utilising these major barriers as strong ward boundaries between areas, which the Committee believes would be in the best interests of the local community to retain. However, as detailed previously, the number of councillors representing each ward in metropolitan cities must be divisible by three and, as outlined in the *Guidance*, we do not propose putting forward wards which return more than three councillors, as we are of the view that numbers in excess of three could result in an unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate. We therefore believe that a uniform pattern of three-member wards in a metropolitan city area would facilitate effective and convenient local government. This approach has implications for the warding pattern within the city and the levels of electoral equality achieved and, in order to facilitate a uniform three-member ward scheme and bearing in mind parishing arrangements, it has been necessary to breach these significant barriers in two areas.

36 During Stage One we received a city-wide scheme from the City Council, and partial schemes from the Sunderland North Constituency Labour Party and Sunderland South Constituency Conservative Association. All proposals addressed the incorrect balance of representation between the four distinct areas in the city under the existing electoral arrangements, and attempted to address this by removing a ward from the north of the urban area and adding one to the Washington area. We recognise that this does improve the

allocation of councillors between the four distinct areas of the city and, consequently, the levels of electoral equality, and are content to adopt this proposal. Having considered the partial schemes received during Stage One, we note that the proposals received from the Sunderland North Constituency Labour Party were very similar to those of the City Council. However, those received from the Sunderland South Constituency Conservative Association, affecting the wards to the south of the River Wear in the urban area of the city, differed considerably from the City Council's scheme.

37 Having considered the two schemes for the south of the urban area, we recognise that they both have some merit. However, we note that the scheme proposed by the City Council achieves better levels of electoral equality than that proposed by the Sunderland South Constituency Conservative Association. We further note that the Council conducted thorough consultation before submitting its proposals to the Committee. Therefore, in view of the degree of consensus behind large elements of the City Council's proposals, and the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, we have based our recommendations on its scheme. We consider that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the other statutory criteria than the current arrangements or other schemes submitted at Stage One. However, having regard to local community identities and interests, we have decided to move away from the City Council's proposals in four areas: Barnes, Doxford, St Peter's and Washington. For city warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- a) Castletown, Colliery, Fulwell, St Peter's, Southwick and Town End Farm wards;
- b) Central, Hendon, St Michael's and Thornholme wards;
- c) Grindon, Pallion, South Hylton and Thorney Close wards;
- d) Ryhope, St Chad's and Silksworth wards;
- e) Eppleton, Hetton, Houghton and Shiney Row wards;
- f) Washington East, Washington North, Washington South and Washington West wards.

38 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.

## Castletown, Colliery, Fulwell, St Peter's, Southwick and Town End Farm wards

39 These six wards are situated in the north-east of the city, and are each represented by three councillors. Under the existing arrangements this area is notably over-represented, with the number of electors per councillor in Castletown, Colliery and Fulwell wards being 11%, 19% and 5% below the city average (12%, 21% and 7% below the city average by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in St Peter's, Southwick and Town End Farm wards is 5%, 25% and 22% below the city average (4%, 27% and 24% below the city average by 2006).

40 During Stage One, three representations were received in regard to these wards. The City Council recognised that this area as a whole is significantly over-represented under the existing arrangements, and therefore proposed to reduce the number of wards from six to five. It proposed transferring the area of Town End Farm ward to the west of Baxter Road and Blackwood Road into Castletown ward, and the area to the north and east of Bedale Crescent, currently in Castletown ward, into Town End Farm ward. The Council further proposed that Town End Farm ward and Castletown wards be renamed Redhill ward and Castle ward, respectively. The remainder of the proposed Castle ward would retain the existing Castletown ward's boundaries. The council further proposed that Redhill ward should also include the area to the north of Washington Road, Radlett Road and Redcar Road and to the west of Old Mill Road and Whitchurch Road, currently in Southwick ward.

41 The Council's revised Southwick ward would comprise the remainder of the existing ward and a substantial area of the existing Colliery ward, to the west of Newcastle Road and south of Wearmouth Drive. It further suggested that the area to the west of North Bridge Street, currently in St Peter's ward, be transferred into Southwick ward. The area to the east of Newcastle Road, currently in Colliery ward, would be transferred into Fulwell ward. The remainder of Fulwell and St Peter's wards' boundaries would be retained.

42 Under the City Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Castle, Fulwell and Redhill wards would be 3%, 5% and 3% above the city average initially (equal to, 2% above and 1% above the city average by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in St Peter's and Southwick wards would be equal to and 3% above the city average initially (1% above and equal to the city average by 2006).

43 Two further representations were received regarding these wards during Stage One. Sunderland North Constituency Labour Party (SNCLP) made proposals for affecting all six existing wards, agreeing with the Council in reducing the number of wards to five. Its proposals were similar to those of the Council, but minor amendments were proposed to the boundaries between Fulwell and St Peter's wards. The SNCLP proposed that part of the boundary between Fulwell ward and St Peter's ward be moved from Side Cliffe Road to Neale Street. The remainder of its proposals for these wards were the same as those of the Council. St Peter's Riverside Forum stated that it was 'not entirely happy with the changes' but that it had 'no strong objections' to the Council's proposals.

44 We have carefully considered all representations received regarding these wards during Stage One. We note that both proposals for warding arrangements received for this area suggested reducing the number of wards from six to five, and we intend adopting this proposal, as it provides for a better balance of representation across the city as a whole. We recognise the level of general consensus between the Council's proposals and those of the SNCLP, and intend adopting the Council's proposals for these wards as part of our draft recommendations, subject to one minor amendment. Officers from the Boundary Committee having visited the area, we were concerned that the area around Wearmouth Drive, to the south of Monkwearmouth Hospital, would have its access to the remainder of St Peter's ward restricted under the Council's proposals. We therefore propose transferring this area into Southwick ward, in order to improve that access and better reflect communities in the area.

45 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Castle, Fulwell and Redhill wards would be the same as under the Council's proposals. The number of electors per councillor in St Peter's and Southwick wards would be equal to and 3% above the city average initially (2% below and 3% above the city average by 2006).

## Central, Hendon, St Michael's and Thornholme wards

46 These four wards are situated in the east of the city, and are each represented by three councillors. Under the existing arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Central, Hendon, St Michael's and Thornholme wards is 9%, 7%, 1% and 7% below the city average respectively (10% below, 8% below, 2% above and 4% below the city average by 2006).

47 During Stage One, five representations were received in regard to these wards. The City Council proposed that the existing Hendon ward be extended to the north, to comprise areas from Central and Thornholme wards. That area to the east of Fawcett Street, Burdon Road and Ryhope Road, currently in Central and Thornholme wards, would be transferred into a revised Hendon ward. Ryhope Road would be the new western boundary of Hendon ward, thus transferring that area to its west, currently in Hendon ward, into a revised St Michael's ward. Finally, that area to the south of the rear of the properties on the south side of Sea View Street, currently in Hendon ward, would be transferred into a revised Ryhope ward.

48 Under the Council's proposals, that area of Central ward to the north and west of Northern Way, Lisburn Terrace, Neville Road and East Moor Road would be transferred into a revised Pallion ward. The remaining area of Central ward (not including that area transferred into Hendon ward, detailed previously) would comprise part of a new Millfield ward, which would also include that area of Thornholme ward to the west of Tunstall Road, north of Thornholme Road and Ranson Street and east of Hurstwood Road, Eden House Road and the footpath to Chester Road. That area to the east of Tunstall Road and Thornholme Road and to the west of Ryhope Road and Burdon Road, currently in Thornholme Road, would be transferred into the revised St Michael's ward, which would also comprise the area of Hendon ward to the west of Ryhope ward, detailed previously. That area to the south and west of Essen Way and Leechmere Road, currently in St Michael's ward, would be transferred into the Council's revised Silksworth ward, and that area to the west of Silksworth Lane and Durham Road, currently in St Michael's ward, would be transferred into the Council's proposed new Barnes ward. The remainder of the existing St Michael's ward would be combined with the areas of Thornholme and Hendon wards detailed previously, to form a revised St Michael's ward.

49 Under the City Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Hendon, Millfield and St Michael's wards would be 2%, 7% and 5% below the city average initially (3%, 4% and 1% below the city average by 2006).

50 Sunderland South Constituency Conservative Association made proposals regarding all wards in the south of the urban area of the city, to the east of the A19. It stated that its proposals 'reflect as best as possible existing public sentiment' and that 'while [it is] aware of the guiding principle of electoral equality, [it has] striven also to observe the concept of keeping communities together as far as possible'. It proposed transferring areas of Hendon and Thornholme wards into a revised Central ward. That area of Hendon ward to the east of Toward Road and the Sunderland–Middlesbrough railway line would be transferred into Central ward, along with that area of Thornholme Road to the north and east of Stockton Road, New Durham Road and Western Hill.

51 Sunderland South Conservative Association further proposed that the area of Thornholme ward to the south of Stockton Road, New Durham Road and Durham Road be transferred into a new St Aidan's ward, which would also comprise the remainder of the existing Hendon ward, and two areas of St Michael's ward, to the north of Queen Alexandra Road and to the north and east of Kitchener Terrace and Buttermere Street. In addition to those areas of Hendon and Thornholme wards detailed previously, the revised Central ward would comprise that area of the existing ward to the east of the cycle path which runs from Chester Road to the junction of Hylton Road, Timdon Street, Farrington Row and Silksworth Row, to the south of Silksworth Row, and to the east of the footpath which runs from Silksworth Row to the River Wear. The remainder of the existing Central ward would comprise part of a proposed new Millfield ward. The Association did not provide confirmed electorate figure for 2001, however, under its proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Central, Millfield, St Aidan's and St Michael's wards would be 8% below, 5% below, 4% below and 2% above the city average by 2006.

52 Sunderland North Constituency Labour Party (SNCLP) argued that the Council's proposals for the south of the city 'have not taken community identity into consideration'. It duly proposed revised warding arrangements for two wards, Central and Pallion. It proposed retaining the majority of the boundaries of the existing wards, making only two minor modifications. It proposed transferring that area of Thornholme ward to the east of Tatham Street into a revised Central ward, and renaming this ward Riverside ward. It further proposed transferring the area to the east of Holborn Road, currently in South Hylton ward, into Pallion ward and the area to the south of Hexham Road and north of The Broadway, currently in Pallion ward, into South Hylton ward. The SNCLP made no further proposals regarding other wards in the area.

53 Two further proposals were received regarding these wards. The Liberal Democrat Group on the Council suggested that the Council's proposed boundary between Barnes and Millfield

wards be moved from the middle of Hurstwood Road to the path further east. Councillor Garry Dent argued that the name St Michael's bears no relation to the geographic area which the revised ward would cover. He therefore argued that the ward be renamed Backhouse ward, in order to better reflect the community within the ward.

54 We have carefully considered all representations received regarding these wards during Stage One. We recognise that the achievement of high levels of electoral equality in this area is constrained due to the significant geographic boundaries referred to previously. Given the levels of consultation conducted by the Council in formulating its proposals and the general support received for them, we intend basing our draft recommendations on those proposals. We are not convinced that the alternative proposals received for these wards during Stage One strike a better balance between our statutory criteria than those of the Council. However, we intend departing from the Council's proposals for the boundary between the proposed Barnes, Millfield and St Michael's wards. Officers from the Committee having visited the area, we were concerned that the boundary running along Eden House Road, Hurstwood Road and Ranson Street did not best reflect the communities in the area, and we therefore propose to transfer these electors into Barnes ward, so that the boundary between this ward and Millfield ward would follow the length of the path to the east of these properties. Similarly, and to secure a more easily identifiable boundary, we propose continuing the boundary along the path to its intersection with Durham Road, thus transferring those properties between the path and Durham Road into Millfield ward from St Michael's ward. Although we recognise that the levels of electoral equality deteriorate slightly in Millfield and St Michael's wards, we believe that this is justifiable given the better reflection of community identity and the more easily identifiable boundaries achieved.

55 We note the proposal from a local councillor to rename St Michael's ward. However, given that the Council's proposals were widely consulted on and received broad support, we do not intend moving away from the Council's recommendation for renaming this ward, although we would welcome further views on this during Stage Three. Therefore, subject to the minor boundary amendment, we intend adopting the Council's proposals for these wards, as we believe they strike the best balance between our statutory criteria, and have received general support locally.

56 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Hendon ward would be the same as under the Council's proposals. The number of electors per councillor in Millfield and St Michael's wards would be 7% and 8% below the city average initially (8% and 1% below the city average by 2006).

## Grindon, Pallion, South Hylton and Thorney Close wards

57 These four wards are situated in the centre of the city, and are each represented by three councillors. Under the existing arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Grindon, Pallion, South Hylton and Thorney Close wards is 18%, 3%, 15% and 12% below the city average respectively (15%, 5%, 11% and 17% below the city average by 2006).

58 During Stage One, four representations were received in regard to these wards. The City Council proposed a new St Anne's ward, which would comprise the areas of Grindon ward to the north of Chester Road, and to the east of Grindon Lane, and that area to the south and west of Holborn Road, Hylton Road, Forest Road, Padgate Road, Fordfield Road, Saint Luke's Road and Keelman's Lane, currently in South Hylton ward. The remaining area of South Hylton ward would be transferred into a revised Pallion ward.

59 Under the Council's proposals, the remaining area of the existing Grindon ward, to the south of the Chester Road, would be transferred into a new Sandhill ward, along with that area of the existing Thorney Close ward to the south-west of Springwell Road and Durham Road. That area of Thorney Close ward to the north-east of Springwell Road would be transferred into a new

Barnes ward (which would also comprise areas of the existing Pallion, St Michael's and Thornholme wards) and that area of Thorney Close ward to the south-east of Durham Road would be transferred into a revised Silksworth ward, as detailed below.

60 Under the City Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Barnes, Pallion, St Anne's and Sandhill wards would be 2% above, 5% below, 12% below and 1% above the city average initially (1%, 6%, 4% and 4% below the city average by 2006).

61 Three further representations were received regarding these wards during Stage One. Sunderland South Constituency Conservative Association proposed revised warding arrangements for these wards. It also proposed a new St Anne's ward, comprising that area to the west of Priory Grove, Bancroft Terrace, Faraday Grove, Fourstones Road, Plantation Road and Victory Street, currently in Pallion ward, and that area of South Hylton ward to the north and east of Henley Road, Palgrove Road, Hylton Road, Grindon Lane and South View Road. Under the Conservative Association's proposals, the area of South Hylton ward to the south of this boundary would form part of a new Broadway ward, which would also include that area of the existing Grindon ward to the north of Goldsmith Road, Gravesend Road and Gleneagles Road. The area of Grindon ward to the south of these roads would be transferred into a new Sandhill ward, which would also comprise the majority of the existing Thorney Close ward, apart from that area of the ward to the north of Durham Road, which would be transferred into a new Barnes ward.

62 The Sunderland South Constituency Conservative Association's Barnes ward would also comprise that area of Pallion ward to the south of The Broadway and Chester Road, and those areas of Thornholme ward and St Michael's ward to the west of Silksworth Lane. As detailed earlier, the Association did not provide confirmed electorate figure for 2001, however, under its proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Barnes, Broadway, St Anne's and Sandhill wards would be 7%, 4%, 8% and 8% below the city average by 2006

63 As detailed previously, the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council proposed an amendment to the boundary between Barnes and Millfield wards. Grindon Village Residents Association opposed the Council's proposal to rename the ward as Sandhill ward, stating that it was 'proud of the estate and the name [Grindon]'.

64 We have carefully considered all representations received regarding these wards during Stage One. As detailed previously, we consider that the City Council's proposals for the south of the river strike the best balance between our statutory criteria and, given the levels of consultation undertaken, we intend basing our draft recommendations for these wards on them. As a consequence, while we acknowledge that some aspects of the proposals from Sunderland South Constituency Conservative Association have some merit, we are unable to adopt them. We note that there are elements of those proposals which, we consider, do not best reflect the communities, such as dividing the area around Gainsborough Road and Farm Avenue from the remainder of the proposed Broadway ward. As detailed earlier, we propose amending the boundary between Barnes, Millfield and St Michael's wards in order to better reflect the communities and improve access within the wards. We note the opposition from Grindon Village Residents Association to the removal of the Grindon name from the revised ward. However, given that the Council's proposals were widely consulted on and received broad support, we do not intend moving away from the Council's recommendation for renaming this ward, although we would welcome further views on this during Stage Three. We therefore propose adopting the Council's proposals for these wards as part of our draft recommendations, subject to the minor boundary amendment in Barnes ward, as we believe they strike the best balance between our statutory criteria.

65 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Pallion, St Anne's and Sandhill wards would be the same as under the Council's proposals. The number of electors per councillor in Barnes ward would be 2% above the city average initially (3% above by 2006).

## Ryhope, St Chad's and Silksworth wards

66 These three wards are situated in the south-east of the city, and are each represented by three councillors. Under the existing arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Ryhope, St Chad's and Silksworth wards is 22% above, 6% below and 10% above the city average respectively (33% above, 8% below and 9% above the city average by 2006).

67 During Stage One, four representations were received in regard to these wards. As detailed previously, the City Council proposed transferring an area of St Michael's ward into a revised Ryhope ward. Similarly, that area to the south of Sea View Street, currently in Hendon ward, would be transferred into Ryhope ward. It also proposed creating a new Doxford ward, which would encompass areas of Silksworth, St Chad's and Ryhope wards. The proposed northern boundary of the new Doxford ward would run east along City Way from the A19, before running north to the rear of the properties on Bowlynn Close and Noirmont Way to meet Silksworth Lane. It would then run east along field boundaries and the rear of the properties on Cambridge Road and Pembroke Avenue, and north to the rear of the properties on the east side of Park Avenue and to the rear of the properties to the north of Cherrywood Gardens. It would then run along Paddock Lane and encompass Bracknell Close before running east along Tunstall Bank and to the north of Withernsea Grove. The eastern boundary of the proposed Doxford ward would run south along the rear of the properties to the east of the Tunstall Bank Estate, before following the Burdon parish boundary to meet the city boundary.

68 The area to the north of Doxford ward's proposed northern boundary and to the west of Silksworth Lane and North Moor Lane would form a revised St Chad's ward, which would retain the rest of its existing boundaries. That area to the east of Silksworth Lane and North Moor Lane would form part of a revised Silksworth ward, which would also encompass areas of the existing Thorney Close and St Michael's wards, detailed earlier. Doxford ward's southern boundary would be formed by the A19 and city boundary.

69 Under the City Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Doxford, Ryhope, St Chad's and Silksworth wards would be 3% below, 12% below, 3% below and equal to the city average initially (4% below, equal to, 5% below and 2% below the city average by 2006).

70 Three further representations were received regarding these wards during Stage One. Sunderland South Constituency Conservative Association proposed alternative warding arrangements for these wards. As detailed previously, it proposed transferring an area of St Michael's ward into a revised Ryhope ward. It proposed retaining the majority of the remaining Ryhope ward boundaries, transferring only a small area around Moorside from Ryhope ward into St Chad's ward. It also proposed retaining the majority of the existing boundaries of Silksworth ward, only transferring the Gilley Law Estate from St Chad's ward into Silksworth ward and that area to the west of Doxford park and Woodland Road into the revised St Chad's ward. Under the Association's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Ryhope, St Chad's and Silksworth wards would be 4%, 3% and 3% above the city average by 2006.

71 Ryhope Labour Party stated that it supported the City Council's proposals for its ward, subject to one minor amendment. It proposed retaining the Tunstall Bank Estate in Ryhope ward, and transferring instead the area of Mill Hill, which will be subject to development by 2006, into Doxford ward. A local resident of Silksworth claimed that the Council's proposals were based on roads which had been demolished.

72 We have carefully considered all representations received regarding these wards during Stage One. As detailed previously, we intend basing our draft recommendations for the wards to the south of the river on the Council's proposals, as they were widely consulted on, received broad support and, in our view, provided the best balance between our statutory criteria. As a consequence, we are not able to adopt the proposals of Sunderland South Constituency Conservative Association. Although we recognise that the warding arrangements for these wards are not ideal, given the constraints of the geographic barriers and the dispersed communities, we believe that they strike the best balance between our statutory criteria. However, we propose one minor amendment to the proposed boundary between Doxford and St Chad's wards, transferring the culs-de-sac around Goldlynn Drive from the Council's proposed St Chad's ward into its proposed Doxford ward, in order to secure the more readily identifiable boundary of Silksworth Way. We also intend retaining the boundary of Burdon parish as the boundary between Doxford ward and Copt Hill ward, as we are reluctant to create two parish wards in Burdon unnecessarily, as detailed subsequently.

73 We note the proposals from Ryhope Labour Party to retain Tunstall Bank Estate in Ryhope ward and transfer the Mill Hill area into Doxford ward instead. However, we consider that the Tunstall Bank Estate benefits from better access and more community links with Doxford ward than the area around Mill Hill, and therefore do not intend adopting this proposal. Subject to the two amendments to the boundaries of Doxford ward detailed previously, we intend adopting the Council's proposals for these wards as part of our draft recommendations.

74 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Ryhope and Silksworth wards would be the same as under the Council's proposals. The number of electors per councillor in Doxford and St Chad's wards would be equal to and 3% below the city average initially (1% and 7% below the city average by 2006).

## Eppleton, Hetton, Houghton and Shiney Row wards

75 These four wards are situated in the south and south-west of the city, and are each represented by three councillors. Under the existing arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Eppleton, Hetton, Houghton and Shiney Row wards is 11% above, 1% above, 8% below and 25% above the city average (9% above, 1% above, 7% below and 29% above the city average by 2006).

76 During Stage One, three representations were received in regard to these wards. The City Council proposed retaining the existing Hetton ward, but proposed revised warding arrangements for Eppleton, Houghton and Shiney Row wards. It proposed transferring the area to the south of the disused railway, currently in Shiney Row ward, into Houghton ward, thus using the disused railway line as a boundary between the two wards. It further proposed transferring the more recently developed estate, to the north of Coaley Lane in Newbottle Village, from Eppleton ward into Houghton ward. The proposed boundary would therefore run along the rear of the properties on the north side of Churston Close, Bigbury Close and Honiton Close, before running south along the rear of the properties on the east side of Oakhampton Drive, Sparkwell Close, Lynton Court and Tavistock Court. It would then run east along Coaley Lane and south along Houghton Road to meet the existing boundary. That area to the east of this boundary, currently in Eppleton ward, would be combined with an area of the existing Shiney Row ward to create a new Copt Hill ward. The Council also proposed transferring the Houghtonside Estate from the existing Eppleton ward into Houghton ward. It further proposed moving the eastern boundary of the proposed Copt Hill ward to the A19, therefore splitting the parish of Burdon.

77 The proposed boundary between Copt Hill and Shiney Row wards would run west from the A19, along Herrington Road and skirting the borders of the fields, Herrington Colliery Miners' Welfare Ground and the Philadelphia Complex to the south of St Aidan's Lane, before running north along Raglan Row to meet Herrington Burn. It would then run south-west along Herrington

Burn, before turning south along the path to meet the disused railway line, which forms the proposed ward boundary with Houghton ward, detailed previously. That area to the north of this boundary would form the revised Shiney Row ward, less that area of the existing Shiney Row ward to the west of the River Wear (the Mount Pleasant area), which would be transferred into a revised Washington East ward, detailed below.

78 Under the City Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Copt Hill, Hetton, Houghton and Shiney Row wards would be 11%, 1%, 3% and 5% above the city average initially (9%, 1%, 4% and 10% above the city average by 2006).

79 Two further representations were received regarding these wards during Stage One. Houghton and Washington East Conservative Association agreed that the Mount Pleasant area should be transferred into a Washington ward, and that the Houghtonside Estate could be in either Houghton or Eppleton ward. It further proposed that Houghton and Eppleton wards should be renamed Houghton-le-Spring West ward and Houghton-le-Spring East ward, respectively. The Association also stated that the Council's proposal 'further splits the village of Newbottle'. A local resident of Newbottle village made a number of representations stating that Newbottle shares more community affinity with Houghton than Eppleton and therefore should be in Houghton ward.

80 We have carefully considered all representations received regarding these wards during Stage One. We note that the Council's proposal to breach the River Wear by transferring the Mount Pleasant area into Washington East ward was supported by Houghton and Washington Conservative Association, and recognise that this would address the levels of electoral inequality between the two areas. We are therefore content to adopt this proposal as part of our draft recommendations. Given the levels of public consultation conducted by the Council and the general support received for its proposals for these wards, we propose adopting them as part of our draft recommendations. While we acknowledge that the village of Newbottle is split between the Houghton and Copt Hill wards, officers from the Committee having visited the area, we noted that this division separates the older more established area of the village from the new estate, which is transferred into Houghton ward. We believe that this warding pattern strikes the best balance between our statutory criteria and are content to adopt it. Similarly, we note that there is no obvious opposition to the transferral of the Houghtonside Estate from the existing Eppleton ward into Houghton ward. However, we do not intend accepting the Council's proposal to divide the parish of Burdon between two wards, as we are unwilling to create two parish wards with so few electors and do not believe that this facilitates convenient and effective local government. We therefore propose retaining the existing parish boundary of Burdon parish as the boundary between Copt Hill ward and the proposed Doxford ward.

81 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Copt Hill, Shiney Row, Hetton and Houghton wards would be the same as under the Council's proposals.

## Washington East, Washington North, Washington South and Washington West wards

82 These four wards are situated in the north-west of the city, and are each represented by three councillors. Under the existing arrangements, this area is notably under-represented, with the number of electors per councillor in Washington East, Washington North, Washington South and Washington West being 29%, 2%, 63% and 8% above the city average (29% above, equal to, 62% above and 6% above the city average by 2006).

83 During Stage One, three representations were received in regard to these wards. The City Council addressed the existing electoral imbalance by proposing to increase the number of wards from four to five, and incorporate the Mount Pleasant area into the Washington East ward. The new ward would be named Washington Central ward and would comprise that area

bounded by the A1231 Sunderland Highway to the north, Northumberland Way to the east and south and the A182 Washington Highway to the west. The ward would also encompass a small area of Lambton Village, to the east of Hambleton Road and Malvern Road, currently in Washington South ward. That area to the east of Linburn and Rickleton Way, currently in Washington South ward, would be transferred into a revised Washington East ward under the Council's proposals. The Council also proposed transferring The Fairway, Foxtton Hall, Carnoustie, Longniddry and Dalmahoy from Washington West ward into a revised Washington North ward, and the area between the A1231 Sunderland Highway and Crowther Road would be transferred from Washington West ward into a revised Washington South ward.

84 Under the City Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Washington Central, Washington North and Washington West wards would be 3%, 4% and 5% above the city average initially (1%, 2% and 3% above the city average by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in Washington East and Washington South wards would be equal to and 1% below the city average, both initially and by 2006.

85 Two further representations were received regarding these wards during Stage One. The Liberal Democrat Group on the Council suggested that Washington East ward be renamed Washington Wear ward. Houghton and Washington East Conservative Association specifically supported the Council's proposal to transfer the Mount Pleasant area into a Washington ward, and also stated that 'the creation of a central ward is welcome and its boundaries are logical, except for the dissection of Lambton Village'. However, it also stated that it did not wish to submit any alternative proposals for Washington, and welcomed the retention of the name Washington East ward, rather than the ward being renamed Washington Wear.

86 We have carefully considered all representations received regarding these wards during Stage One. We recognise the general support received for the Council's proposals and intend basing our draft recommendations for these wards on them. We note that there is consensus on increasing the number of wards in this area from four to five, and concur that this provides a better balance of representation between this area and the remainder of the city. Although we intend recommending the breaching of the River Wear in Washington East ward in order to incorporate the Mount Pleasant area in Washington East ward, officers from the Committee having visited the area, we were of the opinion that this does not have a detrimental effect on the reflection of communities or the provision of convenient and effective local government. However, we share the concern of Houghton and Washington East Conservative Association that Lambton Village would be divided between Washington South and Washington Central wards under the Council's proposals. Although we believe that the best reflection of community identity would be achieved by retaining the entirety of Lambton Village in Washington South ward, which would also secure a more readily identifiable boundary, this would produce unacceptable levels of electoral equality. We are therefore amending the Council's proposed boundary between these two wards to transfer the properties on Caradoc Close, Chiltern Close and Cotswold Close into Washington Central ward, thus reuniting this area with the remainder of Lambton Village. Although we recognise that the levels of electoral equality deteriorate under our draft recommendations, we believe this is justifiable given the better reflection of communities in the area. In considering the issue of ward names for the Washington wards, we are content to accept the Council's proposals as they have received broad support and have been consulted on locally, although we welcome further representations regarding this during Stage Three. Subject to the one amendment to the boundary between Washington Central and Washington South wards, we are recommending the Council's proposals for these wards as part of our draft recommendations.

87 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Washington East, Washington North and Washington West wards would be the same as under the Council's proposals. The number of electors per councillor in Washington Central and Washington South wards would be 7% above and 5% below the city average initially (6% above and 6% below the city average by 2006).

## Electoral cycle

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

## Conclusions

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

- a council of 75 members should be retained;
- there should be 25 wards, as at present;
- the boundaries of 24 of the existing wards should be modified, and one ward should retain its existing boundaries.

90 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the City Council's proposals, but intend departing from them in the following areas:

- we propose amending the boundary between St Peter's ward and Southwick ward in order to improve access and better reflect the communities;
- we propose amending the boundary between Barnes, Millfield and St Michael's wards in order to better reflect communities;
- we propose retaining the parish boundaries of Burdon parish as the boundary between Copt Hill ward and Doxford ward, in order to avoid unnecessary parish warding and secure more convenient and effective local government;
- we propose modifying the boundary between Doxford and St Chad's ward, in order to better reflect communities;
- we propose amending the boundary between Washington Central and Washington West wards, in order to unite Lambton Village in one ward.

91 Table 5 shows how our draft recommendations will affect 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	75	75	75	75
Number of wards	25	25	25	25
Average number of electors per councillor	2,921	2,921	2,985	2,985
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	12	3	11	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	6	0	7	0

92 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for Sunderland City Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from 12 to three. By 2006 no ward is forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10%.

*Draft recommendation*

Sunderland City Council should comprise 75 councillors serving 25 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

93 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 city wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the city. However, our proposals for Sunderland do not entail dividing or further dividing any of its three parishes between city wards and we therefore do not intend to alter the electoral arrangements of those parishes.

*Map 2: Draft recommendations for Sunderland*

## 5 What happens next?

94 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Sunderland 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 City Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

95 Express your views by writing directly to us:

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

96 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 Sunderland: detailed mapping

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

**Map A1** illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the city 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 Sunderland.

*Map A1: Draft recommendations for Sunderland: 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](http://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: The Boundary Committee for England's compliance with Code criteria*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Compliance/departure</b>
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.