

Final recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Sunderland

Report to The Electoral Commission

October 2003

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Report 359

Contents

	Page
What is The Boundary Committee For England?	5
Summary	7
1 Introduction	11
2 Current electoral arrangements	13
3 Draft recommendations	17
4 Responses to consultation	19
5 Analysis and final recommendations	21
6 What happens next?	35
Appendices	
A Final recommendations for Sunderland: Detailed mapping	37
B Guide to interpreting the first draft of the electoral change Order	39
C First draft of the electoral change Order for Sunderland	41

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.

This report sets out our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the city of Sunderland.

Summary

We began a review of Sunderland's electoral arrangements on 14 May 2002. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 25 February 2003, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation. We now submit final recommendations to The Electoral Commission.

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

We found that the existing arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in 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%.**
- **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 final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 98–99) 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 forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 10% from the average for the city in 2006.**

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to The Electoral Commission, which will not make an Order implementing them before 2 December 2003. The information in the representations will be available for public access once the Order has been made.

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Table 1: Final recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Large map reference
1 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 Shiney Row 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
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

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Large map reference
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 city 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: Final 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	7,737	2,579	-12	8,613	2,871	-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	9,224	3,075	5	9,822	3,274	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
Totals	75	219,102	-	-	223,872	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,921	-	-	2,985	-

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. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

1 Introduction

1 This report contains our final recommendations for the electoral arrangements for the city of Sunderland. 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 undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which reported to the Secretary of State in October 1979 (Report no. 359).

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

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3692), i.e. the need to:
 - reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
 - secure effective and convenient local government; and
 - achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.
- the general duty set out in section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1996 and the statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality (Commission for Racial Equality, May 2002), i.e. to have due regard to:
 - eliminate unlawful racial discrimination;
 - promote equality of opportunity; and
 - promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

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

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

6 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so 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 the council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

8 Under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 there is no limit to the number of councillors that can be returned from each metropolitan 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 lead to an unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate and we have not, to date, prescribed any wards with more than three councillors.

9 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 14 May 2002, when we wrote to Sunderland City Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Northumbria Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Northumberland Association of Local Councils, parish councils in the 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 the City Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 16 September 2002. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

10 Stage Three began on 25 February 2003 with the publication of the report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Sunderland*, and ended on 22 April 2003. During this period comments were sought from the public and any other interested parties on the preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four the draft recommendations were reconsidered in the light of the Stage Three consultation and we now publish the final recommendations.

2 Current electoral arrangements

11 The 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.

12 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.

13 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.

14 To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward (the councillor:elector ratio) varies from the 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 3: Existing electoral arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 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
Totals	75	219,102	-	-	223,872	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,921	-	-	2,985	-

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 Draft recommendations

15 During Stage One 11 representations were received, including a city-wide scheme from Sunderland City Council, and representations from the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council, Sunderland North Constituency Labour Party, Sunderland South Constituency Conservative Association, Grindon Village Residents' Association, two city councillors and a local resident. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Sunderland*.

16 Our draft recommendations were based on the City Council's proposals, which achieved improvements in electoral equality. We proposed that:

- Sunderland City Council should be served by 75 councillors, as at present;
- the boundaries of 24 of the existing wards should be modified, while one ward should retain its existing boundaries.

Draft recommendation

Sunderland City Council should comprise 75 councillors, serving 25 wards.

17 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in only three of the 12 wards varying by more than 10% from the city average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 10% from the average in 2006.

4 Responses to consultation

18 During the consultation on the draft recommendations report, nine representations were received. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Sunderland City Council.

Sunderland City Council

19 The Council offered full support for our draft recommendations.

Political Parties

20 Sunderland North Constituency Labour Party offered full support for our draft recommendations for the north of the city. However, it argued that its Stage One proposals for Central and Pallion wards had not been given full consideration and proposed that we look again at our recommendations for these wards. Sunderland South Conservative Association broadly accepted our draft recommendations for the city. However, it queried the Council's electorate forecasts for developments in Hendon and St Michael's wards, offering counter proposals affecting these wards and Ryhope and Millfield wards. St Chad's ward Labour Party offered full support for our draft recommendations.

Other representations

21 A further five representations were received in response to our draft recommendations. Councillor Anderson, member for Central ward, opposed our draft recommendations for Hendon and Millfield wards, requesting that we review our recommendations for these wards, but offering no specific alternative. Councillor Hollern, also member for Central ward, proposed that we amend our proposed boundary between Millfield and Pallion wards. Councillor Watson, member for South Hylton ward, offered general support for our draft recommendations. However, he further proposed that Pallion ward be renamed Havelock ward.

22 A local resident of Shiney Row ward argued that her property, immediately to the west of the A19, be transferred to St Anne's ward, as access is gained through St Anne's ward and all services are used in this ward. A local resident of the village of Newbottle opposed our draft recommendations to divide the village between Copt Hill and Houghton wards. She reiterated her Stage One proposal to unite the village in Houghton ward.

5 Analysis and final recommendations

23 As described earlier, our prime objective 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'.

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

25 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.

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

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

Electorate forecasts

28 Since 1975 there has been an increase of just under 3% in the electorate of the city of Sunderland. At Stage One 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 expected in the Grindon, Shiney Row and South Hylton wards. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard unitary development plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Having accepted that this is an inexact science and, having considered the forecast electorates, we stated in our draft recommendations report that we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

29 During Stage Three, Sunderland South Conservative Association queried the Council's electorate forecasts for Hendon, Ryhope and St Michael's wards. It argued that the number of electors likely to move into these wards has been 'considerably underestimated in the Council's original proposals'. It also provided a list of developments it considered would be inhabited by 2006, which the Council had not considered.

30 We duly addressed the Association's concerns to the City Council. As detailed previously, we rely on the Council to provide its best estimate when forecasting electorate. The Council has considered the Association's queries, but has confirmed that it stands by its original 2006 electorate forecasts. It stated, in reference to the developments in Hendon ward, that 'there will be no completions before 2006'. It also confirmed that the other developments cited by the Association had been included in the Council's original forecasts.

31 In the light of this information from the Council regarding the electorate forecasts, we are content that its original figures provide the best estimate of electorate in Sunderland by 2006, and have based our final recommendations on them.

Council size

32 Sunderland City Council presently has 75 members. During Stage One there was consensus from the Council and the Sunderland North Constituency Labour Party to retain the existing council size. After requesting further information from the Council regarding 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, and having taken other factors such as the size and distribution of electorate into consideration, we concluded that the best balance between our statutory criteria would result under a council of 75 members.

33 We received no further comments on council size during Stage Three, and intend confirming our draft recommendation for 75 members representing Sunderland as final.

Electoral arrangements

34 In formulating our draft recommendations for Sunderland, we noted and 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 believed 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 would 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.

35 We based our draft recommendations on the Council's Stage One proposals, as we believed that they struck the best balance between our statutory criteria. However, we proposed our own amendments to the Council's scheme in four areas, in order to improve community identity and because of parishing arrangements.

36 During Stage Three we received significant levels of general support for our draft recommendations, with no major areas of contention. The draft recommendations have been reviewed in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. Having considered all representations received during this period, we intend confirming our draft recommendations as final, subject to a minor modification to the boundary between St Anne's

and Shiney Row wards, which has no effect on the levels of electoral equality in either ward. For city warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- i. Castleton, Colliery, Fulwell, St Peter's, Southwick and Town End Farm wards;
- ii. Central, Hendon, St Michael's and Thornholme wards;
- iii. Grindon, Pallion, South Hylton and Thorney Close wards;
- iv. Ryhope, St Chad's and Silksworth wards;
- v. Eppleton, Hetton, Houghton and Shiney Row wards;
- vi. Washington East, Washington North, Washington South and Washington West wards.

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

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

38 These six wards are situated in the north-east of the city, and are each represented by three councillors. Under the existing arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Castleton, Colliery and Fulwell wards is 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).

39 At 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 a new Redhill ward, comprising areas of Castletown, Southwick and Town End Farm wards. The remainder of the existing Castletown ward would form its proposed Castle ward, along with part of Town End Farm ward.

40 The Council's revised Southwick ward would comprise an area of the existing Southwick ward and a substantial area of Colliery ward. The Council further suggested that an area of St Peter's ward be transferred into Southwick ward. Part of Colliery ward would be transferred into Fulwell ward. The remainder of Fulwell and St Peter's wards' boundaries would be retained.

41 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% 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).

42 Two further representations were received regarding these wards during Stage One. Sunderland North Constituency Labour Party (SNCLP) made proposals 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, however minor amendments were proposed to the boundaries between Fulwell and St Peter's wards.

43 Having carefully considered all representations received regarding these wards during Stage One, we noted that both proposals for warding arrangements received for this area suggested reducing the number of wards from six to five, and we adopted this proposal, as it provided for a better balance of representation across the city as a whole. Recognising the level of general consensus between the Council's proposals and those of the SNCLP, we adopted the Council's proposals for these wards as part of our draft recommendations, subject to one minor amendment. 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 and therefore proposed transferring this area into Southwick ward, in order to improve that access and better reflect communities in the area.

44 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).

45 We received two representations regarding these wards during Stage Three. The Council and SNCLP offered full support for our draft recommendations. We therefore propose confirming our draft recommendations for these five wards as final.

46 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Castle, Fulwell, Redhill, St Peter's and Southwick wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large maps.

Central, Hendon, St Michael's and Thornholme wards

47 These four wards are situated in the east of the city, and are each represented by three councillors. 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).

48 At 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. 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. A small area in the south of Hendon ward would be transferred into a revised Ryhope ward.

49 Under the Council's proposals, a revised Pallion ward would also comprise an area in the west of Central ward. The remaining area of Central ward would comprise part of a new Millfield ward, which would also include an area of Thornholme ward. An area of Thornholme ward would be transferred into the revised St Michael's ward. 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.

50 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).

51 Sunderland South 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'. Under its proposals, the number of electors per councillor in its proposed 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. However, it made no further proposals regarding the consequential effects on the surrounding wards in the area.

53 Two further proposals were received regarding these wards. The Liberal Democrat Group on the Council requested 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 Having carefully considered all representations received regarding these wards during Stage One, we recognised that the achievement of high levels of electoral equality in this area is constrained due to the significant geographic boundaries previously referred to. Given the levels of consultation conducted by the Council in formulating its proposals and the general support received for them, we based our draft recommendations on its proposals. We were not convinced that the alternative proposals received for these wards during Stage One struck a better balance between our statutory criteria than those of the Council. However, we did depart 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, considered 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 transferred 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 continued 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. We acknowledged that the levels of electoral equality deteriorate slightly in Millfield and St Michael's wards. However, we stated that we were of the opinion that this was justifiable given the better reflection of community identity and the more easily identifiable boundaries achieved.

55 We noted 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 did not move away from the Council's recommendation for renaming this ward. Therefore, subject to the minor boundary amendment, we adopted the Council's proposals for these wards, as we believed that they struck the best balance between our statutory criteria, and 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).

57 During Stage Three, five representations were received regarding these wards. The Council offered its full support for our draft recommendations. Sunderland North Constituency Labour Party argued that its Stage One proposals for Central and Pallion wards had not been taken into sufficient consideration, and requested that we review our proposals for these wards. However, no further proposals were made in regard to the consequential effects on the surrounding wards. Sunderland South Conservative Association proposed amendments to the boundaries of Hendon, Millfield, Ryhope and St Michael's wards. The Association opposed the use of Ryhope Road as the boundary between Hendon and St Michael's wards, arguing that the Sunderland–Middlesbrough railway line would 'more accurately reflect the divide between Hendon... and Ashbrooke/Grangetown [St Michael's ward]'. It proposed further amendments to Ryhope and Millfield wards, in order to balance the electorate.

58 Councillor Anderson, member for Central ward, opposed our recommendations to divide Central ward between the revised Hendon and Millfield wards. However, he offered no specific alternatives. Councillor Hollern, also member for Central ward, proposed that we revert to the existing boundary between Central and Pallion wards, in order to transfer those properties on Northern Way, Lisburn Terrace, Neville Road and East Moor Road into Millfield ward. He stated that 'after discussion with residents in that area, they would prefer to be in Millfield ward'.

59 Having carefully considered those representations received regarding these wards during Stage Three, we are content to confirm our draft recommendations as final. We note and have considered the opposition received for our proposals from Sunderland North Constituency Labour Party. However, we cannot revert to its Stage One proposal, as this would have consequential warding effects on the surrounding wards, which have not been given consideration to by the Party. Similarly, although we note Councillor Anderson's opposition to our proposals for the existing Central ward, we note that no specific counter-proposals were received. After considering Councillor Hollern's proposed amendments to the boundary between Millfield and Pallion wards, we do not consider that he provided sufficient evidence to justify departing from our draft recommendations for this area. We consider that the Council's Stage One proposal, which we adopted as part of our draft recommendations, strikes a better balance between our statutory criteria, and we note that it was consulted on locally.

60 Having considered Sunderland South Conservative Association's proposed amendments, we note that they would involve the transferral of a large number of electors between four wards, in order to facilitate moving the boundary between Hendon and St Michael's wards. We note that the only justification received was regarding this proposed boundary amendment. Whilst we accept that the railway could act as an adequate boundary, we note that it is passable on two roads. We consider that no evidence was provided to justify all other boundary amendments for these wards and do not intend departing from our draft recommendations for these wards.

61 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Hendon, Millfield and St Michael's wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large maps.

Grindon, Pallion, South Hylton and Thorney Close wards

62 These four wards are situated in the centre of the city and are each represented by three councillors. 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).

63 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 areas of Grindon ward and an area currently in South Hylton ward. The remaining area of South Hylton ward would be transferred into a revised Pallion ward, along with an area from Central ward and the majority of the existing Pallion ward.

64 Under the Council's proposals, an area of the existing Grindon ward would be transferred into a new Sandhill ward, along with an area of the existing Sandhill and Thorney Close wards. Another area of Thorney Close ward would be transferred into a new Barnes ward, which would also comprise areas of the existing Pallion, St Michael's and Thornholme wards. Under the City Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Barnes, Pallion, St Anne's and Sandhill 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).

65 Three further representations were received regarding these wards during Stage One. Sunderland South Constituency Conservative Association proposed revised warding arrangements for these wards. It proposed new Barnes, Broadway, St Anne's wards and Sandhill wards. 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.

66 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]'.

67 Having carefully considered all representations received regarding these wards during Stage One, we concluded that the City Council's proposals for the south of the river struck the best balance between our statutory criteria and, given the levels of consultation undertaken, we based our draft recommendations for these wards on them. As a consequence, while we acknowledged that some aspects of the proposals from Sunderland South Constituency Conservative Association had some merit, we were unable to adopt them. As detailed earlier, we proposed 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 noted the opposition from Grindon Village Residents Association to the removal of the Grindon name from the revised ward. However, given the Council's proposals were widely consulted on and received broad support, we did not move away from the Council's recommendation for renaming this ward. We therefore adopted the Council's proposals for these wards as part of our draft recommendations, subject to the minor boundary amendment in Barnes ward, as we believed that they struck the best balance between our statutory criteria.

68 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).

69 During Stage Three, three representations were received in response to our draft recommendations for these wards. The City Council offered full support for our draft recommendations. Councillor Watson, member for South Hylton ward, generally supported our draft recommendations. However, he proposed renaming Pallion ward as Havelock ward, after General Havelock. A local resident of Shiney Row ward proposed that those properties immediately to the west of the A19 (Wood House, Garden House and Whiteheugh and Riverside Farm) be transferred into St Anne's ward, as their access is through St Anne's ward, all services are used in this ward and they have little affinity with the remainder of Shiney Row ward.

70 Having considered all representations received during Stage Three, we are content to confirm our draft recommendations for these wards as final, subject to the minor amendment to the boundary between Shiney Row and St Anne's ward. We agree that those properties detailed above share little affinity with the rest of Shiney Row ward. Although this amendment will breach the strong boundary of the A19, we are of the opinion that the reflection of community identity and the provision of convenient and effective local government will be improved by this amendment. This will have no effect on the levels of electoral equality in either St Anne's or Shiney Row wards. Having considered Councillor Watson's proposal to rename Pallion ward, we don't believe that sufficient evidence or local support exists to justify this amendment, and are content to retain the ward name of Pallion.

71 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Barnes, Pallion, St Anne's and Sandhill wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large maps.

Ryhope, St Chad's and Silksworth wards

72 These three wards are situated in the south-east of the city, and are each represented by three councillors. Ryhope ward comprises the parish of Burdon and an unparished area. 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).

73 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, with an area currently in Hendon ward. It also proposed creating a new Doxford ward, which would encompass areas of Silksworth, St Chad's and Ryhope wards.

74 The Council's revised St Chad's ward would contain an area from Silksworth ward, and 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. 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).

75 Three further representations were received regarding these wards during Stage One. Sunderland South Constituency Conservative Association proposed alternative warding arrangements for these wards, proposing revised Ryhope, St Chad's and Silksworth wards. 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.

76 Ryhope Labour Party stated 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.

77 Having carefully considered all representations received regarding these wards during Stage One, we based 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 a better balance between our statutory criteria. As a consequence, we did not adopt the proposals of Sunderland South Constituency Conservative Association. We acknowledged that the warding arrangements for these wards were not ideal. However, given the constraints of the geographic barriers and the dispersed communities, we were of the opinion that they struck the best balance between our statutory criteria. However, we proposed one minor amendment to the boundary between Doxford and St Chad's ward, 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 retained the boundary of Burdon parish as the boundary between Doxford ward and Copt Hill ward, as we were reluctant to create two parish wards in Burdon unnecessarily.

78 Having noted the proposals from Ryhope Labour Party to retain Tunstall Bank Estate in Ryhope ward and transfer the Mill Hill area into Doxford ward, we considered that the Tunstall Bank Estate benefits from better access and more community links with Doxford ward than the area around Mill Hill, and therefore did not adopt this proposal. Subject to the two amendments to the boundaries of Doxford ward detailed previously, we adopted the Council's proposals for these wards as part of our draft recommendations.

79 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).

80 During Stage Three, three representations were received in response to our draft recommendations for these wards. The City Council offered its full support. As detailed previously, Sunderland South Conservative Association proposed modifications to the boundary of Ryhope ward. St Chad's ward Labour Party offered full support for our draft recommendations. However, as stated, we do not intend adopting the Conservative

Association's amendments, as we do not believe that they have been sufficiently justified. We therefore propose confirming our draft recommendations for these wards as final.

81 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Doxford, Ryhope, St Chad's and Silksworth wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Doxford would contain the parish of Burdon. Our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large maps.

Eppleton, Hetton, Houghton and Shiney Row wards

82 These four wards are situated in the south and south-west of the city, and are each represented by three councillors. Eppleton ward contains the parish of Warden Law and the Hetton Downs parish ward of Hetton parish. Hetton ward comprises the Easington Lane, East Rainton & Moorsley and Hetton Le Hole parish wards of Hetton parish. 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 respectively (9% above, 1% above, 7% below and 29% above the city average by 2006).

83 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. An area 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. The remainder of the existing Shiney Row ward would comprise the revised Shiney Row ward.

84 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).

85 Two further representations were received regarding these wards during Stage One. Houghton and Washington East Conservative Association agreed that the Houghtonside Estate could be in either Houghton or Eppleton wards. 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.

86 Having carefully considered all representations received regarding these wards during Stage One, we noted 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 recognised that this would address the levels of electoral inequality between the two areas. We therefore adopted 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 adopted them as part of our draft recommendations. We acknowledged that the village of Newbottle is split between Copt Hill and Houghton wards but, 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 were of the opinion that this warding pattern struck the best balance between our statutory criteria and were content to adopt it. Similarly, we noted that there

was no obvious opposition to the transferral of the Houghtonside Estate from the existing Eppleton ward into Houghton ward. However, we did not accept the Council's proposals to divide the parish of Burdon between two wards, as we were unwilling to create two parish wards with so few electors and did not believe that this facilitates convenient and effective local government. We therefore retained the existing parish boundary of Burdon parish as the boundary between Copt Hill ward and the proposed Doxford ward.

87 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.

88 During Stage Three, three representations were received in response to our draft recommendations for these wards. As detailed previously, a local resident of Shiney Row ward proposed that her property and two other neighbouring properties be transferred into St Anne's ward, as access is gained from this ward. We have agreed that this minor modification would improve access and therefore provide for a better reflection of community identity, whilst not affecting electoral equality. One further representation was received, from a local resident of the village of Newbottle. She opposed the division of Newbottle and proposed that the village be united within Houghton ward. However, as addressed in our draft recommendations report, we do not consider this modification to strike a better balance between our statutory criteria than our draft recommendations. We further note that uniting the entirety of Newbottle within Houghton ward would result in the number of electors per councillor being 17% above the city average in Houghton ward. We consider this level of electoral imbalance too high to accept and consequently do not intend modifying our draft recommendations for this boundary. Therefore, subject to the minor amendment to the boundary of Shiney Row ward detailed above, we intend confirming our draft recommendations for these wards as final.

89 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Copt Hill, Hetton, Houghton and Shiney Row wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Copt Hill ward contains the parish of Warden Law and the Hetton Downs parish ward of Hetton parish. Hetton ward comprises the Easington Lane, East Rainton & Moorsley and Hetton Le Hole parish wards of Hetton parish. Our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large maps.

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

90 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 currently (29% above, equal to, 62% above and 6% above the city average by 2006).

91 During Stage One, three representations were received in regard to these wards. The City Council recognised 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, currently in Washington South ward. The Council proposed revised Washington North, South, East and West wards. 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.

92 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.

93 Having carefully considered all representations received regarding these wards during Stage One, we recognised the general support received for the Council's proposals and based our draft recommendations for these wards on them. We noted that there is consensus on increasing the number of wards in this area from five to six, and concurred that this would provide for a better balance of representation between this area and the remainder of the city. Although we recommended 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, were of the opinion that this did not have a detrimental effect on the reflection of community or the provision of convenient and effective local government. However, we shared 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 were of the opinion 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 have produced unacceptable levels of electoral equality of 12% from the average in both wards. We therefore amended the Council's proposed boundary between these two wards in order that the properties on Caradoc Close, Chiltern Close and Cotswold Close were transferred into Washington Central ward, thus reuniting this area with the remainder of Lambton Village. Although we recognised that the levels of electoral equality deteriorate under our draft recommendations, we were of the opinion that this was justifiable given the better reflection of communities in the area. In considering the issue of ward names for the Washington wards, we accepted the Council's proposals as they received broad support and had been consulted on locally. Subject to the one amendment to the boundary between Washington Central and Washington South wards, we recommended the Council's proposals for these wards as part of our draft recommendations.

94 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).

95 During Stage Three, one representation was received in response to our draft recommendations for these wards. The Council offered full support for our draft recommendations. We therefore propose confirming our draft recommendations for these wards as final.

96 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Washington East, Washington Central, Washington North, Washington South and Washington West wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large maps.

Electoral cycle

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

Conclusions

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

- we propose transferring three properties to the west of the A19 from Shiney Row ward into St Anne's ward, in order to better reflect communities and secure more convenient and effective local government.

99 We conclude that, in Sunderland:

- a council size from 75 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.

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

Table 4: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	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

101 As Table 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from 12 to three, with no wards varying by more than 20% from the city average. This level of electoral equality would improve further by 2006, with no wards varying by more than 10% from the average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the statutory criteria.

Final 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

102 When reviewing parish electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different city wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. 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: Final recommendations for Sunderland

6 What happens next?

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

104 It is now up to The Electoral Commission to decide whether to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 2 December 2003, and The Electoral Commission will normally consider all written representations made to them by that date. They particularly welcome any comments on the first draft of the Order, which will implement the new arrangements.

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

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

**Fax: 020 7271 0667
Email: implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk
(This address should only be used for this purpose.)**

Appendix A

Final recommendations for Sunderland: Detailed mapping

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for Sunderland.

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

The **large maps** illustrate the proposed warding arrangements for Sunderland.

Map A1: Final recommendations for Sunderland: Key map

Appendix B

Guide to interpreting the first draft of the Electoral Change Order

Preamble

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

Citation and Commencement

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

Interpretation

This defines terms that are used in the Statutory Instrument.

Wards of the City of Sunderland

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

Elections of the council of the City of Sunderland

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

Maps

This requires Sunderland City Council to make a print of the map available for public inspection.

Electoral Registers

This requires Sunderland City Council to adapt the electoral register to reflect the new wards.

Revocation

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

Explanatory Note

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

Appendix C

First Draft of the Electoral Change Order for Sunderland

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

2003 No.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT, ENGLAND

The City of Sunderland (Electoral Changes) Order 2003

Made - - - - *2003*

Coming into force in accordance with article 1(2)

Whereas the Boundary Committee for England(a), acting pursuant to section 15(4) of the Local Government Act 1992(b), has submitted to the Electoral Commission(c) recommendations dated October 2003 on its review of the city(d) of Sunderland.

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

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

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

Citation and commencement

1.—(1) This Order may be cited as the City of Sunderland (Electoral Changes) Order 2003.

(2) This Order shall come into force –

(a) for the purpose of proceedings preliminary or relating to any election to be held on the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2004, on the day after that on which it is made;

(a) The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, established by the Electoral Commission in accordance with section 14 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (c.41). The Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001 (S.I. 2001/3962) transferred to the Electoral Commission the functions of the Local Government Commission for England.

(b) 1992 c.19. This section has been amended by S.I. 2001/3962.

(c) The Electoral Commission was established by the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (c.41). The functions of the Secretary of State, under sections 13 to 15 and 17 of the Local Government Act 1992 (c.19), to the extent that they relate to electoral changes within the meaning of that Act, were transferred with modifications to the Electoral Commission on 1st April 2002 (S.I. 2001/3962).

(d) The metropolitan district of Sunderland has the status of a city.

(e) This section has been amended by S.I. 2001/3962 and also otherwise in ways not relevant to this Order.

(f) This section has been amended by S.I. 2001/3962.

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

Interpretation

2. In this Order –

“city” means the city of Sunderland;

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

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

- (a) the principal office of the Electoral Commission; and
(b) the offices of Sunderland City Council.

Wards of the city of Sunderland

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

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

(3) Each ward shall comprise the area designated on the map by reference to the name of the ward and demarcated by red lines; and the number of councillors to be elected for each ward shall be three.

(4) Where a boundary is shown on the map as running along a road, railway line, footway, watercourse or similar geographical feature, it shall be treated as running along the centre line of the feature.

Elections of the council of the city of Sunderland

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

(2) The councillors holding office for any ward of the city immediately before the fourth day after the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2004 shall retire on that date and the newly elected councillors for those wards shall come into office on that date.

(3) Of the councillors elected in 2004 one shall retire in 2006, one in 2007 and one in 2008.

(4) Of the councillors elected in 2004 –

(a) the first to retire shall, subject to paragraphs (6) and (7), be the councillor elected by the smallest number of votes; and

(b) the second to retire shall, subject to those paragraphs, be the councillor elected by the next smallest number of votes.

(5) In the case of an equality of votes between any persons elected which makes it uncertain which of them is to retire in any year, the person to retire in that year shall be determined by lot.

(6) If an election of councillors for any ward is not contested, the person to retire in each year shall be determined by lot.

(7) Where under this article any question is to be determined by lot, the lot shall be drawn at the next practicable meeting of the council after the question has arisen and the drawing shall be conducted under the direction of the person presiding at the meeting.

(a) See the City of Sunderland (Electoral Arrangements) Order 1980 (S.I. 1980/756).

(b) Article 4 provides for a single election of all the councillors and for reversion to the system of election by thirds, as established by section 7 of the Local Government Act 1972 (c.70).

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

Maps

5. Sunderland City Council shall make a print of the map marked “Map referred to in the City of Sunderland (Electoral Changes) Order 2003” available for inspection at its offices by any member of the public at any reasonable time.

Electoral registers

6. The Electoral Registration Officer(a) for the city shall make such rearrangement of, or adaptation of, the register of local government electors as may be necessary for the purposes of, and in consequence of, this Order.

Revocation

7. The City of Sunderland (Electoral Arrangements) Order 1980(b) is revoked, save for articles 8 and 9(7)

Sealed with the seal of the Electoral Commission on the day of 2003

Date

Chairman of the Commission

Date

Secretary to the Commission

SCHEDULE

article 3

NAMES OF WARDS

Barnes	Pallion	Shiney Row
Castle	Redhill	Silksworth
Copt Hill	Ryhope	Southwick
Doxford	St Anne's	Washington Central
Fulwell	St Chad's	Washington East
Hendon	St Michael's	Washington North
Hetton	St Peter's	Washington South
Houghton	Sandhill	Washington West
Millfield		

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

(b) S.I.1980/726

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Order)

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

The modifications are *indicate the modifications*.

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

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

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

Article 6 obliges the Electoral Registration Officer to make any necessary amendments to the electoral register to reflect the new electoral arrangements.

Article 7 revokes the City of Sunderland (Electoral Arrangements) Order 1980, with the exception of articles 8 and 9(7)

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