

LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT  
COMMISSION  
FOR ENGLAND

FINAL  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
ON THE FUTURE  
ELECTORAL  
ARRANGEMENTS FOR  
RICHMONDSHIRE  
IN NORTH  
YORKSHIRE

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

*November 1999*

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Richmondshire in North Yorkshire.

Members of the Commission are:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)

Professor Michael Clarke (Deputy Chairman)

Peter Brokenshire

Kru Desai

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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Richmond is inserted inside the back cover of the report.





## Local Government Commission for England

30 November 1999

Dear Secretary of State

On 3 November 1998 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Richmondshire under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in May 1999 and undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although a modification has been made (see paragraphs 139-140) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Richmondshire.

We recommend that Richmondshire District Council should be served by 34 councillors representing 24 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that the whole Council should continue to be elected together.

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

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

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT  
Chairman



# SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Richmondshire on 3 November 1998. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 25 May 1999, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

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

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

- **in 16 of the 26 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and 10 wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2003 electoral equality is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 17 wards, and by more than 20 per cent in 11 wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 139-140) are that:

- **Richmondshire District Council should have 34 councillors, the same as at present;**
- **there should be 24 wards, instead of the current 26;**
- **the boundaries of 24 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of two, and two wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place for the whole council every four years.**

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

- **In eight of the proposed 24 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by more than 10 per cent from the district average initially.**
- **Electoral equality is forecast to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in all but one ward expected to vary by less than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2003. Colburn ward would vary by 11 per cent.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Hunton and Richmond.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 11 January 2000:

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

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

<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
1 Addlebrough	1	Askrigg ward (the parishes of Askrigg, Bainbridge and Low Abbotside); Aysgarth ward (part – the parishes of Aysgarth and Thornton Rust)	Map 2
2 Barton	1	Barton ward (part – the parishes of Barton, Cleasby, Newton Morrell and Stapleton)	Map 2
3 Bolton Castle	1	Bolton Manor ward (part – the parishes of Castle Bolton with East & West Bolton, Preston-under-Scar, Redmire and Wensley); Aysgarth ward (part – Carperby-cum-Thoresby parish); Leyburn ward (part – Bellerby parish)	Map 2
4 Brompton-on-Swale & Scorton	2	Swaleside ward (part – the parishes of Brompton-on-Swale and Easby); Scorton ward (the parishes of Bolton-on-Swale, Ellerton-on-Swale, Scorton and Uckerby)	Map 2
5 Catterick	2	Catterick with Tunstall ward (part – Catterick parish)	Map 2
6 Colburn	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Colburn parish)	Map 2
7 Croft	1	Croft on Tees ward (the parishes of Croft-on-Tees, Dalton-on-Tees and Eryholme); St Michael with St Luke ward (part – North Cowton parish)	Map 2
8 Gilling West	1	St Agathas ward (part – the parishes of Aske and Gilling with Hartforth & Sedbury); Kirby Hill ward (part – the parishes of Gayles, Kirby Hill, Ravensworth and Whashton)	Map 2
9 Hawes & High Abbotside	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Hawes and High Abbotside)	Map 2
10 Hipswell	2	Hipswell ward (Hipswell parish); Swaleside ward (part – St Martin's parish)	Map 2
11 Hornby Castle	1	Lower Dale ward (part – Arrathorne and Hornby parishes, and part of Hunton parish); Catterick with Tunstall ward (part – the parishes of Appleton East & West, Brough with St Giles and Tunstall)	Maps 2 and A2
12 Leyburn	2	Leyburn ward (part – Leyburn parish); Urevale ward (part – Harmby parish)	Map 2

Figure 1 (continued):  
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
13 Lower Wensleydale	1	Urevale ward (part – the parishes of Akebar, Barden, Constable Burton, East Hauxwell, Finghall, Garriston, Hutton Hang, Spennithorne, Thornton Steward and West Hauxwell); Lower Dale ward (part – Patrick Brompton and Newton-le-Willows parishes)	Map 2
14 Melsonby	1	Barton ward (part – Manfield and Cliffe parishes); Stanwick ward (part – Aldbrough and Melsonby parishes)	Map 2
15 Middleham	1	Middleham & Coverdale ward (part – the parishes of Calderbergh with East Scafton, Coverham with Agglethorpe, East Witton Out, East Witton Town, Melmerby, Middleham and West Scafton)	Map 2
16 Middleton Tyas	1	St Michael with St Luke ward (part – the parishes of Middleton Tyas and Moulton); St Agathas ward (part – Skeeby parish)	Map 2
17 Newsham with Eppleby	1	Kirby Hill (part – the parishes of Caldwell, Dalton, East Layton, Forcett & Carkin, Newsham and West Layton); Stanwick ward (part – Eppleby and Stanwick St John parishes)	Map 2
18 Penhill	1	Aysgarth ward (part – the parishes of Bishopdale, Burton cum Walden, Newbiggin and Thoraby); Middleham & Coverdale ward (part – Carlton Highdale and Carlton Town parishes); Bolton Manor ward (part - West Witton parish)	Map 2
19 Reeth & Arkengarthdale	1	Reeth ward (part – the parishes of Arkengarthdale, Marrick and Reeth, Fremington & Healaugh); Lower Swaledale ward (part – the parishes of Marske and New Forest)	Map 2
20 Richmond Central	2	Richmond Central ward (part); Richmond East ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
21 Richmond East	2	Richmond East ward (part)	Map 2 and large map

*continued overleaf*

*Figure 1 (continued):  
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary*

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
22	Richmond West	2	Richmond West ward (part); Richmond Central ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
23	Scotton	2	Scotton ward (Scotton parish); Lower Dale ward (part – part of Hunton parish)	Maps 2 and A2
24	Swaledale	1	Grinton & Upper Swaledale ward (the parishes of Grinton, Melbecks and Muker); Reeth ward (part – Ellerton Abbey parish); Lower Swaledale ward (part – the parishes of Downholme, Hudswell, Stainton and Walburn)	Map 2

*Note: Map 2 and Appendix A, including the large map in the back of the report, illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.*

Figure 2:  
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Richmondshire

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Addlebrough	1	1,050	1,050	11	1,056	1,056	2
2 Barton	1	1,029	1,029	9	1,077	1,077	4
3 Bolton Castle	1	1,014	1,014	8	1,052	1,052	1
4 Brompton-on-Swale & Scorton	2	1,808	904	-4	2,189	1,095	6
5 Catterick	2	1,727	864	-8	2,090	1,045	1
6 Colburn	3	2,415	805	-15	2,775	925	-11
7 Croft	1	970	970	3	1,037	1,037	0
8 Gilling West	1	954	954	1	968	968	-7
9 Hawes & High Abbotside	1	1,060	1,060	12	1,057	1,057	2
10 Hipswell	2	1,464	732	-22	2,174	1,087	5
11 Hornby Castle	1	767	767	-19	1,069	1,069	3
12 Leyburn	2	1,791	896	-5	1,954	977	-6
13 Lower Wensleydale	1	1,005	1,005	7	1,031	1,031	-1
14 Melsonby	1	963	963	2	1,021	1,021	-2
15 Middleham	1	1,022	1,022	8	1,051	1,051	1
16 Middleton Tyas	1	1,027	1,027	9	1,056	1,056	2
17 Newsham with Eppleby	1	932	932	-1	948	948	-9
18 Penhill	1	995	995	6	1,020	1,020	-2
19 Reeth & Arkengarthdale	1	1,000	1,000	6	1,032	1,032	0
20 Richmond Central	2	2,144	1,072	14	2,222	1,111	7

*continued overleaf*

Figure 2 (continued):  
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Richmondshire

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
21 Richmond East	2	2,150	1,075	14	2,227	1,114	7
22 Richmond West	2	2,090	1,045	11	2,158	1,079	4
23 Scotton	2	1,718	859	-9	2,041	1,021	-2
24 Swaledale	1	952	952	1	959	959	-8
<b>Totals</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>32,047</b>	—	—	<b>35,264</b>	—	—
<b>Averages</b>	—	—	<b>943</b>	—	—	<b>1,037</b>	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on material provided by Richmondshire District 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 district. 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 on the electoral arrangements for the district of Richmondshire in North Yorkshire. We have now reviewed the districts in North Yorkshire (excluding York) as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all principal local authority areas in England. We expect to undertake a PER of York unitary authority in 2000/1.

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Richmondshire. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in July 1977 (Report No. 222). The electoral arrangements of North Yorkshire County Council were last reviewed in August 1984 (Report No. 477). We intend reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements in due course.

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

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

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the District Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also make recommendations on the electoral arrangements for parish and town councils in the district.

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

6 In our *Guidance*, we state that we wish wherever possible to build on schemes which have been prepared locally on the basis of careful and effective consultation. Local interests are normally in a better position to judge what council size and ward configuration are most likely to secure

effective and convenient local government in their areas, while allowing proper reflection of the identities and interests of local communities.

7 Second, the broad objective of PERs is then to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the district as a whole. For example, we will require particular justification for schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification

8 Third, we are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the general assumption that the existing council size already secures effective and convenient local government in that district but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. 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 a district's electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a district council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other districts.

9 In July 1998, the Government published a White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, i.e. in year one half of the district council would be elected, in year two half the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities.

<sup>10</sup> Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1998/99 PER programme, including the North Yorkshire districts, that until any direction is received from the Secretary of State, the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the March 1998 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State's intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas.

<sup>11</sup> This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 3 November 1998, when we wrote to Richmondshire District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified North Yorkshire County Council, North Yorkshire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Yorkshire Local Council's, parish and town councils in the district, the Member of Parliament and the Members of the European Parliament for the Yorkshire & Humber region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 8 February 1999. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

<sup>12</sup> Stage Three began on 25 May 1999 with the publication of our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Richmondshire in North Yorkshire*, and ended on 19 July 1999. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

## 2. CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

13 The district of Richmondshire in North Yorkshire, covers two of the best known Yorkshire dales, Wensleydale and Swaledale, and two-thirds of the district falls within the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The district contains the three main market towns of Richmond (the administrative centre), Leyburn and Hawes, which together represent over a third of the population, and Catterick – the largest British Army base in the world, where 16,000 soldiers and their dependents reside. Richmondshire is one of the most sparsely populated districts in the country with a population density of only 0.3 persons per hectare which, together with the rural topography of the district, has a significant influence on patterns of activity, settlement, communication and community identity. The district is completely parished and comprises 99 parishes.

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 district average in percentage terms. In the text which follows this calculation may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

15 The electorate of the district is 32,047 (February 1998). The Council currently has 34 members who are elected from 26 wards. Outside the three wards covering Richmond town, the wards are predominantly rural in nature. Twenty of the wards are each represented by a single councillor, four are two-member wards and two are three-member wards. The Council is elected as a whole every four years.

16 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in the district with around 12 per cent more electors since the last review. The most notable increases have been in Lower Dale, Richmond East and Scotton wards, with approximately 600, 500 and 800 more electors respectively.

17 At present, each councillor represents an average of 943 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,037 by 2003 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 16 of the 26 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average and in 10 wards by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Richmond Central ward where the councillor represents 66 per cent more electors than the district average.

Map 1:  
Existing Wards in Richmondshire

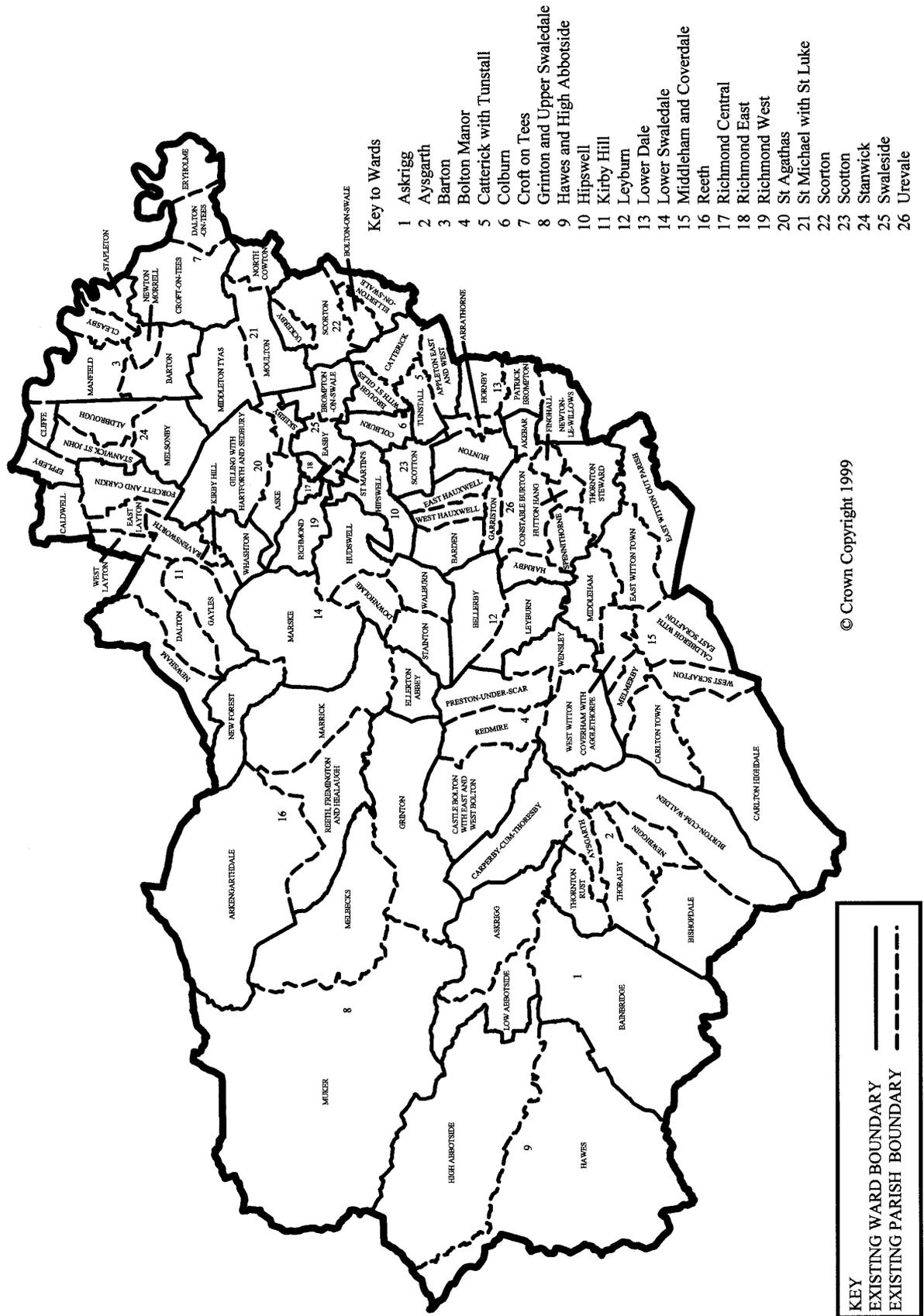


Figure 3:  
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Askrigg	1	801	801	-15	806	806	-22
2 Aysgarth	1	886	886	-6	902	902	-13
3 Barton	1	1,281	1,281	36	1,329	1,329	28
4 Bolton Manor	1	848	848	-10	878	878	-15
5 Catterick with Tunstall	2	2,085	1,043	11	2,752	1,376	33
6 Colburn	3	2,415	805	-15	2,775	925	-11
7 Croft on Tees	1	571	571	-39	590	590	-43
8 Grinton & Upper Swaledale	1	656	656	-30	663	663	-36
9 Hawes & High Abbotside	1	1,060	1,060	12	1,057	1,057	2
10 Hipswell	2	1,334	667	-29	2,041	1,021	-2
11 Kirby Hill	1	1,042	1,042	11	1,065	1,065	3
12 Leyburn	2	1,763	882	-6	1,932	966	-7
13 Lower Dale	1	1,010	1,010	7	1,020	1,020	-2
14 Lower Swaledale	1	381	381	-60	381	381	-63
15 Middleham & Coverdale	1	1,240	1,240	32	1,278	1,278	23
16 Reeth	1	915	915	-3	947	947	-9
17 Richmond Central	1	1,569	1,569	66	1,689	1,689	63
18 Richmond East	3	3,122	1,041	10	3,189	1,063	2
19 Richmond West	2	1,693	847	-10	1,729	865	-17
20 St Agathas	1	881	881	-7	890	890	-14
21 St Michael with St Luke	1	1,101	1,101	17	1,172	1,172	13

*continued overleaf*

Figure 3 (continued):  
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
22 Scorton	1	614	614	-35	783	783	-25
23 Scotton	1	1,490	1,490	58	1,813	1,813	75
24 Stanwick	1	999	999	6	1,061	1,061	2
25 Swaleside	1	1,324	1,324	40	1,539	1,539	48
26 Urevale	1	966	966	2	983	983	-5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>32,047</b>	—	—	<b>35,264</b>	—	—
<b>Averages</b>	—	—	<b>943</b>	—	—	<b>1,037</b>	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Richmondshire District 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 district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1998, electors in Lower Swaledale ward were substantially over-represented by 60 per cent, while electors in Richmond Central ward were substantially under-represented by 66 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

### 3. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

18 During Stage One we received 19 representations, including district-wide schemes from Richmondshire District Council and from Richmondshire District Labour Party, and representations from Richmondshire Constituency Liberal Democratic Party, 12 parish and town councils and parish meetings, three district 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 Richmondshire in North Yorkshire*.

19 Our draft recommendations were based on the District Council's proposals, which achieved improvements in electoral equality, and utilised a mix of single-, two- and three-member wards. However, we moved away from the District Council's scheme in a number of areas using a proposal put forward by the District Labour Party, the Constituency Liberal Democratic Party and others, together with some of our own proposals. We proposed that:

- (a) Richmondshire District Council should be served by 34 councillors, as at present, representing 24 wards, two fewer than at present;
- (b) the boundaries of 24 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a reduction of two, while two wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- (c) there should be new warding arrangements for Hunton parish and revised warding arrangements for Richmond parish.

#### **Draft Recommendation**

Richmondshire District Council should comprise 34 councillors, serving 24 wards. The whole Council should continue to be elected together every four years.

20 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 16 of the 24 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with only one ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2003. Colburn ward would have varied by 11 per cent from the average.



## 4. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

<sup>21</sup> During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 25 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Richmondshire District Council and the Commission.

### **Richmondshire District Council**

<sup>22</sup> The District Council stated that “in principle the majority of the proposals were accepted”, subject to two areas where it proposed amendments. First, it reiterated its support for two single-member wards of Brompton-on-Swale and Scorton. Second, it considered that Carlton Highdale and Carlton Town parishes should form part of Middleham ward, due to the geography and community identity of the areas concerned.

### **North Yorkshire County Council**

<sup>23</sup> The County Council objected to our draft recommendations on the grounds that “the review of electoral arrangements in each district has been carried out as a self-contained exercise, without regard for its implications for the electoral arrangements for the County Council”.

<sup>24</sup> It reiterated its view that “significant benefits” will flow to local electors from wards and divisions having shared boundaries, wherever practicable, as it believed that a high degree of coterminosity is a pre-requisite for securing effective and convenient local government and to properly reflect the identities and interests of local communities. It argued that more enduring electoral arrangements would have been achieved if the implications for county electoral divisions had been recognised earlier in the review process, allowing district and county reviews to be carried out concurrently.

### **Richmond Conservative Association**

<sup>25</sup> The Conservative Association stated that, with two exceptions, it accepted the Commission’s draft recommendations. However it opposed the formation of a new Penhill ward, supporting instead the retention of the existing wards of Askrigg, Aysgarth, Bolton Manor and Middleham with Coverdale, stating that this would better reflect the geography locally. The Conservative Association also opposed the draft recommendation for a new two-member Brompton-on-Swale & Scorton ward, instead supporting the retention of two single-member wards in this area.

### **Richmondshire District Labour Party**

<sup>26</sup> The District Labour Party supported the draft recommendation to create a two-member Brompton-on-Swale & Scorton ward. It also supported the inclusion of The Larches estate in Scotton ward, the inclusion of St Martin’s parish in Hipswell ward and the inclusion of East Witton Out parish in Middleham ward.

<sup>27</sup> The District Labour Party opposed the draft recommendation dividing Harmby and Spennithorne parish between two different wards. It also opposed the proposal to include Brough with St Giles parish in a new Hornby Castle ward, instead proposing to include it in Colburn ward.

### **Parish Councils**

<sup>28</sup> At Stage Three we received representations from two town councils, 12 parish councils and four parish meetings in the district.

<sup>29</sup> Aysgarth & District Parish Council expressed concern at the proposed Penhill ward, stating that

the present arrangements in this area seemed to better reflect local geography. It also expressed concern about the administration of its joint parish council if its constituent parishes were divided between two wards. Bellerby Parish Council opposed the proposal to transfer Bellerby parish from Leyburn ward to Bolton Castle ward, instead preferring the existing arrangements. Harmby Parish Council opposed the proposals for the parish for community reasons. Burton-cum-Walden Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations for its area, arguing that it had closer ties with the area lying within the existing Aysgarth ward than with the parishes of Carlton Highdale and Carlton Town.

30 Middleham Town Council rejected the proposals for Carlton Highdale and Carlton Town parishes on the grounds that they would not reflect the geography locally. West Scafton Parish Meeting expressed concern at the possible location of the polling station serving its area, if Carlton Town and Carlton Highdale parishes were transferred to a new Penhill ward, as its polling station is currently sited in Carlton. Hunton Parish Council proposed an increase in the number of councillors representing the parish. The Parish Council also requested that the Commission should instruct the District Council to carry out a parish boundary review to transfer the proposed The Larches parish ward from Hunton parish to Scotton parish.

31 Brompton-on-Swale Parish Council supported our proposed Brompton-on-Swale & Scorton ward. Uckerby Parish Meeting and Scorton Parish Council opposed the proposed Brompton-on-Swale & Scorton ward, stating that it would not reflect community identities locally. Instead they both favoured the District Council's proposal for two single-member wards in this area. Manfield with Cliffe Parish Council and St Martin's Parish Council both opposed the draft recommendations for their areas. Dalton Parish Meeting opposed the proposals in its area, mainly due to community and geographical reasons. Newton-le-Willows Parish Council queried the draft recommendations for its area.

32 Richmond Town Council broadly supported the draft recommendations, with the exception of two proposals for amendments to ward boundaries in Richmond town. Brough with St Giles Parish Meeting and Catterick Parish Council each supported the draft recommendations for their areas. Scotton Parish Council supported our draft recommendations.

## Other Representations

33 A further three representations were received in response to our draft recommendations, from two councillors and a local resident.

34 Councillor Forth, member for Leyburn ward, opposed the proposal to transfer Bellerby parish from Leyburn ward to Bolton Castle ward. Councillor Heseltine, member for Scorton ward, opposed the proposal for a two-member Brompton-on-Swale & Scorton ward, instead supporting the District Council's proposals for two single-member wards. He argued that the proposed warding of Brompton-on-Swale parish contained in the District Council's proposals could be justified, as there are sufficient electors in the area at present to form a ward.

35 A resident of Leyburn stated that, under the District Council's rules, Leyburn Town Council was entitled to nine town councillors, and requested a consequential increase in the Town Council's representation. He also considered that "with regard to your recommendation that elections on the District Council should only take place every four years ... many people would welcome an electoral system in which part of the council is elected on a more frequent basis."

36 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Richmondshire is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to the statutory criteria set out in the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the interests and identities of local communities – and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

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

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

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

expressed concern that there was little evidence that the expected increase in registration had occurred. In response, the District Council confirmed that the final published version of the 1999 register differed from the draft version, since a number of electors had been added after the draft version had been compiled.

43 In our draft recommendations we stated that we took a cautious approach to arguments relating to improvements in voter registration. We noted that we would only take such claims into account for the purposes of five-year forecasts where credible evidence is provided that under-registration exists and that active steps were being taken to improve the level of electoral registration, with some evidence of success. We noted the increased figures included in the February 1999 electoral register, and concluded that sufficient evidence existed to support the District Council's forecast figures. We accepted that forecasting electorates is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the District Council's figures, were content that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at this time. We stated that we welcomed further evidence on electorate forecasts during Stage Three.

44 At Stage Three Saint Martin's Parish Council stated that "we also understand that Catterick Garrison are at present considering which 'brown field' sites to release for redevelopment as housing and this could effect electoral numbers quite dramatically". However, in considering electorate forecasts we must only have regard to probable developments over the five-year period to 2003 and cannot have regard to development which is at present under consideration or which is unconfirmed. Having re-examined the Council's electorate forecasts we are content that they represent the best estimates which can be made at the present time.

## Council Size

45 As already explained, the Commission's starting point is to assume that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government.

46 In our draft recommendations we noted that Richmondshire District Council currently has 34 members, which the District Council proposed should be retained. The District Labour Party proposed a council size of 33, stating that, in

arriving at a pattern of two-member wards (with just one single-member ward), "the number of councillors for the district would emerge from the new wards as identified and not be a prior condition".

47 In our draft recommendations we stated that, having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we had concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by retaining a council of 34 members.

48 At Stage Three we received no further proposals or evidence regarding council size and are therefore confirming our draft recommendation for a council size of 34 as final.

## Electoral Arrangements

49 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered the representations received, including the two district-wide schemes from the District Council and the District Labour Party. Both the district-wide schemes would have provided significant improvements to electoral equality across the district. From the representations received some considerations emerged which informed us when preparing our draft recommendations.

50 First, the current electoral arrangements provide for a mix of one-, two- and three-member wards in Richmondshire. After considering the White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, the District Labour Party proposed a pattern of two-member wards across the district (with the exception for a single-member Catterick Garrison: West Colburn ward). We received no other support for such a ward pattern. Indeed the preference of the District Council for retaining a pattern of single-member wards in the more sparsely populated rural areas of the district, as exists at present, appeared to reflect the views of many of the parish councils in the district.

51 Second, we noted the preference of all respondents for ward patterns which would respect the natural boundary between the dales of Swaledale and Wensleydale.

52 We judged that maintaining a mix of single-, two- and three-member wards and, as detailed earlier, a council size of 34 members, would

facilitate the best electoral scheme in the district. We concluded, therefore, that we should base our draft recommendations on the District Council's scheme. We considered that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or the alternative proposals submitted at Stage One. However, to improve electoral equality further and having regard to local communities, we proposed modifying the District Council's proposals in four areas.

53 As stated earlier, North Yorkshire County Council objected to our draft recommendations. It argued that the Commission's approach was likely to lead to "significant reductions" in the existing level of coterminosity, and urged us to change the review process so that district and county council reviews could be carried out concurrently during the Stage One consultation period.

54 The approach we have adopted in our PERs of two-tier county areas is the same as that taken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission. That is to first review the electoral arrangements of each of the district council areas in the county and then, once the necessary electoral change orders have been made for the districts, to review those of the County Council. This ensures that, as required by Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act, our recommendations for electoral division boundaries have regard to district ward boundaries, and that these are fixed and not subject to change.

55 This is an issue which has arisen in a number of review areas. It is indicative of the tensions which can arise between the achievement of electoral equality within the individual districts of a county, each of whose electoral arrangements can vary significantly in terms of councillor:elector ratios and ward sizes, and across county council electoral divisions, while also seeking some measure of coterminosity between the two. These tensions are not readily reconciled.

56 In certain cases, it has been put to us that in reviewing district electoral arrangements we should prescribe that ward patterns and sizes should be such that they would be compatible with county council divisions. We do not believe this to be an approach the Commission should take. As a Commission, we rely heavily on local authorities and others to put proposals to us on how the electoral arrangements within their individual areas might be improved. We believe that the interests of

local democracy are best served by basing our recommendations on schemes which are generated locally, address the statutory criteria, and achieve a high level of electoral equality.

57 Nevertheless, we recognise that coterminosity between county divisions and district wards is capable of being conducive to effective and convenient local government, and we place a high value on its achievement as part of our reviews of county council electoral arrangements.

58 At Stage Three the District Council accepted the majority of our draft recommendations, subject to two amendments: one in the area of the proposed Brompton-on-Swale & Scorton ward, the other in the area of the proposed Middleham and Penhill wards. Richmond Conservative Association stated that it broadly accepted our draft recommendations but proposed that the existing wards of Askrigg, Aysgarth, Bolton Manor and Middleham with Coverdale should be retained on their existing boundaries and that two single-member wards should be retained in the Brompton on Swale and Scorton areas. We received no other representations relating to our proposals for the district as a whole.

59 We also received representations during Stage Three from a number of parish and town councils and parish meetings opposing our draft recommendations, with some alternative configurations for the wards covering their areas although some supported the existing arrangements. However, as previously noted, we are unable to consider any single area in isolation but must have regard to the impact which any modification would have upon the achievement of electoral equality across the district as a whole. We have therefore sought to evaluate any such proposal from a parish council or other interested party in the light of the impact which it would have upon the electoral equality for both individual wards and across the wider area.

60 We have reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of the representations received during Stage Three and the further evidence obtained thereafter and have modified our draft recommendations. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Richmond (three wards);
- (b) Grinton & Upper Swaledale, Lower Swaledale and Reeth wards;

- (c) Barton, Croft on Tees, Kirkby Hill and Stanwick wards;
- (d) St Agathas, St Michael with St Luke, Scorton and Swaleside wards;
- (e) Catterick with Tunstall, Colburn, Hipswell, Lower Dale and Scotton wards;
- (f) Leyburn, Middleham & Coverdale and Urevale wards;
- (g) Askrigg, Aysgarth, Bolton Manor and Hawes & High Abbotside wards.

61 Details of our draft recommendations are set out in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inserted at the back of this report.

### **Richmond (three wards)**

62 The town (and parish) of Richmond lies in the centre of the district and is currently served by three district wards: a single-member Richmond Central ward, a three-member Richmond East ward and a two-member Richmond West ward. The number of electors per councillor in the wards is 66 per cent above, 10 per cent above and 10 per cent below the district average respectively (63 per cent, 2 per cent and 17 per cent in 2003).

63 The town is currently served by a total of six district councillors and, despite the severe imbalances which exist within the town, this is the correct level of representation based on the forecast electorate in 2003 and a 34-member council for the district. However, some parts of the town are substantially under-represented while other parts are relatively over-represented and there is therefore a need to redraw the ward boundaries within the town.

64 At Stage One we received proposals from the District Council and the District Labour Party for alternative warding for Richmond town. The two submissions each proposed that Richmond should comprise three two-member district wards, retaining the existing ward names of Richmond Central, Richmond East and Richmond West, although each proposed different boundaries between the wards. The District Council stated that Richmond Town Council supported its proposals.

65 Under the District Council's proposal for a council size of 34, the number of electors per councillor would be 14 per cent above the district average in both Richmond Central ward and

Richmond East ward (both at 7 per cent in 2003) and 11 per cent above in Richmond West ward (4 per cent in 2003). Under the District Labour Party's proposed council size of 33, the number of electors per councillor would be 11 per cent above the district average in Richmond Central ward (5 per cent above in 2003), 8 per cent above in Richmond East ward (2 per cent in 2003) and 9 per cent above in Richmond West ward (2 per cent in 2003). However, since we were proposing a 34-member council, we calculated that electoral variances based on the District Labour Party's proposed boundaries would, in fact, be broadly similar to those under the District Council's proposals.

66 In our draft recommendations report we carefully considered the proposals received in relation to Richmond. We noted that there was agreement between the two schemes for a pattern of three two-member wards in the town and the same ward names. Each would also secure considerable improvements to electoral equality across Richmond, particularly by 2003. Although a degree of relative under-representation would initially continue in the town, we calculated that by 2003 the electorate in the town would merit a total of six councillors, as at present. We did not consider there was any merit in looking beyond the town for alternative warding arrangements as this would not reflect the statutory criteria with regard to community identity, and further noted that this was not proposed by any respondent. We therefore agreed that Richmond town should be warded as a discrete area, and decided to adopt the District Council's proposals for the three wards in Richmond, as we judged that the District Council's proposals would utilise, in the main, clearer boundaries and were supported by Richmond Town Council.

67 At Stage Three, Richmond Town Council supported our draft recommendations, but proposed two amendments in Richmond town. First it proposed that Anchorage Hill and Maison Dieu should be retained in Richmond East ward. Second it proposed that "it would be simpler if the whole periphery of the Market Place were in one ward instead of two and therefore the bottom of Frenchgate should be in West ward".

68 We have given careful consideration to the amendments which Richmond Town Council have proposed. With regard to the Town Council's first proposal to include Anchorage Hill and Maison Dieu in Richmond East, we have calculated that

this would transfer 124 electors from Richmond Central ward to Richmond East ward. As a result of such a modification, the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent above the district average in Richmond Central ward (1 per cent in 2003) and 21 per cent above in Richmond East ward (13 per cent in 2003). We note that such a modification would lead to a less equitable distribution of electorate between the two wards concerned and do not consider that such a change would better reflect the statutory criteria. With regard to the Town Council's second proposal, we note that while it would have a negligible effect on electoral equality it would entail dividing Frenchgate between two district wards. We do not consider that such a modification represents a substantial improvement on our draft recommendations in this area. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for the wards of Richmond Central, Richmond East and Richmond West as final. Our final recommendations for Richmond are illustrated on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

### **Grinton & Upper Swaledale, Lower Swaledale and Reeth wards**

<sup>69</sup> These three wards are situated in the north-west of the district and are each represented by a single councillor. Grinton & Upper Swaledale ward comprises the parishes of Grinton, Melbecks and Muker; Lower Swaledale ward comprises the parishes of Downholme, Hudswell, Marske, New Forest, Stainton and Walburn; and Reeth ward comprises the parishes of Arkengarthdale, Ellerton Abbey, Marrick and Reeth, Fremington & Healaugh. The area as a whole is markedly over-represented, with the number of electors per councillor in each ward being 30 per cent, 60 per cent and 3 per cent below the district average respectively (36 per cent, 63 per cent and 9 per cent in 2003).

<sup>70</sup> At Stage One, the District Council referred to the rural and sparsely populated nature of this area and consequently proposed that it should be covered by two new single-member wards. Reeth & Arkengarthdale ward would comprise the parishes of Arkengarthdale, Marrick, Marske, New Forest and Reeth, Fremington & Healaugh.

<sup>71</sup> The Council's proposed Swaledale ward would comprise the parishes of Downholme, Ellerton Abbey, Grinton, Hudswell, Melbecks, Muker, Stainton and Walburn. The District Council stated that, although this ward would be the largest geographically in the district, creating a smaller

ward in this area would not have secured good electoral equality. Under the District Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 6 per cent above the district average in Reeth & Arkengarthdale ward (equal to the average in 2003) and 1 per cent above the average in Swaledale ward (8 per cent below in 2003).

<sup>72</sup> Richmondshire District Labour Party proposed a two-member Reeth & Muker ward in this area, to replace the wards of Grinton & Upper Swaledale, Lower Swaledale and Reeth. It considered that such a ward would achieve good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests. The District Labour Party did not consider that the argument for single-member wards in sparsely populated areas applied in Swaledale, instead arguing that the area contains "a 'ribbon' of habitation [that] occupies a small part of what is otherwise largely unpopulated moorland". The number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent above the district average in its two-member Reeth & Muker ward (7 per cent below the average in 2003), based on a 33-member council.

<sup>73</sup> In our draft recommendations report we considered the representations received for this area. We welcomed the fact that both schemes would have achieved significant improvements in electoral equality compared to the existing arrangements. However, we were concerned at the size of the area covered by a two-member ward in this part of the district, as proposed by the District Labour Party. As stated earlier, we acknowledge the District Council's preference for retaining single-member wards in sparsely populated rural areas where this would meet the objectives of the review. We conclude that single-member wards in this area would better reflect the statutory criteria and be in line with the current ward pattern. We therefore included the District Council's proposed Reeth & Arkengarthdale and Swaledale wards as part of our draft recommendations.

<sup>74</sup> At Stage Three we received no detailed comments on our proposals for the wards in this area and are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for Reeth & Arkengarthdale and Swaledale wards as final.

### **Barton, Croft on Tees, Kirby Hill and Stanwick wards**

<sup>75</sup> These four wards are situated in the north-east corner of the district. Barton ward (comprising the parishes of Barton, Cleasby, Cliffe, Manfield,

Newton Morrell and Stapleton) and Croft on Tees ward (comprising the parishes of Croft-on-Tees, Dalton-on-Tees and Eryholme) are each represented by a single councillor. There are large electoral imbalances in these two wards: the number of electors per councillor is 36 per cent above the district average in Barton ward (28 per cent in 2003) and 39 per cent below in Croft-on-Tees ward (43 per cent in 2003). The two wards of Kirby Hill and Stanwick are detailed later.

76 At Stage One, in order to address the considerable electoral inequality in the two wards, the District Council proposed transferring Cliffe and Manfield parishes from the existing Barton ward to form part of the new wards of Newsham with Eppleby and Melsonby respectively. The Council also proposed a new Croft ward comprising the existing Croft on Tees ward and North Cowton parish (currently in St Michael with St Luke ward). It stated that it had received no objections to such arrangements from the parishes concerned. The number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent above the district average in Barton ward (4 per cent in 2003) and 3 per cent above the average in Croft ward (equal to the average in 2003).

77 The District Labour Party proposed a new two-member Barton & North Cowton ward in this area, comprising the existing Croft on Tees ward together with the parishes of Barton, Newton Morrell and Stapleton (currently in Barton ward) and North Cowton parish (in St Michael with St Luke ward). It considered that the new ward would reflect community identities and interests. Under its proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent below the average in Barton & North Cowton ward (7 per cent below in 2003).

78 In arriving at our draft recommendations for the area, we carefully considered the alternative proposals for this area. While each would have substantially improved the electoral equality in the two wards, the District Council's proposals would have provided better electoral equality by 2003 while largely respecting existing community ties. Again we judged that retaining two single-member wards in this part of the district would best meet the statutory criteria. We therefore included the District Council's proposed Barton and Croft wards as part of our draft recommendations.

79 The single-member Kirby Hill and Stanwick wards together cover the remainder of this area. Kirby Hill ward currently comprises the 10

parishes of Caldwell, Dalton, East Layton, Forcett & Carkin, Gayles, Kirby Hill, Newsham, Ravensworth, West Layton and Whaston, while Stanwick ward comprises the four parishes of Aldbrough, Eppleby, Melsonby and Stanwick St John. The number of electors per councillor is 11 per cent above the district average in Kirby Hill ward (3 per cent in 2003) and 6 per cent above the average in Stanwick ward (2 per cent in 2003).

80 At Stage One, as a result of the changes which it proposed to the south and east, the District Council proposed two new district wards to cover the majority of the area of the existing Kirby Hill and Stanwick wards. It proposed a new single-member Melsonby ward, comprising Aldbrough and Melsonby parishes (currently in Stanwick ward) and Manfield parish (in Barton ward). Although the Council's proposals for this area would include Cliffe and Manfield parishes, which together form a joint parish council, in separate district wards it added that "the two parishes have stated that they have no objections to being separated".

81 To the west, the District Council proposed a new Newsham with Eppleby ward, comprising the parishes of Caldwell, Dalton, East Layton, Forcett & Carkin, Newsham and West Layton (in Kirby Hill ward), Eppleby and Stanwick St John parishes (in Stanwick ward) and Cliffe (in Barton ward). The District Council stated that both wards would have good internal road links. Under its proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent below the district average in Melsonby ward (5 per cent below in 2003) and 2 per cent above in Newsham with Eppleby ward (6 per cent below in 2003).

82 Richmondshire District Labour Party proposed a new two-member Aldbrough St John & Newsham ward in this area, comprising the existing Kirby Hill ward, Stanwick ward except Melsonby parish, and the parishes of Cleasby, Cliffe and Manfield (in Barton ward), arguing that such a configuration would provide a balance of the statutory criteria. Under the District Labour Party's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent above the district average in Aldbrough St John & Newsham ward (6 per cent below in 2003).

83 We gave due consideration in our draft recommendations report to the proposals received for this area. Both the District Council's and the District Labour Party's schemes would have

provided similar levels of electoral equality by 2003. However, we judged that the District Council's scheme would provide a satisfactory balance of the statutory criteria while being compatible with the recommendations which we had put forward for neighbouring wards. Consequently we adopted the District Council's proposed Melsonby and Newsham with Eppleby wards as part of our draft recommendations.

84 At Stage Three Dalton Parish Meeting opposed the proposals for its area, arguing that "it would be quite inappropriate to separate Dalton from its natural neighbours, especially Gayles, Kirby Hill and Whashton". Manfield with Cliffe Parish Council (representing Cliffe and Manfield parishes) opposed the proposals for its area, arguing that to divide the two parishes between different wards would not reflect existing community ties and would be confusing to the electorate. We received no other views relating to our draft recommendations for the four wards in this area.

85 We have given careful consideration to the views which we have received in these areas. While we are sympathetic to Dalton Parish Meeting's preference for remaining in the same ward as the villages of Gayles, Kirby Hill and Whashton, we are unable to look at any single area in isolation, but must have regard to the impact which any change would have upon the achievement of electoral equality across the whole district. We note that the Parish Meeting's submission did not contain detailed proposals for alternative warding arrangements for the area. However, we judge that to combine Dalton parish with neighbouring villages as outlined in its submission would not achieve an acceptable level of electoral equality for this ward or, as a consequence, for the wider area. With regard to Manfield with Cliffe Parish Council's submission, we note its objection to the placing of the two parishes in separate district wards as, it considered, it could cause confusion among the electorate locally, together with its preference for being represented by the current member for Barton ward. We have calculated that to transfer Cliffe parish from Newsham with Eppleby ward to Melsonby ward would mean that the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent above the average in Melsonby ward (2 per cent below in 2003) and 1 per cent below in Newsham with Eppleby ward (9 per cent below in 2003). We note that this modification would unite both Manfield and Cliffe parishes within a single district ward, a proposal which we consider would

be more readily understandable to the electorate locally, while retaining reasonable electoral equality in the area. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for the wards of Barton, Croft, Melsonby and Newsham with Eppleby as final, subject to transferring Cliffe parish to Melsonby ward, as outlined above.

### **St Agathas, St Michael with St Luke, Scorton and Swaleside wards**

86 These four single-member wards are situated in the north-east of the district. St Agathas ward comprises the parishes of Aske, Gilling with Hartforth & Sedbury and Skeeby, while St Michael with St Luke ward comprises the parishes of Middleton Tyas, Moulton and North Cowton. The number of electors per councillor is 7 per cent below the district average in St Agathas ward (14 per cent in 2003) and 17 per cent above the average in St Michael with St Luke ward (13 per cent in 2003). Scorton and Swaleside wards are described later.

87 At Stage One, the District Council proposed two single-member wards to represent much of the area covered by the existing St Agathas and St Michael with St Luke wards. It proposed a new Gilling West ward comprising Aske and Gilling with Hartforth & Sedbury parishes (currently in St Agathas ward) together with the parishes of Gayles, Kirby Hill, Ravensworth and Whashton (in Kirby Hill ward); and a new Middleton Tyas ward comprising Middleton Tyas and Moulton parishes (in St Michael with St Luke ward) and Skeeby parish (in St Agathas ward). North Cowton parish would form part of its Croft ward, detailed earlier. The Council stated that its proposals would provide improved electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests in the areas concerned. Under its proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent above the district average in Gilling West ward (7 per cent below the average in 2003) and 9 per cent above the average in Middleton Tyas ward (2 per cent in 2003). Middleton Tyas Parish Council supported the District Council's proposed Middleton Tyas ward.

88 The District Labour Party proposed a two-member Gilling, Melsonby & Middleton Tyas ward for this area, which would comprise the existing St Agathas ward together with Melsonby parish (currently in Stanwick ward) and Middleton Tyas and Moulton parishes (in St Michael with St Luke ward). The District Labour Party stated that this

ward would “bring together a number of larger parish electorates and community interests”. Under its proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent above the district average in Gilling, Melsonby & Middleton Tyas ward (1 per cent below in 2003). North Cowton parish would form part of its proposed Barton & North Cowton ward, detailed above.

89 In our draft recommendations report we considered the alternative views which we had received for this area. We noted the improved electoral equality which would have resulted under both schemes, and particularly under the District Labour Party’s proposals, although this was based on a 33-member council. However, in arriving at our recommendations we noted that we could not look at any area in isolation and must consider the impact which any changes would have on the warding arrangements for the district as a whole. In view of the scheme which we put forward in the north of the district, we were unable to adopt the District Labour Party’s proposed wards. We concluded that the District Council’s proposed wards of Gilling West and Middleton Tyas would provide a satisfactory balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, and put them forward for consultation.

90 At Stage Three we received no further views specifically commenting on our proposals for the wards of Gilling West and Middleton Tyas and are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for these wards as final.

91 Scorton ward (comprising the parishes of Bolton-on-Swale, Ellerton-on-Swale, Scorton and Uckerby) and Swaleside ward (comprising the parishes of Brompton-on-Swale, Easby and St Martin’s) are each represented by a single member. The number of electors per councillor is 35 per cent below the district average in Scorton ward (25 per cent in 2003) and 40 per cent above the district average in Swaleside ward (48 per cent in 2003).

92 At Stage One, in order to address the serious electoral inequality in these two wards, the District Council proposed two modifications. First, it proposed transferring St Martin’s parish from Swaleside ward to Hipswell ward (detailed later). Second, it proposed new warding for Brompton-on-Swale parish, with a new Gatherley parish ward covering that part of Brompton-on-Swale parish east of the A1, and then including that parish ward in a modified Scorton district ward. It stated that

“it is not proposed that a parish councillor be allocated at this stage to represent Gatherley parish ward as the properties are not yet completed ... and the matter should be resolved at a later date”. The District Council noted that, while its proposals were supported by “Scorton and surrounding parishes”, it understood that Brompton-on-Swale Parish Council was opposed to such a proposal. Finally, it proposed that the modified Swaleside ward should be renamed Brompton-on-Swale. Under the District Council’s proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 14 per cent above the district average in Brompton-on-Swale ward (5 per cent above in 2003) and 22 per cent below the average in Scorton ward (6 per cent above in 2003).

93 Richmondshire District Labour Party and Richmondshire Constituency Liberal Democrats both proposed creating a new two-member ward in this area, comprising the parishes of Bolton-on-Swale, Brompton-on-Swale, Easby, Ellerton-on-Swale, Scorton and Uckerby, which the District Labour Party proposed should be named Brompton-on-Swale & Scorton ward. Consequently, the District Labour Party considered that the proposed warding of Brompton-on-Swale parish was unnecessary. Under the District Labour Party’s proposals, based on a council size of 33, the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent below the average in Brompton-on-Swale & Scorton ward (2 per cent above in 2003). Under the Liberal Democrats’ proposals for a council size of 34, the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent below the average in Brompton-on-Swale & Scorton ward (6 per cent above in 2003).

94 We also heard from Bolton-on-Swale Parish Meeting, Scorton Parish Council, Uckerby Parish Council and Councillor Heseltine, member for Scorton ward, who all supported the District Council’s proposals for two single-member wards in this area. Brompton-on-Swale Parish Council and Councillor Fryer, member for Swaledale ward, both supported a two-member ward for the area. St Martin’s Parish Council also supported a two-member ward for the area, stating that it opposed the District Council’s proposal to transfer St Martin’s parish to Hipswell ward as it would not reflect community ties.

95 In our draft recommendations we considered the submissions received for this area. We noted that while both the proposal for two single-member wards and the proposal for one two-

member ward would achieve good electoral equality by 2003, the electoral variance in 1998 under two single-member wards would be considerably worse than under the two-member ward.

96 Furthermore, we are unable to recommend warding a parish where the affected area contains few or no electors, or put forward recommendations for the allocation of representation which would be dependent on future developments taking place, as under the District Council's proposal for warding Brompton-on-Swale parish. Consequently, we were persuaded that a two-member ward in this area would provide a better balance of the statutory criteria. While we were sympathetic to St Martin's Parish Council's request that the parish should be included in such a two-member ward, to make such a modification (involving some 130 electors) would have had an adverse effect on electoral equality in the two wards which would be modified. We therefore put forward the proposal made by both the District Labour Party and the Constituency Liberal Democrats for a two-member Brompton-on-Swale & Scorton ward as part of our draft recommendations. Under a 34-member council, the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent below the average in the ward (6 per cent above in 2003).

97 At Stage Three Richmondshire District Labour Party and Brompton-on-Swale Parish Council supported the proposed two-member Brompton-on-Swale & Scorton ward. The District Council, Richmond Conservative Association, Scorton Parish Council, Uckerby Parish Meeting and Councillor Heseltine all opposed the proposal for a two member Brompton-on-Swale & Scorton ward, mainly due to local community identities and geography, instead favouring two single-member wards in this area. Councillor Heseltine also argued that there are sufficient electors in the Gatherley Road area of Brompton-on-Swale ward to justify the formation of a parish ward, as proposed by the District Council.

98 We have reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the further views received during Stage Three. We note the arguments made by the District Council and others regarding the separate community identities and interests of the area concerned. We have also noted the comments of Councillor Heseltine in support of the viability of creating a parish ward in the Gatherley Road area of Brompton-on-Swale parish in order to facilitate the retention of a single-

member Scorton ward. However, we remain concerned at the poor electoral equality which would currently exist in Scorton ward under such an option and note that a clear alternative exists in this case in the form of our draft recommendation creating a two-member Brompton-on-Swale & Scorton ward would address such inequality. Consequently, we judge that, while the arguments in this area are finely balanced, the need to secure improvements in electoral equality outweighs other considerations. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for this area as final.

### **Catterick with Tunstall, Colburn, Hipswell, Lower Dale and Scotton wards**

99 These five wards are situated in the centre and east of the district. Together, Catterick with Tunstall, Colburn, Hipswell and Scotton wards contain many of the armed forces personnel stationed at Catterick Garrison. Each of the two district councillors serving Catterick with Tunstall ward, which currently comprises the parishes of Appleton East & West, Brough with St Giles, Catterick and Tunstall, currently represents 11 per cent more electors than the district average (forecast to worsen to 35 per cent in 2003). The councillor serving Lower Dale ward, which comprises the parishes of Arrathorne, Hornby, Hunton, Newton-le-Willows and Patrick Brompton, represents 7 per cent more electors than the average (2 per cent fewer in 2003). The district councillor for Scotton ward (and parish) represents 58 per cent more electors than the average (75 per cent in 2003). Overall there is a high degree of under-representation in this area.

100 At Stage One, the District Council proposed a re-configuration of wards in this area. It proposed a new two-member Catterick ward comprising only the parish of the same name. In addition it proposed that Brough with St Giles parish should be warded, to create a new Walkerville parish ward comprising 125 properties which are to be built over the next five years in the west of the parish. It stated that "it is not proposed that a parish councillor be allocated to the Walkerville parish ward at this stage as the houses have not yet been built". The Council proposed that Walkerville parish ward should be combined with Colburn parish to form a modified Colburn ward (discussed later). It also proposed warding Hunton parish, thereby creating a new The Larches parish ward, comprising 228 electors in the north-east of the

parish, and including this parish ward with Scotton parish in a modified Scotton district ward. The Council informed us that the proposed warding of Hunton parish had the support of Hunton and Scotton parish councils.

101 The District Council proposed that the remainder of Catterick with Tunstall ward (Appleton East & West and Tunstall parishes and the rest of Brough with St Giles parish) and the remainder of the existing Lower Dale ward (the parishes of Arrathorne, Hornby and Patrick Brompton and part of Hunton parish) should form a new single-member Hornby Castle ward. Under the District Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent below the district average in Catterick ward (1 per cent above in 2003), 5 per cent below in Hornby Castle ward (12 per cent below in 2003) and 9 per cent below in Scotton ward (2 per cent below in 2003).

102 Alternatively, the District Labour Party proposed a new two-member Catterick Village & Brough with St Giles ward comprising Catterick parish and part of Brough with St Giles parish. It similarly proposed that Brough with St Giles should be warded and Walkerville parish ward should form part of a new Colburn Town ward with the area to its west. The parishes of Appleton East & West and Tunstall (currently in Catterick with Tunstall ward) should be combined with the area to the south and west to form a new two-member Harmby, Bellerby & Hunton ward, (discussed later). The District Labour Party argued that Brough with St Giles parish shared community identity and interests with Catterick and its proposals would, therefore, better reflect local communities. It also proposed a modified Catterick Garrison: Scotton ward comprising Scotton parish and the new The Larches parish ward of Hunton parish, as proposed by the District Council. Under the District Labour Party's proposals for a 33-member council, the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent below the district average in Catterick Village & Brough with St Giles ward (1 per cent above in 2003) and 12 per cent below the average in Catterick Garrison:Scotton ward (5 per cent below in 2003).

103 The Constituency Liberal Democrats proposed modifying the District Council's Hornby Castle ward to include Newton-le-Willows parish (currently in Lower Dale ward), which it stated would better reflect community identity. Under a 34-member council the number of electors per

councillor in their proposed Hornby Castle ward would be 12 per cent above the district average in 2003. Brough with St Giles Parish Meeting opposed the proposed warding of the parish.

104 In our draft recommendations report we noted that normally our concern would be with the proposed warding of Brough with St Giles parish as the proposed Walkerville parish ward would have no electors, and the District Council has proposed that representation should be conditional on future development. This has been discussed earlier in paragraph 92. However, of greater significance is the fact that Brough with St Giles is a parish meeting and there is no provision in the legislation for warding a parish that does not have a parish council. We therefore considered alternative configurations in this area.

105 We calculated that combining the whole of Brough with St Giles parish with Catterick parish to form a new two-member ward would not achieve acceptable electoral equality. In view of our proposals elsewhere, we were precluded from combining Brough with St Giles parish with areas to the north or west. Consequently we judged that the District Council's proposals for the wards of Catterick, Hornby Castle and Scotton would provide the best alternative warding arrangement for this area, subject to two amendments. First, we proposed including the whole of Brough with St Giles parish in Hornby Castle ward. Second, and as a consequence of the first amendment, we proposed transferring Patrick Brompton parish to Lower Wensleydale ward. We considered that these proposals would ensure the achievement of good electoral equality in this ward, while having regard to the statutory criteria. Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor would be 19 per cent below the district average in Hornby Castle ward, improving to 3 per cent below in 2003. The significant improvement in electoral equality over the five-year period would be due to new housing developments in the ward.

106 At Stage Three Catterick Parish Council supported our draft recommendation for a district ward comprising the parish alone. The Parish Council also agreed with our proposal to retain the whole of Brough with St Giles parish in a single district ward. Brough with St Giles Parish Meeting supported the proposal to include the entire parish in Hornby ward, stating that such a proposal would secure effective local government in its area.

Richmondshire District Labour Party considered that “relating to Brough with St Giles [parish] ... its inclusion in the Hornby Castle ward appears to be the least favourable option resulting in a variance greater than 10 per cent and a disregard of community links and services”. Consequently it proposed that Brough with St Giles parish should be included in Colburn ward. Hunton Parish Council stated that it had not expressed support for the District Council’s proposal to ward the parish, although it did not object to our proposed division of the parish in principle. Scotton Parish Council supported our draft recommendations.

107 In arriving at our final recommendations in this area we have given careful consideration to the views which we have received. While we note that under the District Labour Party’s proposed modification to our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 12 per cent below the average in Colburn ward (1 per cent in 2003), a high level of electoral inequality would exist in Hornby Castle ward, the number of electors per councillor being 26 per cent below the average (25 per cent in 2003). We are therefore not persuaded to modify our draft recommendations for the two wards concerned. Additionally, we note the general support for our proposals in this area. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for the wards of Catterick, Hornby Castle and Scotton as final.

108 Under the current arrangements, both Colburn and Hipswell wards are over-represented, although some improvement is forecast by 2003. Colburn ward is served by three councillors, each of whom represents 15 per cent fewer electors than the district average (11 per cent fewer in 2003). Hipswell ward is served by two councillors, each of whom represents 29 per cent fewer electors than the average (2 per cent fewer in 2003).

109 As described earlier, at Stage One the District Council proposed uniting Colburn parish and Walkerville parish ward of Brough with St Giles parish in a modified three-member Colburn ward for district warding purposes. It also proposed uniting Hipswell parish with St Martin’s parish (in Swaleside ward) in a modified two-member Hipswell ward. Under its proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 15 per cent below the district average in Colburn ward (improving to 1 per cent below in 2003) and 22 per cent below the average in Hipswell ward (improving to 5 per cent above in 2003).

110 The District Labour Party proposed that the area comprising Colburn parish and the District Council’s proposed Walkerville parish ward of Brough with St Giles parish should be divided into two new wards, thereby also warding Colburn parish. It proposed a new Catterick Garrison:West Colburn ward comprising the area of Colburn parish around Colburn Grange Farm and Harley Hill, to be served by a single councillor and a new Colburn Town ward comprising the remainder of Colburn parish together with Walkerville parish ward, to be served by two councillors. The District Labour Party also proposed a two-member ward comprising Hipswell and St Martin’s parishes to be called Catterick Garrison: Hipswell & St Martin’s ward. Under its proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 10 per cent below the district average in Colburn Town ward (3 per cent below in 2003), 25 per cent below in Catterick Garrison:Hipswell & St Martin’s ward (2 per cent above in 2003) and 29 per cent below in Catterick Garrison:West Colburn ward (6 per cent below in 2003). Additionally, Colburn Town Council supported the retention of the existing Colburn district ward. As noted earlier, St Martin’s Parish Council opposed the proposal to combine the parish with Hipswell parish to form a modified district ward.

111 In our draft recommendations we carefully considered the representations received. As already stated, we cannot recommend the formation of a parish ward which would initially contain no electors, as would be the case in Brough with St Giles parish. We therefore looked at possible alternative district warding arrangements for the Colburn area. However, our proposals for neighbouring areas precluded alternative combinations to the north, south and west of Colburn and, consequently, we proposed retaining a three-member Colburn ward on its existing boundaries and included this as part of our draft recommendations.

112 The number of electors per councillor in the unchanged Colburn ward would be 15 per cent below the district average (11 per cent in 2003), unchanged from the current arrangements. We recognised that by 2003 this ward would have the most significant electoral imbalance in the district, but we considered that our proposal would represent the best balance of the statutory criteria which can be achieved in this area. In addition, we adopted the proposals submitted by both the District Council and the District Labour Party for a two-member ward comprising the parishes of

Hipswell and St Martin's, although we proposed retaining the existing name of Hipswell ward, as proposed by the District Council. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 22 per cent below the district average in Hipswell ward, although this is forecast to improve to 5 per cent above the average by 2003 as a result of the growth in electorate and the campaign to improve voter registration by the District Council. In fact the 1999 electoral register, which is now available, shows that the number of electors per councillor has already improved to 14 per cent below the district average in the proposed Hipswell ward.

113 At Stage Three the District Labour Party supported our draft recommendation to include St Martin's parish in Hipswell ward. It also proposed including the whole of Brough with St Giles parish in Colburn ward (as detailed above). St Martin's Parish Council reiterated their Stage One view opposing our draft recommendation to include St Martin's parish in Hipswell ward.

114 As described above, we do not consider that the District Labour Party's proposals for Colburn and Hornby Castle wards represent as satisfactory a balance of the statutory criteria as that contained in our draft recommendations. Moreover, we note that adopting St Martin's Parish Council's preference would have an adverse impact upon electoral equality in the two wards concerned, which we consider is not justified by the community identity arguments put forward. We remain of the view that our draft recommendations for the wards of Colburn and Hipswell represent the best balance between the need to achieve improvements to electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria, and are therefore confirming them as final.

### **Leyburn, Middleham & Coverdale and Urevale wards**

115 Leyburn, Middleham & Coverdale and Urevale wards are situated in the south of the district. Leyburn ward, which comprises the parishes of Bellerby and Leyburn, is served by two councillors, each representing on average 6 per cent fewer electors than the district average (7 per cent in 2003). Middleham & Coverdale ward, which comprises the nine parishes of Caldbergh with East Scafton, Carlton Highdale, Carlton Town, Coverham with Agglethorpe, East Witton Out, East Witton Town, Melmerby, Middleham and

West Scafton, is served by a single councillor who represents 32 per cent more electors than the district average (23 per cent in 2003). Urevale ward, which comprises the 11 parishes of Akebar, Barden, Constable Burton, East Hauxwell, Finghall, Garriston, Harmby, Hutton Hang, Spennithorne, Thornton Steward and West Hauxwell, is served by a single councillor who represents 2 per cent more electors than the district average (5 per cent fewer in 2003).

116 At Stage One, the District Council proposed a re-configuration of these wards in order to address the electoral inequality in the wider area. The Council proposed that a modified two-member Leyburn ward should comprise the parishes of Leyburn and Harmby; a new single-member Lower Wensleydale ward should comprise the existing Urevale ward (except for Harmby parish), together with East Witton Out parish (in Middleham & Coverdale ward) and Newton-le-Willows parish (in Lower Dale ward); and a new single-member Middleham ward should comprise Middleham & Coverdale ward, except for the parishes of Carlton Highdale, Carlton Town and East Witton Out. The District Council argued that these warding arrangements would secure improved electoral equality across the area, while generally reflecting community identities and interests. It noted that in the case of its proposed Lower Wensleydale ward, "the main objections received from the parishes within this ward relate to historical and social connections", but added that "the parish boundaries will not be altered so this should not affect any social arrangements within the parishes". The District Council also informed us that the parishes of East Witton Out and East Witton Town would prefer to be within the same district ward, as at present, but this had not formed part of the Council's scheme. Under the District Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent below the district average in Leyburn ward (6 per cent in 2003), 1 per cent below in Lower Wensleydale ward (7 per cent below in 2003) and 2 per cent above in Middleham ward (5 per cent below in 2003).

117 The District Labour Party proposed the same level of representation but a different configuration of two two-member wards in this area. It proposed a new Leyburn & Middleham ward comprising the two parishes of the same names, and a new Harmby, Bellerby & Hunton ward comprising the existing Urevale ward (except for Thornton Steward parish), Lower Dale ward (except for the

proposed The Larches parish ward of Hunton parish), the parishes of Appleton East & West and Tunstall (currently in Catterick with Tunstall ward), and Bellerby parish (in Leyburn ward). The remainder of the existing Middleham & Coverdale ward would form part of a proposed two-member Redmire & Witton ward, as detailed later. The District Labour Party argued that its two proposed wards would reflect community identities in the areas concerned while achieving improvements in electoral equality. Under the District Labour Party's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent above the district average in Leyburn & Middleham ward (6 per cent in 2003) and 14 per cent above the average in Harmby, Bellerby & Hunton ward (5 per cent in 2003).

118 The Constituency Liberal Democrats made alternative proposals in this area, arguing that their proposals would take greater account of local communities than those put forward by the District Council. Bellerby Parish Council stated that it wished to remain in a ward with Leyburn parish. Harmby Parish Council opposed the proposal to combine Harmby parish with Leyburn parish for the purposes of district warding.

119 In our draft recommendations report we stated that, in conducting an electoral review of a district area, we cannot consider any one area in isolation, and must seek to achieve electoral equality across the whole district. In the light of our proposals for the whole district, we were unable to reflect the preferences of all respondents. The changes to warding arrangements which we proposed to the west and east of this area precluded us from adopting the options put forward by the District Labour Party, the Constituency Liberal Democrats or Bellerby and Harmby parish councils. We concluded therefore that the best arrangements for the area were provided by the District Council's three proposed wards of Leyburn, Lower Wensleydale and Middleham, subject to two modifications. As detailed earlier, our proposed changes to Hornby Castle ward would involve transferring Patrick Brompton parish to Lower Wensleydale ward to improve electoral equality in Hornby Castle ward. As a result, Lower Wensleydale ward would be under-represented while the neighbouring proposed Middleham ward would be relatively over-represented. We therefore proposed amending the boundary between the two new wards to include East Witton Out parish in Middleham ward, noting this configuration would be more in line with the existing arrangements and

better reflect local ties, particularly between East Witton Out and East Witton Town parishes. Such a proposal would improve electoral equality in the two wards concerned by 2003 and, we understood, enjoy some local support. Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent above the average in Lower Wensleydale ward (1 per cent below in 2003) and 8 per cent above the average in Middleham ward (1 per cent above in 2003).

120 At Stage Three the District Council, the Conservative Association and Middleham Town Council opposed the draft recommendation to include the parishes of Carlton Highdale and Carlton Town in a ward to their west, arguing that such a proposal would not reflect local geography or community identities. The District Council observed that there "is no direct road linking Carlton with West Witton, Bishopdale, Burton cum Walden, Newbiggin and Thoraby", and argued that Carlton Highdale and Carlton Town parishes should form part of the proposed Middleham ward. Similarly Middleham Town Council opposed our draft recommendations in this area, as including Carlton Highdale and Carlton Town parishes in the proposed Penhill ward would create a "cross dale" ward. West Scafton Parish Meeting expressed concern at the future location of its polling station, which is currently located in Carlton, if the parish is transferred to Penhill ward. Bellerby Parish Council opposed the proposal to remove Bellerby parish from Leyburn ward. Harmby Parish Council opposed the proposal to transfer Harmby parish to Leyburn ward, instead arguing that it should retain its existing community links with Spennithorne and other neighbouring villages. Richmond District Labour Party also opposed the proposal for Harmby parish. Newton-le-Willows Parish Council queried our proposals for the parish, stating that "it could be argued that our village voice is not always heard or heeded".

121 We have given careful consideration to the views which we have received in these areas. In the light of the opposition to our draft recommendation to include Carlton Highdale and Carlton Town parishes in Penhill ward, we have considered alternative configurations in the area. We note that the preference of Richmondshire District Council, Richmond Conservative Association and Middleham Town Council to retain Carlton Highdale and Carlton Town parishes in Middleham ward would, together with

the proposals contained in our draft recommendation to modify the District Council's Stage One proposal for the area, in effect retain a ward on the same boundaries as the existing Middleham & Coverdale ward. Under such a proposal the number of electors per councillor would be 32 per cent above the average in Middleham ward (23 per cent in 2003), while it would be 18 per cent below the average in Penhill ward (24 per cent below in 2003). While we note that the Coverdale area may only be accessed from the remainder of the ward via a neighbouring ward we do not consider that the electoral inequality which would result under the proposals outlined above, can be justified. We therefore consider that the need to secure good electoral equality in this area outweighs the arguments relating to the geography and community identity of the Coverdale area. In the absence of other new proposals, we are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for Middleham ward as final.

<sup>122</sup> We have considered the views received from Bellerby parish and Harmby parish opposing the proposals for Leyburn ward. We note that both respondents argue that the existing arrangements better reflect community interests and identities than the proposals contained in our draft recommendations. We have calculated that modifying Leyburn ward to reflect either Bellerby Parish Council's or Harmby Parish Council's concerns would have a detrimental effect on the electoral equality achieved across the wider area. Moreover, we consider that the draft recommendations for Leyburn and Lower Wensleydale wards represent a satisfactory balance of the need to secure good electoral equality while reflecting the statutory criteria and we therefore confirm them as final.

### **Askrigg, Aysgarth, Bolton Manor and Hawes & High Abbotside wards**

<sup>123</sup> These wards are situated in Wensleydale, and are sparsely populated, with the most significant settlement being Hawes, which contains some 900 electors. Each ward is represented by a single councillor. The number of electors per councillor in Askrigg ward, which comprises the parishes of Askrigg, Bainbridge and Low Abbotside, is 15 per cent below the district average (22 per cent in 2003), while Hawes & High Abbotside ward, which comprises Hawes and High Abbotside parishes, is 12 per cent above the district average (2 per cent in 2003).

<sup>124</sup> At Stage One the District Council proposed that Hawes & High Abbotside ward should remain unchanged, while a new Addlebrough ward should comprise Askrigg ward together with Aysgarth and Thornton Rust parishes (currently in Aysgarth ward). It stated that the two wards would each reflect community identities in the area concerned, achieve good electoral equality by 2003 and form wards of a size which is "geographically acceptable". Under the District Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 11 per cent above the district average in Addlebrough ward and 12 per cent above the district average in Hawes & High Abbotside ward (both 2 per cent in 2003). Although minimal electorate growth is expected in these wards, the degree of under-representation would improve as a consequence of the growth in electorate elsewhere in the district.

<sup>125</sup> The District Labour Party proposed that a new two-member Hawes & Askrigg ward should comprise the existing wards of Askrigg and Hawes & High Abbotside, together with the parishes of Aysgarth, Thoraby and Thornton Rust (in Aysgarth ward). The District Labour Party considered that its proposal would create a ward with a community of identity and of a reasonable geographical size. Under its proposal for a 33-member council, the number of electors per councillor would be 16 per cent above the district average in Hawes & Askrigg ward (5 per cent above in 2003).

<sup>126</sup> The Constituency Liberal Democrats proposed a single-member Bainbridge ward, on identical boundaries to the existing Askrigg ward, for this area. Under its proposal the number of electors per councillor would remain at 22 per cent below the district average in 2003. While recognising that this ward would have fewer electors than the district average, they considered that the topography and community identity of the ward, together with their proposals for wards to the east, supported such a configuration. We also received a representation from Aysgarth & District Parish Council, which represents the parishes of Aysgarth, Bishopdale, Newbiggin, Thoraby and Thornton Rust. The Parish Council expressed concern at the District Council's proposals, to divide its constituent parishes between more than one district ward, which it stated could cause problems for the administration of the joint parish council.

<sup>127</sup> In arriving at our draft recommendations, we carefully considered the proposals put forward in this area. While both the District Council's

proposals and the District Labour Party's proposals would secure improved electoral equality, the District Council's proposals would provide better electoral equality, particularly in 2003. We considered that we were unable to accept the Liberal Democrats' argument that the area should be significantly over-represented as compared to the rest of the district, particularly since good alternative arrangements had been submitted by other respondents. Furthermore we judged that the District Council's proposals would generally reflect existing community ties and facilitate a good electoral scheme in the rest of the district. We were sympathetic to the concerns of Aysgarth & District Parish Council with regard to the administration of its joint parish council, but considered that the need to achieve fair electoral arrangements across the district outweighed the possible disadvantages of including constituent parishes in neighbouring district wards. We therefore adopted the District Council's proposals as part of our draft recommendations.

<sup>128</sup> At Stage Three Richmond Conservative Association supported the retention of the existing Askrigg ward. Aysgarth & District Parish Council reiterated its Stage One submission and argued that the existing arrangements are preferable to those contained in our draft recommendations. The Parish Council stated that it was particularly concerned about the administration of the joint parish council if its constituent parishes did not lie wholly within one ward.

<sup>129</sup> We have considered the views which we have received in this area. Both respondents have supported the retention of the existing district warding arrangements in this area. However, as noted in our draft recommendations, we remain concerned at the poor electoral equality which would result if the existing wards were retained and note that any modifications to the draft recommendations to retain this area within a single ward would also have a detrimental effect on electoral equality. In the absence of other alternative proposals, we are confirming our draft recommendations for the wards of Hawes & High Abbotside and Addlebrough as final.

<sup>130</sup> Bolton Manor ward, which comprises the parishes of Castle Bolton with East & West Bolton, Preston-under-Scar, Redmire, Wensley and West Witton, is served by a single councillor who represents 10 per cent fewer electors than the district average (15 per cent in 2003). Aysgarth

ward, which comprises the parishes of Aysgarth, Bishopdale, Burton-cum-Walden, Carperby-cum-Thoresby, Newbiggin, Thoraby and Thornton Rust, is served by a single councillor who represents 6 per cent fewer electors than the district average (13 per cent in 2003).

<sup>131</sup> At Stage One, in order to address the relative over-representation in the area, the District Council proposed a new single-member Bolton Castle ward, comprising all of the existing Bolton Manor ward except West Witton parish, together with Carperby-cum-Thoresby parish (in Aysgarth ward) and Bellerby parish (in Leyburn ward). It also proposed a new single-member Penhill ward, comprising the parishes of Bishopdale, Burton-cum-Walden, Newbiggin and Thoraby (in Aysgarth ward), Carlton Highdale and Carlton Town parishes (in Middleham & Coverdale ward) and West Witton parish (in Bolton Manor ward). The District Council stated that its proposals would provide good electoral equality while combining parishes which were, in the main, linked by good communication routes. Under the District Council's proposal the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent above the average in Bolton Castle ward (1 per cent above in 2003) and 6 per cent above the average in Penhill ward (2 per cent below in 2003).

<sup>132</sup> The District Labour Party proposed a new two-member Redmire & Witton ward in this area, comprising the existing Bolton Manor ward, Middleham & Coverdale ward except Middleham parish, Burton-cum-Walden and Carperby-cum-Thoresby parishes (in Aysgarth ward) and Thornton Steward parish (in Urevale ward). It stated that this configuration would achieve improved electoral equality while retaining important local links. Under its proposal for a 33-member council the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent above the district average in Redmire & Witton ward (1 per cent below in 2003).

<sup>133</sup> The Constituency Liberal Democrats proposed a new single-member Bolton Castle ward which would comprise the existing Bolton Manor ward and Carperby-cum-Thoresby parish (in Aysgarth ward), while a new single-member Penhill ward would comprise the existing Aysgarth ward, except Carperby-cum-Thoresby parish, together with Carlton Town and Carlton Highdale parishes (in Middleham & Coverdale ward). Under the Liberal Democrats' proposal, by 2003 the number of

electors per councillor would be 1 per cent above the average in Bolton Castle ward and 7 per cent below the average in Penhill ward. Aysgarth & District Parish Council considered that there are “physical boundaries which would make it difficult to ward together Thoraby, Bishopdale, Newbiggin, Burton-cum-Walden and West Witton with Carlton Town and Carlton Highdale”.

134 In arriving at our draft recommendations, we considered the options available for reconfiguring wards in this area. While we noted Aysgarth & District Parish Council’s concerns, we also recognised that the other three proposals received for this area would all combine Carlton Highdale and Carlton Town parishes in a ward with parishes to the west. Each of the three proposals would offer some improvement in electoral equality in comparison with the current arrangements. However, by 2003 the District Council’s proposals are projected to provide a comparable level of improvement and, we judged, combine parishes with similar community identities and interests, together with facilitating our proposals for neighbouring wards. We therefore included the District Council’s proposals for the wards of Bolton Manor and Penhill as part of our draft recommendations.

135 At Stage Three Richmond Conservative Association opposed our draft recommendations, instead supporting the retention of the existing Aysgarth and Bolton Manor wards. As noted above, the Conservative Association, the District Council and Middleham Town Council opposed our draft recommendations to include the parishes of Carlton Highdale and Carlton Town in a new Penhill ward. Bellerby Parish Council opposed the proposal to transfer the parish to the new Bolton Castle ward. Burton-cum-Walden Parish Council expressed concern at the proposed Penhill ward, as it considered that it would not reflect existing community identities.

136 As discussed above, we do not consider that the proposal to transfer Carlton Highdale and Carlton Town parishes to Middleham ward (supported by the District Council, the Conservative Association and Middleham Town Council) would achieve a satisfactory level of electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. Similarly we consider that the retention of the existing warding arrangements as favoured by the Conservative Association, and Bellerby Parish Council in its own area, would also result in unacceptable levels of electoral equality in

the two wards concerned. Therefore, we remain of the view that the achievement of reasonable electoral equality, taking into consideration the geography and community identities of the areas concerned, is best served by our draft recommendations for the wards of Bolton Manor and Penhill, which we are confirming as final.

## Electoral Cycle

137 We received no comments at Stage One regarding change to the current electoral cycle for Richmondshire as permitted under the existing legislation. We therefore proposed no change to the current cycle of whole-council elections for the district.

138 At Stage Three a resident of Leyburn opposed the proposal to retain whole-council elections for the district, arguing that “many people would welcome an electoral system in which part of the council is elected on a more frequent basis”. We have reconsidered our draft recommendation but consider that there is insufficient evidence in support of a change to the existing electoral cycle. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendation as final.

## Conclusions

139 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided substantially to endorse our draft recommendations, subject to modifying the boundary between Melsonby and Newsham with Eppleby wards.

140 We conclude that, in Richmondshire:

- (a) a council of 34 members should be retained;
- (b) there should be 24 wards, two fewer than at present;
- (c) the boundaries of all but two of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of two wards;
- (d) the whole council should continue to be elected together every four years.

141 Figure 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1998 and 2003 electorate figures.

142 As Figure 4 shows, our recommendations

Figure 4 :  
Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	1998 electorate		2003 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	34	34	34	34
Number of wards	26	24	26	24
Average number of electors per councillor	943	943	1,037	1,037
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	16	8	17	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	10	1	11	0

would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 16 to eight, with only one ward varying by more than 20 per cent from the district average. This improved level of electoral equality would improve further in 2003, with only one ward, Colburn, varying by more than 10 per cent from the average, at 11 per cent. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

### Final Recommendation

Richmondshire District Council should comprise 34 councillors serving 24 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A. The whole Council should continue to be elected together every four years.

## Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

<sup>143</sup> In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different district

wards, it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, in our draft recommendations report we proposed consequential changes to the warding arrangements for the parishes of Hunton and Richmond to reflect the proposed district wards.

<sup>144</sup> Hunton Parish Council is currently served by five councillors and the parish is unwarded. In order to facilitate its proposals for district warding in this area, the District Council proposed that Hunton parish should be warded into two, one parish ward covering the residential area which borders Scotton parish, to be called The Larches, and the other covering the remainder of the parish, to be called Hunton. The two wards would be represented by two and three parish councillors respectively. For district warding purposes, the proposed The Larches parish ward would form part of a modified Scotton district ward and the proposed Hunton parish ward would form part of new Hornby Castle district ward.

<sup>145</sup> In response to our consultation report, no further comments were received from the District Council. Hunton Parish Council proposed an increase in the number of councillors serving the parish and also considered that we should instruct the District Council to carry out a parish boundary review to transfer the proposed The Larches parish

ward from Hunton parish to Scotton parish. However we do not consider that there is a clear case for an increase to the number of councillors serving Hunton parish. Moreover with regard to the request for a parish boundary review, it lies outside our remit to give such an instruction. We suggest that such a request should be forwarded to the District Council for their consideration.

<sup>146</sup> Having considered all the evidence received, and in light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for warding Hunton parish as final.

### **Final Recommendation**

Hunton Parish Council should comprise five councillors, as at present, representing two wards: (Hunton returning three councillors) and The Larches (two). The parish ward boundary should reflect the proposed district ward boundary in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

<sup>147</sup> Richmond Town Council is currently served by 12 councillors who represent three wards – Central, East and West – which are coterminous with the district wards. Central ward is represented by three parish councillors, East ward by five and West ward by four. In the light of our draft recommendations, for district warding in Richmond, in which we proposed three two-member wards for the town retaining the existing ward names, we proposed modifying the parish ward boundaries to correspond with the district ward boundaries in the town as proposed by the District Council. We proposed that each parish ward should return four councillors.

<sup>148</sup> In response to our consultation report, Richmond Town Council commented on the district ward boundaries for Richmond Central and Richmond East wards. However, having considered all the evidence received, and in light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for warding Richmond parish as final.

### **Final Recommendation**

Richmond Town Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Central, East and West each returning four councillors. The boundaries between the three parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

<sup>149</sup> As part of the District Council's Stage One submission, proposals were made for warding Brompton-on-Swale and Brough with St Giles parishes to facilitate its district warding proposals. However, as we did not endorse the District Council's proposals for district wards in these areas we did not propose any changes to the electoral arrangements of the two parishes concerned.

<sup>150</sup> At Stage One we received two further requests relating to parishing arrangements. Richmondshire District Labour Party considered that the District Council should "review the parish boundaries of Hipswell, Scotton and West Colburn to enable the creation of flexible wards within Catterick Garrison". We noted that we are unable to review parish boundaries as part of the present, and that the District Council has the power to review parish boundaries under the Local Government and Rating Act 1997.

<sup>151</sup> We also heard from a resident of Leyburn who requested an increase in the number of councillors serving Leyburn Town Council from eight to 11. However, we noted that we had not received such a request from the Town Council itself, and did not include a recommendation for change as part of our draft recommendations. In his Stage Three submission, the resident argued that "when one bears in mind the complexity of Leyburn's commercial affairs, one can readily make an argument for a further one or two councillors to be appointed in order that the complex affairs of our town receive proper attention". However, in the absence of evidence of widespread support for such a change, we are not proposing to modify the electoral arrangements of Leyburn Town Council.

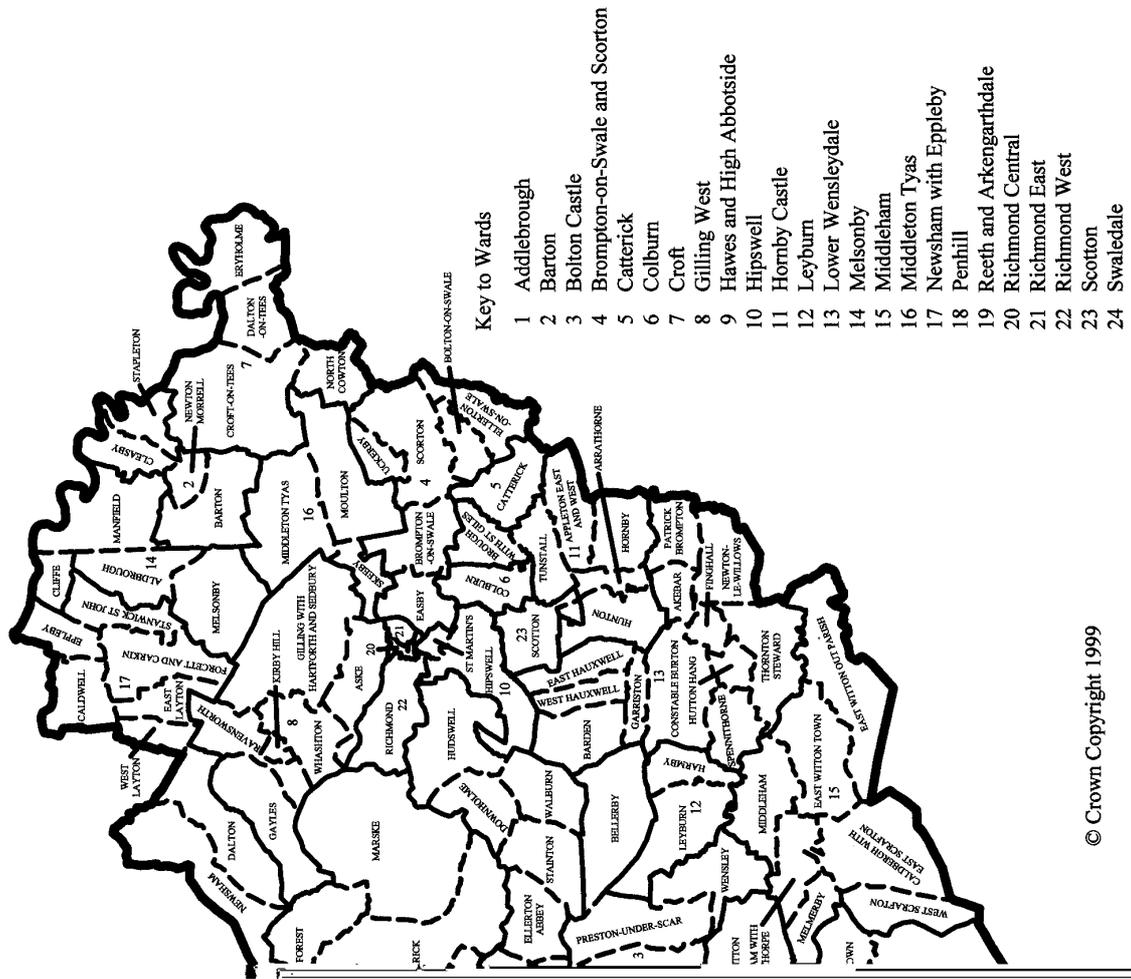
<sup>152</sup> In our draft recommendations report we

proposed that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the district, and are confirming this as final.

### **Final Recommendation**

For parish councils, whole-council elections should continue to take place every four years, on the same cycle as that of the District Council.

Map 2:  
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Richmondshire



## 6. NEXT STEPS

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

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

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

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



# APPENDIX A

## Final Recommendations for Richmondshire: Detailed Mapping

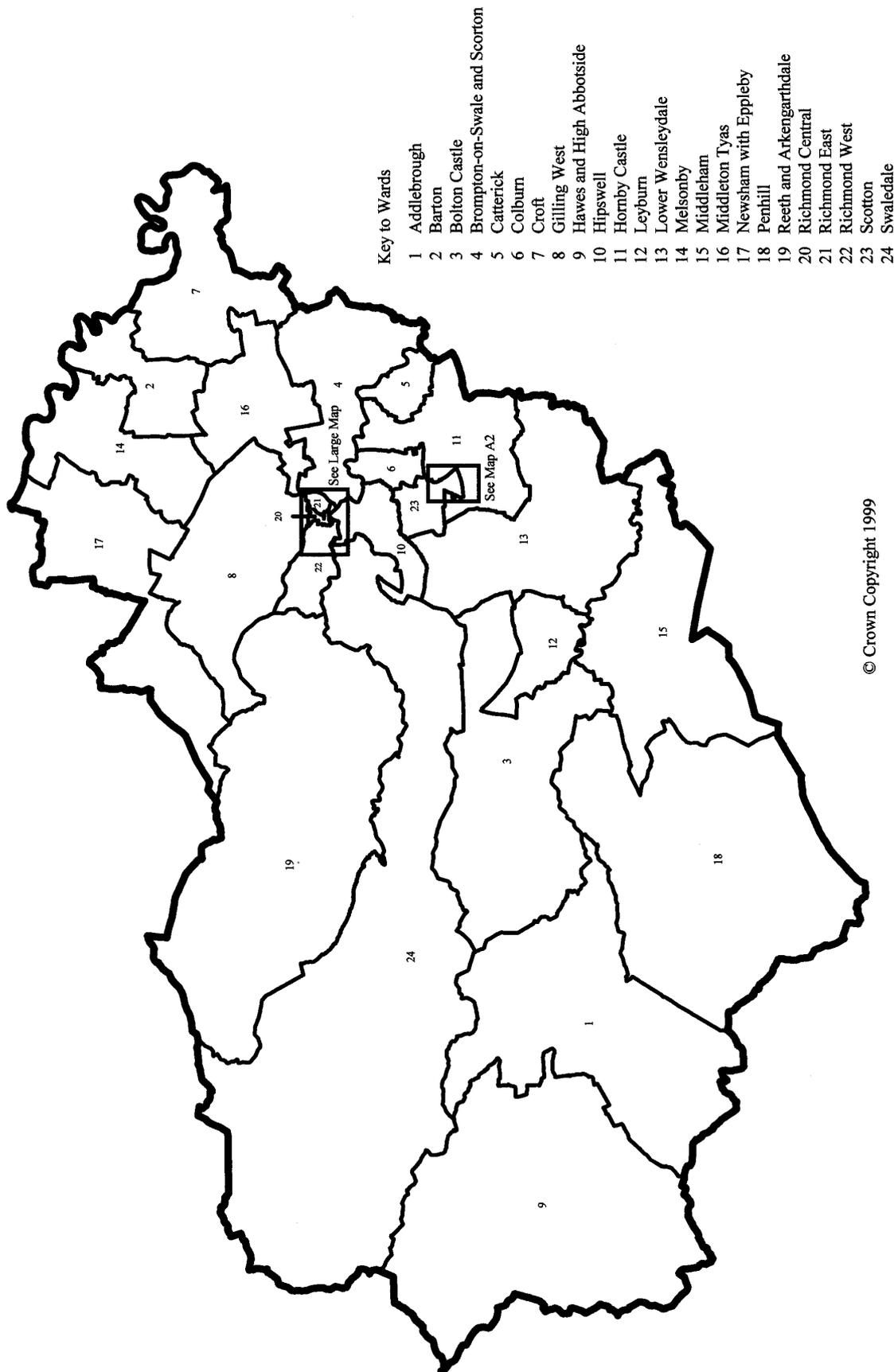
The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for the Richmondshire area.

**Map A1** illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the district and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail on Map A2 and the large map inserted at the back of the report.

**Map A2** illustrates the proposed warding of Hunton parish.

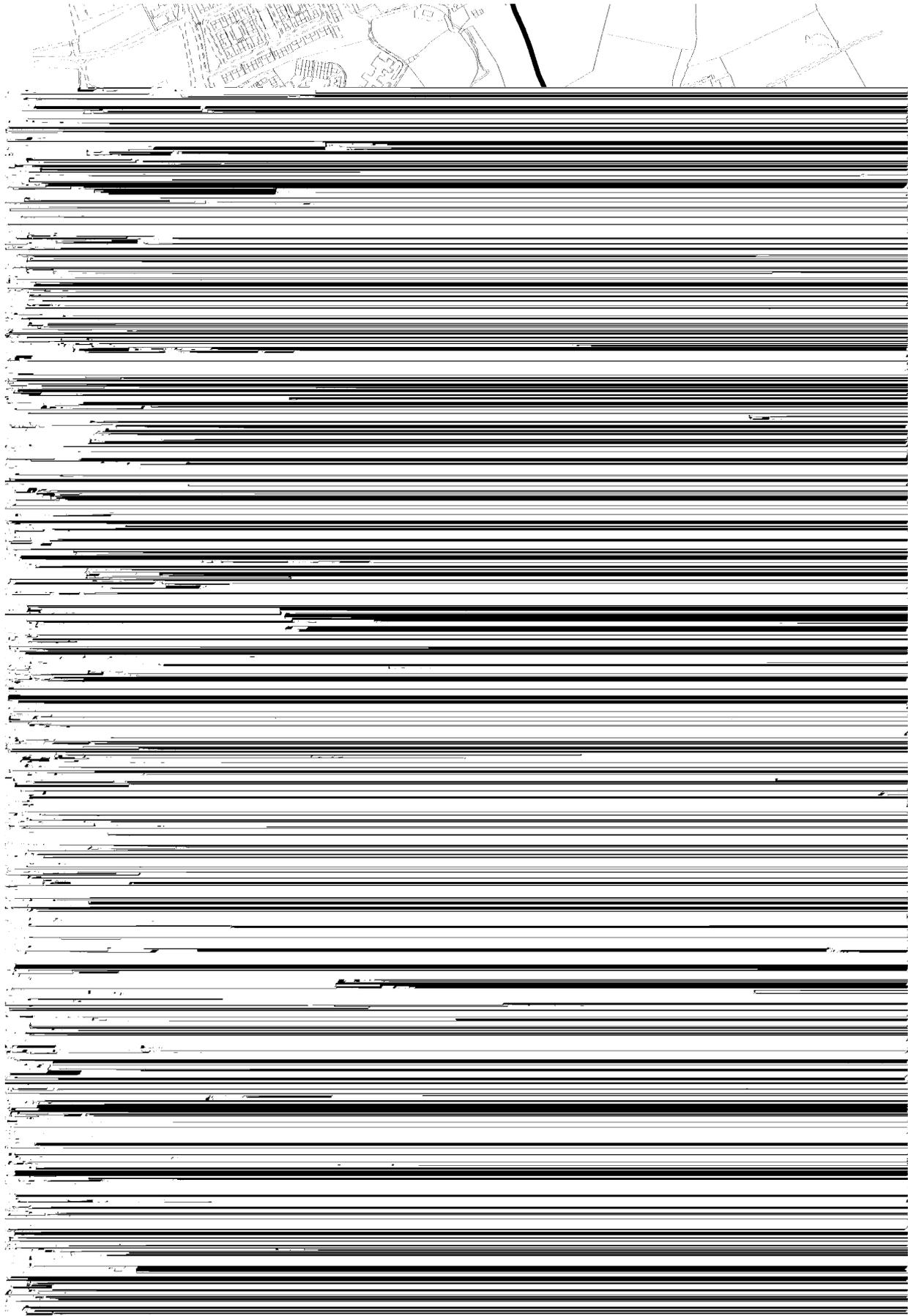
The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the proposed warding arrangements for Richmond town.

Map A1:  
*Final Recommendations for Richmondshire: Key Map*



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*Map A2:  
Proposed warding of Hunton parish*





# APPENDIX B

## Draft Recommendations for Richmondshire

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of two wards, where our draft proposals are set out below.

*Figure B1:  
The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Constituent Areas*

Ward name	Constituent areas
Melsonby	Barton ward (part – Manfield parish); Stanwick ward (part – Aldbrough and Melsonby parishes)
Newsham with Eppleby	Kirby Hill (part – the parishes of Caldwell, Dalton, East Layton, Forcett & Carkin, Newsham and West Layton); Stanwick ward (part – Eppleby and Stanwick St John parishes); Barton ward (part – Cliffe parish)

*Figure B2:  
The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward*

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Melsonby	1	934	934	-1	990	990	-5
Newsham with Eppleby	1	961	961	2	979	979	-6

*Source: Electorate figures are based on material provided by Richmondshire District 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 district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.*





