

LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND

FINAL
RECOMMENDATIONS
ON THE FUTURE
ELECTORAL
ARRANGEMENTS FOR
ALNWICK IN
NORTHUMBERLAND

*Report to the Secretary of State for
the Environment*

March 1997

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

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Local Government Commission for England

25 March 1997

Dear Secretary of State

On 19 March 1996 the Commission commenced a periodic electoral review of the district of Alnwick under the Local Government Act 1992. It published its draft recommendations in October 1996 and undertook a nine-week period of consultation.

The Commission has now formulated its final recommendations in the light of the consultation. It has, in some areas, confirmed its draft recommendations, although it has modified some of its initial warding proposals in the light of further evidence. This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in the area.

The Commission is therefore recommending to you that Alnwick should be served by 30 councillors representing 16 wards, but that some changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the Commission's statutory criteria. It is recommended that the whole Council should continue to be elected together every four years.

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 Alnwick on 19 March 1996. It published its draft recommendations on electoral arrangements on 31 October 1996, after which it undertook a nine-week period of consultation.

- **This report summarises the submissions received by the Commission during consultation on its draft recommendations, and offers its final recommendations to the Secretary of State.**

The Commission found that the existing electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Alnwick because:

- **in nine of the 17 wards, the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district;**
- **in five of these wards, the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **in one ward, Elsdon, the number of electors represented by the single councillor varies from the average by 45 per cent.**

The Commission's final recommendations for the District Council's electoral arrangements (Figure 1) are that:

- **Alnwick should be served by 30 councillors, compared with 29 at present;**
- **there should be 16 wards, rather than 17 as at present;**
- **the ward boundaries of 11 of the existing wards should be modified, while six wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years, with the next elections taking place in 1999.**

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 12 of the 16 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average, both initially and in 2001.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, who will not make an Order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 5 May 1997.

Figure 1:
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1 Alnwick Castle	3	Alnwick Castle ward (part - the parish ward of Alnwick Castle as amended)	Maps 2 and A1
2 Alnwick Clayport	2	Alnwick Clayport ward (the parish ward of Alnwick Clayport); Alnwick Castle ward (part); Alnwick Hotspur ward (part)	Maps 2 and A1
3 Alnwick Hotspur	2	Alnwick Hotspur ward (part - the parish ward of Alnwick Hotspur as amended)	Maps 2 and A1
4 Amble Central	2	Amble East ward (part); Amble West ward (part)	Maps 2 and A2/A3
5 Amble East	2	Amble East ward (part - the parish of Hauxley and the parish ward of Amble East as amended); Warkworth ward (part - the parish of Togston)	Maps 2 and A2/A3
6 Amble West	2	Amble West ward (part - the parish ward of Amble West as amended)	Maps 2 and A2/A3
7 Embleton	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Embleton and Newton-by-the-Sea)	Map 2
8 Harbottle and Elsdon	1	Harbottle ward (the parishes of Alwinton, Biddlestone, Harbottle, Hepple and Netherton); Elsdon ward (part - the parish of Elsdon)	Map 2
9 Hedgeley	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Edlingham, Eglingham and Hedgeley)	Map 2
10 Lesbury	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Alnmouth, Denwick and Lesbury)	Map 2
11 Longframlington	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Brinkburn and Longframlington)	Map 2
12 Longhoughton with Craster and Rennington	2	Craster and Rennington ward (the parishes of Craster and Rennington); Longhoughton ward (the parish of Longhoughton)	Map 2
13 Rothbury and South Rural	3	Rothbury ward (the parishes of Rothbury, Snitter, Thropton and Whitton & Tosson); Elsdon ward (part - the parishes of Hesleyhurst, Hollinghill, Nunnykirk and Rothley)	Map 2
14 Shilbottle	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Felton, Newton-on-the-Moor & Swarland and Shilbottle)	Map 2

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

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
15	Warkworth	2	Warkworth ward (part - the parishes of Acklington and Warkworth)	Map 2
16	Whittingham	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Alnham, Callaly, Cartington, Glanton and Whittingham)	Map 2

1. INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Alnwick in Northumberland.

2 The Commission has now reviewed all the districts in Northumberland as part of its programme of periodic electoral reviews of all principal local authority areas in England. This is the Commission's first review of the electoral arrangements for Alnwick. The last such review was undertaken by the Commission's predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in October 1975 (Report No. 90). The electoral arrangements of Northumberland County Council were last reviewed in January 1980 (Report No. 370). It is intended that a review of the County Council's electoral arrangements will follow in due course.

3 In undertaking these reviews, the Commission is required to have regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992:
 - (a) to reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
 - (b) to secure effective and convenient local government;
- the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements* contained in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 The Commission has also had regard to its own *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (published in March 1996 and supplemented in September 1996). This sets out its approach to the reviews.

5 The review of Alnwick was in four stages (Figure 2).

6 Stage One commenced on 19 March 1996. The Commission wrote to Alnwick District Council inviting it to make proposals for its future electoral arrangements. Copies of that letter were sent to Northumberland County Council, the other borough and district councils in Northumberland, the Northumbria Police Authority, the local authority associations, the Northumberland Association of Local Councils, parish and town councils in the district, Members of Parliament and Members of the European Parliament with constituency interests in the district, and the headquarters of the main political parties. The Commission also placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council itself to publicise the review.

7 At Stage Two the Commission considered all the representations received during Stage One and formulated its draft recommendations.

8 Stage Three began on 31 October 1996 with the publication of the Commission's report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Alnwick in Northumberland*. Copies were sent to all those to whom the Commission wrote at the start of the review as well as to those who had written to the Commission during Stage One, inviting comments on the preliminary conclusions. Again the Commission placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the report more widely.

9 Finally, during Stage Four, the Commission re-considered its draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation.

*Figure 2:
Stages of the Review*

Stage	Description
One	Submission of proposals to the Commission
Two	The Commission's analysis and deliberation
Three	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation
Four	Final deliberation and report to the Secretary of State for the Environment

2. CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

10 Alnwick is a predominantly rural district of some 108,000 hectares, with a population of just over 30,000. The east coast is clustered with small villages, while the inland area is agricultural, extending to the moorlands and fells of the Northumberland National Park. The three main towns are Alnwick, the county town, Amble, a sea port, and Rothbury, which acts as the administrative centre for the rural area to the west. There are 41 parishes in the district.

11 In order to compare levels of electoral equality between wards, the Commission calculated the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward (councillor:elector ratio) varies from the average for the district in percentage terms. In the text which follows this calculation may be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

12 Since the last electoral review over two decades ago, there has been significant housing development within the two main towns of Alnwick and Amble which has led to electoral imbalances in some wards. Electors in the relatively urban ward of Amble West, for example, have become relatively under-represented on the District Council, while some large rural wards such as Elsdon and Harbottle are now over-represented. The District Council envisages further localised development over the next five years.

13 The current electorate of the district is 24,740 (February 1996), which is projected by the District Council to increase to almost 27,200 by the year 2001. There are 29 members who are elected from 17 wards (Figure 3 and Map 1). Eight wards are represented by a single councillor, six wards by two councillors, and three wards by three councillors. In the main, the town wards are multi-member and the rural wards are single-member. Elections for the whole Council take place every four years, the next being in May 1999.

14 The current average number of electors per councillor in Alnwick is 853, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 938 by the year 2001. There are currently nine wards in which the number of electors per councillor varies from the average by more than 10 per cent, including five wards in which it varies by more than 20 per cent. In Elsdon ward, the number of electors per councillor varies by 45 per cent from the average, so that the councillor for this ward represents just 466 electors compared to the district average of 853.

Map 1:
Existing Wards in Alnwick



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Figure 3:
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	1996				2001 (Projected)		
	Number of councillors	Electorate	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Alnwick Castle	3	2,670	890	4	2,830	943	1
2 Alnwick Clayport	2	1,466	733	-14	1,556	778	-17
3 Alnwick Hotspur	2	1,833	917	7	2,135	1,068	14
4 Amble East	3	2,632	877	3	2,704	901	-4
5 Amble West	2	2,186	1,093	28	2,692	1,346	44
6 Craster & Rennington	1	583	583	-32	611	611	-35
7 Elsdon	1	466	466	-45	470	470	-50
8 Embleton	1	764	764	-10	858	858	-9
9 Harbottle	1	622	622	-27	628	628	-33
10 Hedgeley	1	774	774	-9	774	774	-17
11 Lesbury	2	1,476	738	-13	1,556	778	-17
12 Longframlington	1	966	966	13	1,004	1,004	7
13 Longhoughton	1	920	920	8	1,066	1,066	14
14 Rothbury	2	2,129	1,065	25	2,461	1,231	31
15 Shilbottle	3	2,463	821	-4	2,897	966	3
16 Warkworth	2	2,007	1,004	18	2,127	1,064	13
17 Whittingham	1	783	783	-8	829	829	-12
Totals	29	24,740	—	—	27,198	—	—
Averages	—	—	853	—	—	938	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Alnwick 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, electors in Elsdon ward are relatively over-represented by 45 per cent, while those in Longframlington are relatively under-represented by 13 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

15 During Stage One, the Commission received submissions from Alnwick District Council, a group of district councillors called the 'Rural Alliance', 18 parish councils and two members of the public. In the light of these representations, the Commission formulated its preliminary conclusions which were set out in its report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Alnwick in Northumberland*. It proposed that Alnwick should continue to be served by 29 councillors, serving 17 wards. The Commission also proposed that:

- (a) in the town of Alnwick, the boundaries between the existing wards of Castle, Clayport and Hotspur be modified;
- (b) in the town of Amble, three new two-member wards, Amble Central, Amble East and Amble West be created from the two existing Amble wards and the parish of Togston;
- (c) the pattern of parishes constituting the present wards of Craster and Rennington, Elsdon, Embleton, Harbottle, Hedgeley, Lesbury, Longframlington, Rothbury, Shilbottle, Warkworth and Whittingham be reconfigured;
- (d) there should be no change to the present ward of Longhoughton.

16 The Commission's draft recommendations generally reflected the views put forward by the District Council in relation to the towns of Alnwick and Amble, and by the Rural Alliance in respect of the rest of the district.

Draft Recommendation

Alnwick District Council should comprise 29 councillors, serving 17 wards. The whole Council should continue to be elected together every four years.

17 The Commission's proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 16 of the 17 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the average. By 2001, the number of electors per councillor was projected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average in 10 wards.

18 The Commission's draft recommendations are summarised in Appendix B.

4. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

19 During the consultation on the Commission's draft recommendations report, 17 submissions were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission.

Alnwick District Council

20 The District Council reaffirmed its previous proposal that the council size should be increased from 29 to 30. It contended that an increase in the number of councillors would assist "in distributing the parishes among wards in such a way as to take account of local community links, whilst also attempting to reduce excessive variances". It supported the Commission's draft recommendations for the towns of Alnwick and Amble, which had been based upon the Council's Stage One submission.

21 The Council also stated that "the Commission has indicated that it is required to have regard to local ties which may be broken, and to the interests and identities of local communities. However, in several instances, it appears that these aspects (presumably due to an understandable lack of local knowledge) appear to have been sacrificed for the purposes of arithmetical electoral equality".

22 In its revised proposals, the Council proposed a ward comprising the parishes of Embleton and Newton-by-the-Sea, and a further ward comprising the parishes of Craster and Rennington. The number of electors per councillor in Embleton ward would vary by 7 per cent from the district average, but in its proposed Craster and Rennington ward, where the number of electors per councillor would vary by 29 per cent under the Council's scheme, it argued that electoral equality "should take second place to local community ties".

23 The Council's revised scheme would also see the retention of the existing wards of Elsdon, Hedgeley, Lesbury, Longframlington and Shilbottle.

24 To address the electoral inequality in Harbottle ward the Council proposed that it be enlarged to include the parishes of Alnham and Snitter, resulting in a ward comprising the parishes of

Alnham, Alwinton, Biddlestone, Harbottle, Hepple, Netherton and Snitter. The Council proposed that Whittingham ward should comprise the parishes of Callaly, Cartington, Glanton and Whittingham, and considered that a "moderate" level of electoral inequality should be accepted due to the combined effects of sparsity, topography and community links.

25 The Commission's draft recommendation to split the parishes of Acklington and Warkworth was not considered appropriate, the Council's view being that Shilbottle ward should remain unchanged and that Warkworth ward should comprise the parishes of Warkworth and Acklington.

26 Finally, the District Council proposed that the Commission's draft recommendation for a two-member Rothbury ward should be extended to include the parish of Whitton & Tosson in addition to those of Rothbury and Thropton. However, it acknowledged that the ward would remain considerably under-represented, varying from the average number of electors per councillor by 24 per cent.

The Rural Alliance

27 The Rural Alliance, which the Commission understands is a group of district councillors representing rural wards, formed to address "the imbalance of urban political members and the sparsely populated rural areas", agreed in general terms with most of the District Council's Stage Three proposals, although it identified some specific reservations. It asked the Commission to bear in mind three issues of principle. Firstly, it proposed that the balance of representation throughout the district should not be disturbed, agreeing with the District Council's proposal that there should be 15 members representing the "urban" wards of Alnwick, Amble and Rothbury, with 14 or 15 members representing the rural wards.

28 Secondly, it contended that the rural wards should continue to be "represented by single members because of the needs and cohesion of the scattered communities".

29 Finally, it stated that the rural wards had problems of sparsity of population, and distance between communities. It contended that it had been very difficult to address the electoral equality issue without splitting communities, “which is what our group attempted to do [in its Stage One submission to the Commission”].

Members of Parliament

30 Alan Beith, MP for Berwick-upon-Tweed, expressed concern that some of the Commission’s draft proposals would mean a “loss of identity and an unreasonable sacrifice of distinct representation”. He endorsed the views of Whitton & Tosson Parish Council, outlined in paragraph 39, in relation to its area. He contended that Craster and Embleton were distinct areas and, in his view, should continue to be separate wards and that the proposed Hedgeley ward lacked “any overall sense of community.” Finally, he stated that Shilbottle and Warkworth are both large villages, different in character, identity and tradition and they would “make a particularly unnatural marriage”.

Berwick-upon-Tweed Constituency Liberal Democrats

31 The Berwick-upon-Tweed Constituency Liberal Democrats supported the Commission’s proposals for Alnwick town, Amble town, Longhoughton and Longframlington. However, the party argued that changes should not be made to existing wards which are near to an acceptable level of electoral equality, and could be maintained within an overall framework, adding “unnecessary change serves only to confuse the electorate and reduces identification between councillors and their electorate”.

Northumberland Association of Local Councils

32 The Association commented that there had been little demand for change at a local level, and that people were generally content with current electoral arrangements. It expressed concern that some parishes had been linked “simply to achieve broad electoral equality”, and added that it was “comfortable” with electoral variances above 20 per cent, “in this county of such marked contrasts”.

33 The Association put forward specific comments for a number of wards. In relation to the proposed Hedgeley ward, it stated that although the parishes were all rural, they had significant differences in character. In the proposed wards of Elsdon, Harbottle and Longframlington, it was “not convinced that the proposals would bring any noticeable benefits, and some currently linked communities would lose their ties”. The proposal to divide the existing Shilbottle ward had received conflicting views amongst its members, and therefore the Association decided not to express a preference.

Parish and Town Councils

34 Representations were received from ten parish councils during Stage Three. The parish councils of Felton, Hepple and Harbottle supported the Commission’s draft recommendations in relation to the district wards for their own areas.

35 Newton-by-the-Sea Parish Council opposed the recommendation that it should leave Embleton ward and instead form part of a modified Hedgeley ward. The Council argued that it shared close links with the parish of Embleton, and had never had a “close liaison” with the parishes of Eglingham and Hedgeley. This view was supported by Embleton Parish Council which agreed that to separate the two parishes would sever long-established community ties.

36 Hedgeley Parish Council could “not see any reason to change the present [arrangements]” and argued that it has closer ties with Edlingham, while having no connection with the parish of Newton-by-the-Sea.

37 The parish councils of Shilbottle and Newton-on-the-Moor & Swarland both expressed the view that they would be better represented if the current electoral arrangements for Shilbottle ward were retained. Newton-on-the-Moor & Swarland Parish Council added that it opposed joining with the parishes of Acklington and Felton for “historical, social, ecclesiastical and representational reasons”.

38 Rennington Parish Council strongly opposed the proposal to add the parish to the present Lesbury ward. The Council believed that “the new ward would be an arbitrary linking together, for purely arithmetical purposes, of parishes which are not united by any historical traditions or common identity”. It further contended that the District

Council's proposal to link Rennington parish with the parishes of Craster and Embleton was "a much better and more realistic proposal".

39 Whitton & Tosson Parish Council objected to the proposal that it should no longer be part of Rothbury ward and should instead become part of Elsdon ward. It contended that all its connections are with Rothbury, and that the majority of Whitton residents live on the Jubilee Crescent estate, which lies partly within Rothbury parish. The majority of the residents live within walking distance of the services provided in Rothbury, while Elsdon, it contended, is a 25-minute drive away. The Parish Council considered that if it were to become part of Elsdon ward there was likely to be local ill-feeling.

Other Representations

40 The Commission received a further three submissions during Stage Three in relation to this review. District Councillor Mrs Bolam, representing Harbottle ward, considered that the Commission should consider certain special cases such as the wards of Elsdon and Shilbottle which might justify a larger degree of over-representation than would normally be acceptable.

41 County Councillor Thorne, representing Shilbottle division, opposed the proposal to move Brinkburn parish from Longframlington ward into the proposed Elsdon ward, stating that Brinkburn and Longframlington are socially, economically and physically intertwined.

42 District Councillor Sandford, representing Rothbury ward, proposed that Elsdon parish be transferred to the Harbottle ward, and that Snitter parish remain with Rothbury ward. Both these proposals were argued on community and geographical grounds.

5. ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

43 As indicated previously, the Commission's prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Alnwick was to achieve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria and to Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the ratio of electors being "as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough".

44 However, the Commission's function is not merely arithmetical, for three reasons. First, its recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on assumptions as to changes in the number and distribution of local government electors likely to take place within the ensuing five years. Second, it must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries, and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken. Third, the Commission has had to consider the desirability of servicing effective and convenient local government, and reflecting the interests and identities of local communities.

45 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral system which provides for exactly the same number of electors per councillor in every ward of an authority. There must be a degree of flexibility. In conducting its electoral reviews, the Commission's predecessor, the LGBC, considered that variations from the average number of electors per councillor for an authority as a whole should be kept to the absolute minimum: a variation of up to plus or minus 10 per cent in a particular ward may be regarded as being "acceptable", but variations in excess of plus or minus 20 per cent were generally accepted only in very exceptional circumstances.

46 The Commission's view is that the LGBC's approach to this issue had merit insofar as it combined a clearly defined tolerance threshold with the degree of flexibility necessary to achieve reasonable levels of electoral equality across a local authority's area. Accordingly, the Commission has decided to adopt this approach for the purposes of its reviews.

47 In its March 1996 *Guidance*, the Commission expressed the view that "proposals for changes in electoral arrangements should therefore be based on variations in each ward of no more than plus or minus 10 per cent from the average councillor:elector ratio for the authority, having regard to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates. Imbalances in excess of plus or minus 20 per cent may be acceptable, but only in highly exceptional circumstances, and will have to be justified in full". However, as the Commission emphasised in its September 1996 supplement to the *Guidance*: "While the Commission accepts that absolute equality of representation is likely to be unattainable, it considers that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, such equality should be the starting point in any electoral review".

Electorate Projections

48 The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2001, projecting an increase in the electorate of 2,458 over the five-year period, from 24,740 to 27,198. The Council has estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period. Reasonable estimates have been made of the change in electorate that will arise. The Commission accepts that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to projected electorates, is content that they represent the best estimates that can be reasonably be made at this time.

Council Size

49 The Commission indicated in its March 1996 *Guidance* that it would normally expect the number of councillors serving a borough or district council to be in the range of 30 to 60.

50 Alnwick District Council is presently served by 29 councillors representing 17 wards. The District Council proposed an increase to 30 councillors (17 wards) during Stage One of this review. In its draft recommendations report, the Commission considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received. The Commission concluded that the statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would best be served by a council size of 29 members. Although that number falls just below the Commission's indicative range, the Commission considered, on the balance of evidence available at that time, that the proposed council size would provide for proper representation of the electorate.

51 Having now considered its draft recommendations in the light of the representations received during the consultation period, the Commission has concluded, along with the District Council, that the statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would best be served by a council size of 30.

Electoral Arrangements

52 Having considered all representations received during Stage Three of the review, the Commission has further considered its draft recommendations. The following areas (existing wards) are covered in turn:

- (a) Alnwick town (the wards of Castle, Clayport and Hotspur);
- (b) Amble town (the wards of East and West);
- (c) the western wards of Elsdon, Harbottle and Rothbury;
- (d) the southern wards of Shilbottle and Warkworth;
- (e) the eastern wards of Craster & Rennington, Embleton, Lesbury and Longhoughton;
- (f) the central and northern wards of Hedgeley, Longframlington and Whittingham.

Alnwick town (Castle, Clayport and Hotspur)

53 In its draft recommendations report, the Commission put forward the District Council's proposal for minor boundary changes to reduce the electoral imbalances within the three wards of Alnwick town. This involved transferring 80 electors from Castle ward to Clayport ward, and 139 electors from Hotspur ward to Clayport.

54 During Stage Three, the District Council reaffirmed its support for this proposal, while the Berwick-upon-Tweed Constituency Liberal Democrats also endorsed the Commission's recommendation. As a result of these ward boundary modifications, and assuming a council size of 30 members, the number of electors per councillor in Castle, Clayport and Hotspur wards would vary by 5 per cent, 2 per cent and 3 per cent respectively from the district average in 1996 (1 per cent, 2 per cent and 10 per cent in 2001). Given this support, and the good level of electoral equality achieved in these wards, the Commission has decided to confirm its draft recommendations for the Alnwick town wards as final.

Amble town (East and West)

55 In its draft recommendations report, the Commission adopted the District Council's proposal for the town (and parish) of Amble to be divided into three two-member wards, incorporating the neighbouring parishes of Hauxley and Togston. A new two-member Amble Central ward would be created comprising part of Amble East and part of Amble West ward (which would retain two-members). Hauxley and Togston would be included in the modified Amble East ward.

56 During the consultation period, the District Council reaffirmed its support for the proposal, while support was also received from the Berwick-upon-Tweed Constituency Liberal Democrats. However, as a consequence of the Commission's recommendations elsewhere in the district and the proposed increase in council size to 30, the electoral inequality in the wards as proposed in the draft recommendations would worsen. To rectify this, the Commission has considered modifications to its draft proposals in respect of Amble and recommends a minor boundary adjustment. The proposal involves transferring a total of 150 electors from Ivy Street and St Lawrences Avenue from the proposed Amble East ward into the proposed Amble Central ward. The Commission considers that such a proposal would improve electoral equality without adversely affecting adherence to the statutory criteria.

57 The number of electors per councillor in the wards of Amble Central, Amble East and Amble West would vary by 17 per cent, 4 per cent and 13 per cent respectively from the district average initially. However, allowing for the projected growth in the town, this figure would fall to under 10 per cent in all three wards by 2001. The

Commission is content that this additional boundary modification is the most appropriate solution for the area, and confirms these wards as its final recommendations for the town of Amble.

The western wards of Elsdon, Harbottle and Rothbury

58 The third-largest town in the district, Rothbury, currently forms part of a two-member ward comprising the parishes of Rothbury, Snitter, Thropton and Whitton & Tosson. The ward is significantly under-represented at present, with the number of electors per councillor 25 per cent above the district average, projected to be 31 per cent by 2001.

59 At Stage One, both the District Council and the Rural Alliance proposed that, in order to improve electoral equality, the Rothbury ward should be modified, although they differed in their detailed proposals. The Commission concluded in its draft recommendations that the balance of advantage lay with the proposal of the Rural Alliance that the ward should comprise solely the parishes of Rothbury and Thropton, with the parishes of Snitter and Whitton & Tosson being transferred to adjacent wards. During the consultation period, however, the Commission received opposition to its proposal.

60 The District Council proposed that Whitton & Tosson remain in the Rothbury ward, arguing that, although this would perpetuate a degree of electoral inequality, it should be considered as a 'special case' on the grounds that, "being more densely populated [than other wards] it is less difficult (in practical terms) to represent". Whitton & Tosson Parish Council also responded during the consultation period, arguing that it should be a part of the Rothbury ward, a view supported by Alan Beith MP.

61 The Commission has reconsidered its draft recommendation in the light of the responses received. It acknowledges that both Thropton and Whitton & Tosson parishes have a close affinity to Rothbury. However, it is equally conscious of the deleterious impact on electoral equality that would result from adding Whitton & Tosson to the proposed two-member Rothbury ward. The Commission is now persuaded that Whitton & Tosson parish should be included with Rothbury and Thropton. However, such a ward would

contain 2,038 electors, which would be significantly under-represented were it to be represented by two members and over-represented if represented by three members.

62 Despite its concerns over recommending a three-member ward for Rothbury which would include a number of rural parishes, as expressed in paragraph 37 of the draft recommendations report, the Commission can see no realistic alternative to this if it is to include Whitton & Tosson parish in the ward. This concern was also voiced during Stage Three by Councillor Mrs Bolam.

63 The Commission therefore proposes to add the rural southern parishes of Hesleyhurst, Hollinghill, Nunnykirk and Rothley (all presently in Elsdon ward) as well as the parish of Snitter (presently in the Rothbury ward) to the ward. This would give the ward enough electors to merit three councillors, thereby improving electoral equality, and would also address the concerns of Whitton & Tosson Parish Council and others. It is acknowledged that electors in the rural southern parishes may not wish to lose 'their' single district councillor, but given the circumstances, including the fact that this area of the district appears to the Commission to relate closely to Rothbury, the Commission is of the view that its recommendation best meets the need for electoral equality while reflecting, as far as possible, the statutory criteria.

64 The number of electors per councillor in the three-member 'Rothbury and South Rural' ward would be just 2 per cent from the district average, both initially and by 2001, and the Commission puts the ward forward as its final recommendation.

The southern wards of Shilbottle and Warkworth

65 In its draft recommendation report, the Commission adopted the Rural Alliance's proposal for a new three-member ward of Shilbottle with Warkworth, which would comprise those two parishes which are of a similar size and electorate. The number of electors per councillor would have been only 2 per cent from the district average.

66 The Commission also proposed that the parishes of Felton and Newton-on-the-Moor & Swarland (currently in Shilbottle ward) should be joined with the parish of Acklington (currently in

Warkworth ward) to form a new two-member ward of Felton. The number of electors per councillor in the proposed ward of Felton would have varied from the district average by just 1 per cent.

67 During Stage Three, the District Council expressed the view that the retention of the current arrangements would be the best option for the area. This was also the view of Newton-on-the-Moor & Swarland Parish Council, which preferred to remain within Shilbottle ward, and Shilbottle Parish Council, which was similarly content with the present arrangements. Alan Beith MP also expressed concern at the Commission's proposals, stating that Acklington had more in common with Warkworth, and that Shilbottle had links with Newton-on-the-Moor & Swarland.

68 Felton Parish Council, however, contended that the Felton ward proposed by the Commission would significantly improve the present arrangements, and the proposal was also supported by the Berwick-upon-Tweed Constituency Liberal Democrats. The Northumberland Association of Local Councils noted the conflicting views of the local parish councils and did not express a preference.

69 The Commission has considered the views expressed and, on the balance of the evidence available, has concluded that the statutory criteria would best be achieved by retaining the existing three-member Shilbottle ward on its present boundary. The number of electors per councillor in the Shilbottle ward would be almost exactly the same as the district average, initially, varying by 7 per cent by 2001. The Commission therefore recommends that the existing Shilbottle district ward is retained, comprising the parishes of Felton, Newton-on-the-Moor and Shilbottle.

70 In the case of Warkworth, the Commission acknowledges the community identity issues raised by the District Council, and the concerns of Alan Beith MP and the Northumberland Association of Local Councils, and concludes that a two-member ward comprising the parishes of Acklington and Warkworth would provide the most appropriate electoral arrangements for the area. The number of electors per councillor in such a ward would vary from the district average by 6 per cent (2 per cent in 2001) and the Commission has decided to confirm this recommendation as final. The recommended ward is effectively the same as at present, but without the parish of Togston, which is recommended to become part of Amble East ward (see paragraph 55).

The eastern wards of Craster & Rennington, Embleton, Lesbury and Longhoughton

71 In its draft recommendations report, the Commission adopted the Rural Alliance's proposal for a single-member ward covering the parishes of Craster and Embleton, where the number of electors per councillor would vary from the district average by 3 per cent. It also proposed that the parish of Rennington be linked to the parishes of Alnmouth, Denwick and Lesbury to form a new two-member ward where the number of electors per councillor would vary by 1 per cent from the district average. No changes were proposed to the existing single-member Longhoughton ward where the number of electors per councillor would vary by 8 per cent (14 per cent in 2001).

72 During the consultation period, the District Council, supported by Rennington Parish Council, argued that the present Craster and Rennington ward was a "special case" and should remain unchanged. It argued that in this instance the achievement of electoral equality should take second place to local community ties. Alan Beith MP argued that Craster and Embleton were both distinct areas, and should continue to be separate wards. The Berwick-upon-Tweed Constituency Liberal Democrats proposed merging the present Craster and Rennington ward with the parish of Denwick.

73 In Lesbury, the District Council supported the retention of the existing ward, while the Berwick-upon-Tweed Constituency Liberal Democrats recommended the creation of a two-member ward comprising the parishes of Lesbury and Shilbottle. The proposal to retain Longhoughton ward on its current boundaries gained support from the District Council and Berwick-upon-Tweed Constituency Liberal Democrats.

74 The Commission acknowledges the community identity issues raised in these eastern wards, but it is also mindful of its duty to secure electoral equality, taking into account local circumstances. In the light of the evidence now available, the Commission has concluded that the present warding arrangements in this area, with some modifications, would both acknowledge the need to secure electoral equality and also reflect local community identities.

75 The Commission is therefore recommending the creation of a new two-member ward of Longhoughton with Craster and Rennington,

comprising the parishes of those names. Although this proposal involves the joining of parishes with differing electoral sizes (Longhoughton parish containing nearly two-thirds of the electors) the Commission has concluded that such a ward would provide the best electoral arrangements, given the good transport links and the common coastal nature of the area. The number of electors per councillor for the two-member ward would vary from the district average by 9 per cent (8 per cent in 2001).

76 During Stage Three, the Commission considered alternative re-configurations of the wards around Lesbury, but concluded that the ward should remain on its present boundaries, a proposal which was supported by the District Council. The number of electors per councillor in the two-member Lesbury ward, comprising the parishes of Alnmouth, Denwick and Lesbury, would vary from the district average by 11 per cent (14 per cent in 2001).

The central and northern wards of Hedgeley, Longframlington and Whittingham

77 In its draft recommendations report, the Commission adopted proposals put forward by the Rural Alliance for these wards. The current ward of Elsdon, which is currently over-represented by 45 per cent, would be enlarged to include the parishes of Whitton & Tosson and Brinkburn; the parishes of Craster and Embleton would be combined; Newton-by-the-Sea would join the parishes of Eglington and Hedgeley to form a modified Hedgeley ward; and the present Harbottle ward would be enlarged to include the parishes of Alnham and Snitter.

78 The proposals also included transferring Brinkburn parish from Longframlington ward to the modified Elsdon ward, and Alnham parish from Whittingham ward to the modified Harbottle ward, which would also incorporate the parish of Edlingham (currently in Hedgeley ward).

79 During Stage Three, the District Council argued that Elsdon was a “special case” because of the sparsity of population in the area, a view supported by the Northumberland Association of Local Councils and Councillor Mrs Bolam. Councillor Thorne objected to the transfer of Brinkburn from the ward of Longframlington into the proposed Elsdon ward. The parish councils of Hepple and Whitton & Tosson both opposed the proposal to place them in Elsdon ward, whilst

Harbottle Parish Council agreed with the Commission’s draft recommendation relating to its area.

80 As previously indicated, the Commission is now of the view that the majority of the present Elsdon ward should be placed within the new Rothbury and South Rural ward. However, the Commission considers that the parish of Elsdon itself would be better placed in the present Harbottle ward - the parishes of Alwinton, Biddlestone, Harbottle, Hepple and Netherton - to form a new single-member Harbottle and Elsdon ward. The Commission notes the arguments for Elsdon to remain a ward in its own right, but given the degree of electoral inequality in both the present Elsdon and the present Harbottle wards, together with the configuration of parishes in the western area of Alnwick district and the pattern of communication links, the Commission has concluded that its revised proposals would provide the most appropriate arrangements for the area as a whole.

81 The number of electors per councillor in the proposed single-member Harbottle and Elsdon ward would vary from the district average by 5 per cent (12 per cent in 2001), and the Commission has decided to put this forward as its final recommendation.

82 The proposal to combine Craster and Embleton parishes to form a new single-member ward received no local support, the District Council proposing that Embleton should form a ward with Newton-by-the-Sea, and that Craster remain with Rennington. This view was supported by the Constituency Liberal Democrats. Alan Beith MP suggested that Craster and Embleton should be in separate wards, and the parish councils of Embleton, Newton-by-the-Sea and Rennington all opposed the Commission’s proposals in relation to their areas.

83 In the light of these representations the Commission has decided to modify its draft recommendations in this area. As discussed above, Craster, Rennington and Longhoughton parishes would form a new two-member ward. This would enable Embleton to remain (as now) in a ward with its neighbouring parish of Newton-by-the-Sea, a proposal which has the support of both the District Council and the Constituency Liberal Democrats. The Commission acknowledges that there are strong community links between the parishes of Embleton and Newton-by-the-Sea and given that the number of electors per councillor would vary from the district average by only 7 per

cent (5 per cent in 2001), it has decided to put forward the ward as its final recommendation.

84 The Commission's proposal for a modified single-member Hedgeley ward comprising the parishes of Eglington, Hedgeley and Newton-by-the-Sea also received no support. Alan Beith MP expressed concern that the proposed ward lacked any overall sense of community and similarity. The District Council supported the retention of the existing Hedgeley ward, as did the Constituency Liberal Democrats, the Northumberland Association of Local Councils and Hedgeley Parish Council.

85 The Commission has now re-considered its proposals for the area. In the light of the views expressed and taking into account the proposals for surrounding wards, the Commission is now satisfied that the existing single-member ward of Hedgeley should remain on its present boundaries, comprising the parishes of Edlington, Eglington and Hedgeley. The Commission acknowledges the views expressed to it that the parishes of Hedgeley and Newton-by-the-Sea have different community identities, and given the degree of electoral equality that would be achieved, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the district average by 6 per cent (15 per cent in 2001), has decided to confirm the ward of Hedgeley as final.

86 At Stage Three, the proposal for the parish of Longframlington to form a single-member ward on its own (without the parish of Brinkburn) received support from the Constituency Liberal Democrats but the 'removal' of Brinkburn parish to Elsdon ward was opposed by the County Councillor for the area, by the District Council and by the Northumberland Association of Local Councils, the latter of which added that such a proposal would break community links in the area.

87 The proposal to transfer Brinkburn to the proposed Elsdon ward formed part of the Commission's draft recommendations, reducing electoral inequality in the current Elsdon ward. However, due to changes described above, relating to other parts of the district, and the further views expressed about community identity, the Commission now agrees that the single-member ward of Longframlington, comprising the parishes of Longframlington and Brinkburn, should remain as at present. The number of electors per councillor would vary from the district average by 17 per cent, although this would improve to 11 per cent by 2001.

88 The Commission's draft recommendation in relation to the Whittingham district ward - a single-member ward which would include the parishes of Callaly, Cartington, Edlington, Glanton and Whittingham - was not endorsed by the District Council which, in its overall scheme preferred Whittingham ward to comprise solely the parishes of Callaly, Cartington, Glanton and Whittingham, i.e. not including Edlington. In view of the final recommendation that Edlington should remain in the adjoining Hedgeley ward (indicated in paragraph 85), the Commission endorses the District Council's proposal. To further improve the level of electoral equality in the ward, the Commission proposes to retain the existing Whittingham ward. This would place the parish of Alnham (which at draft recommendations stage was proposed to be included in the Harbottle ward), in Whittingham ward, as at present.

89 The number of electors per councillor in the single-member Whittingham ward would vary from the district average by 5 per cent (9 per cent in 2001) and the Commission confirms this recommendation as final.

Electoral Cycle

90 In its draft recommendations report, the Commission proposed that the present system of whole-council elections be retained. No representations were received on this issue during Stage Three and the Commission has therefore decided to confirm its draft recommendation as final.

Parish Council Electoral Arrangements

91 The Commission proposes no change to parish and town council electoral arrangements, on which it has received no representations, other than warding changes in Alnwick and Amble to ensure coterminosity with the proposed district wards.

Conclusions

92 The Commission has examined alternative configurations of parishes and communities in order to assess whether further improvement to electoral equality could be obtained. However, it has concluded that any further improvements to

electoral equality may be at the expense of the statutory criteria, namely the need to reflect community identities and secure convenient and effective local government. It is also mindful that, because overall there is a relatively low number of electors represented by each councillor in Alnwick, a small change in electorate can have a proportionately greater effect on the percentage of electoral imbalance.

93 Having considered all the evidence and representations it has received on its draft recommendations, the Commission has concluded that there should be an increase in council size from 29 to 30; that there should be 16 wards rather than 17 as at present; that elections should remain on a whole-council basis; and that 11 of the existing wards should be modified. Figure 4 shows the impact of the Commission's final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, as based on 1996 electorate figures, and with projected electorates for the year 2001.

94 As Figure 4 shows, the Commission's recommendations would result in a reduction from nine to four in the number of wards where the number of electors per councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average. Under these proposals, the average number of electors per councillor would fall from 853 to 825. The Commission concludes that its recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Alnwick District Council should comprise 30 councillors serving 16 wards as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 5 and Map 2. The whole Council should continue to be elected every four years.

95 In the Alnwick Town Council area, the Commission recommends that the parish wards are modified to reflect the proposed District Council warding arrangements in the town.

Final Recommendation

The town of Alnwick should be re-warded, such that its town wards are coterminous with the proposed District Council warding arrangements, as shown in Map A1 in Appendix A. There should be no change in the present number of town councillors representing the wards of Castle, Clayport and Hotspur.

96 In the Amble Town Council area, the Commission recommends that the parish wards are modified to reflect the proposed District Council warding arrangements in the town.

Final Recommendation

The town of Amble should be re-warded, such that its town wards are coterminous with the proposed District Council warding arrangements, as shown in Maps A2 and A3 in Appendix A. The wards of Central, East and West should each return three town councillors. There should be no change in the present number of parish councillors representing the parishes of Hauxley and Togston.

*Figure 4:
Comparison of Current and Recommended Arrangements*

	1996 electorate		2001 projected electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	29	30	29	30
Number of wards	17	16	17	16
Average number of electors per councillor	853	825	938	907
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	9	4	12	4
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	5	0	5	0

Figure 5:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Alnwick

Ward name	1996				2001 (Projected)		
	Number of councillors	Electorate	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Alnwick Castle	3	2,590	863	5	2,750	917	1
2 Alnwick Clayport	2	1,685	843	2	1,775	888	-2
3 Alnwick Hotspur	2	1,694	847	3	1,996	998	10
4 Amble Central	2	1,930	965	17	1,946	973	7
5 Amble East	2	1,712	856	4	1,944	972	7
6 Amble West	2	1,436	718	-13	1,852	926	2
7 Embleton	1	764	764	-7	858	858	-5
8 Harbottle and Elsdon	1	787	787	-5	797	797	-12
9 Hedgeley	1	774	774	-6	774	774	-15
10 Lesbury	2	1,476	738	-11	1,556	778	-14
11 Longframlington	1	966	966	17	1,004	1,004	11
12 Longhoughton with Craster and Rennington	2	1,503	752	-9	1,677	839	-8
13 Rothbury and South Rural	3	2,430	810	-2	2,762	921	2
14 Shilbottle	3	2,463	821	0	2,897	966	7
15 Warkworth	2	1,747	874	6	1,781	891	-2
16 Whittingham	1	783	783	-5	829	829	-9
Totals	30	24,740	—	—	27,198	—	—
Averages	—	—	825	—	—	907	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Alnwick District Council's submissions.

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.

6. NEXT STEPS

97 Having completed its review of electoral arrangements in Alnwick and submitted its final recommendations to the Secretary of State, the Commission has fulfilled its statutory role under the Local Government Act 1992.

98 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to the Commission's 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 the Commission's recommendations are submitted to the Secretary of State.

99 All further correspondence concerning the Commission's recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State at the following address:

The Secretary of State for the Environment
Local Government Review
Department of the Environment
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

APPENDIX A

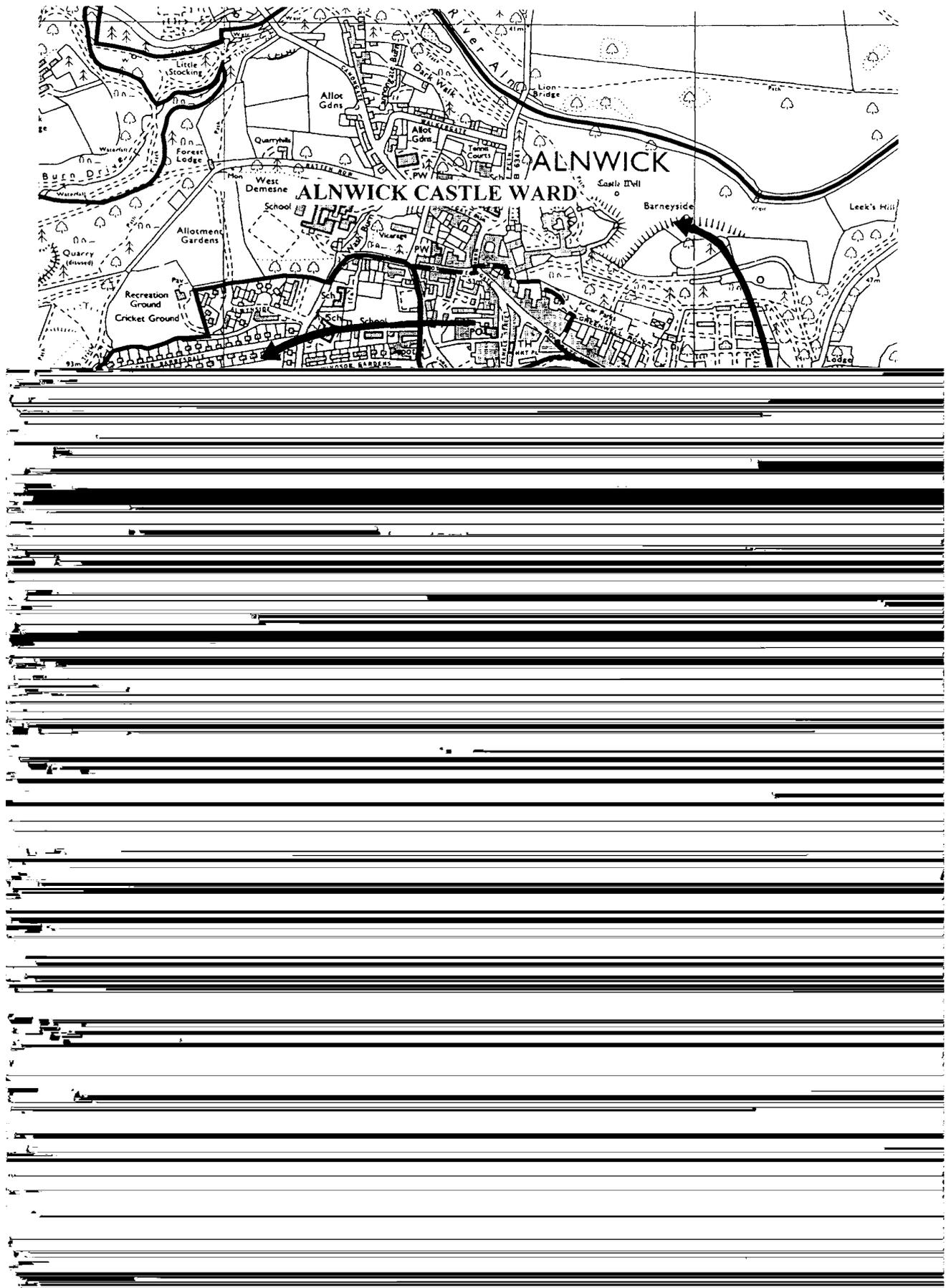
Final Recommendations for Alnwick: Detailed Mapping

Map A1 illustrates the proposed boundary changes to the Alnwick Castle, Alnwick Clayport and Alnwick Hotspur wards.

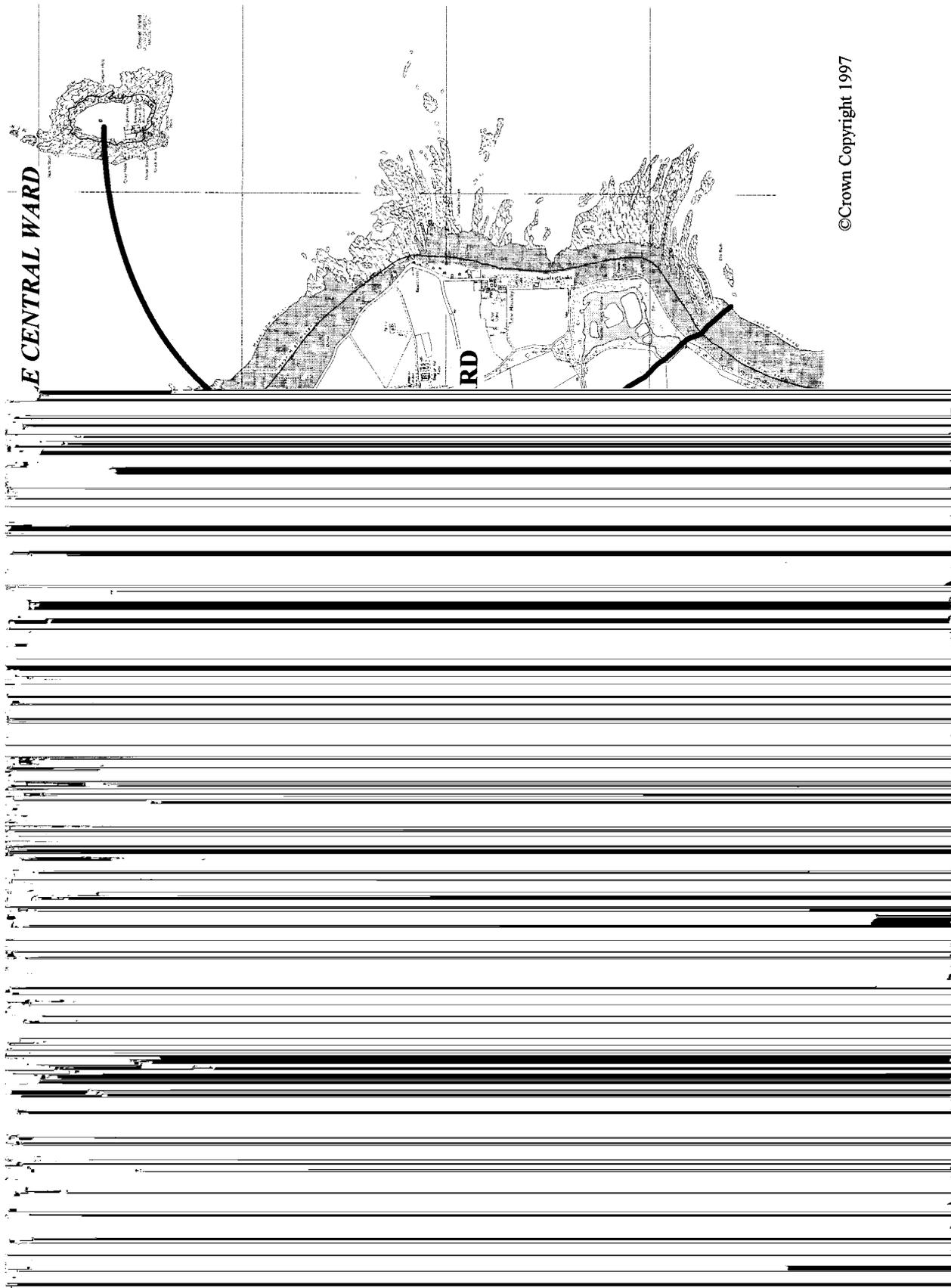
Map A2 illustrates the proposed boundary changes to Amble East and West wards, and the new Amble Central ward.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed boundaries within the town of Amble.

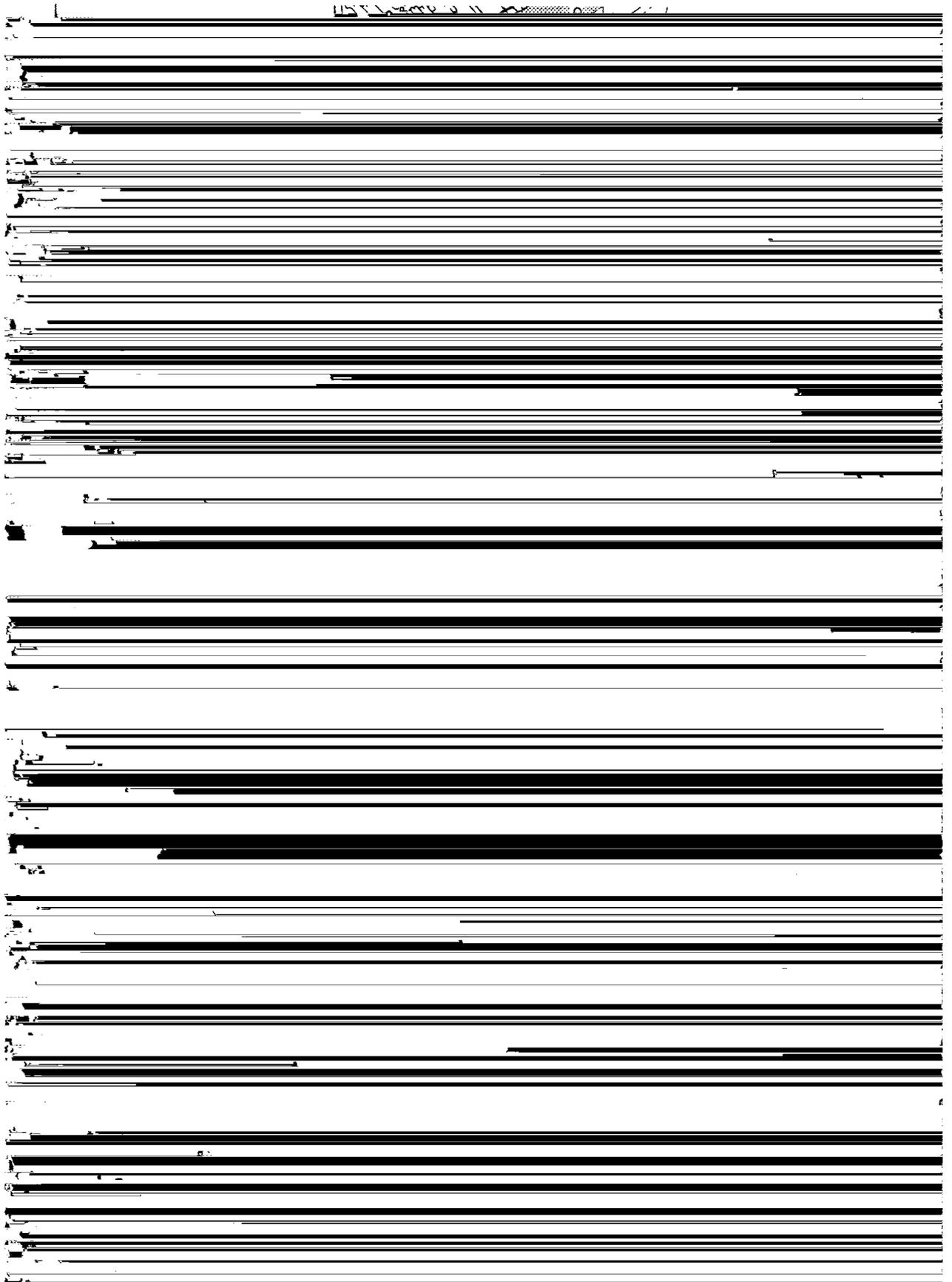
Map A1:
Proposed Boundary Changes to the Alnwick Castle, Clayport and Hotspur wards



Map A2:
Proposed Boundary Changes to Amble East and West wards and the New Amble Central ward



*Map A3:
Proposed Boundaries within the town of Amble*



APPENDIX B

Draft Recommendations for Alnwick

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

Ward name	Constituent areas
1 Alnwick Castle	Alnwick Castle ward (part - the parish ward of Alnwick Castle as amended)
2 Alnwick Clayport	Alnwick Clayport ward (the parish ward of Alnwick Clayport); Alnwick Castle ward (part); Alnwick Hotspur ward (part)
3 Alnwick Hotspur	Alnwick Hotspur ward (part - the parish ward of Alnwick Hotspur as amended)
4 Amble Central	Amble East ward (part); Amble West ward (part)
5 Amble East	Amble East ward (part - the parish of Hauxley and the parish ward of Amble East as amended); Warkworth ward (part - the parish of Togston)
6 Amble West	Amble West ward (part - the parish ward of Amble West as amended)
7 Craster and Embleton	Parishes of Craster and Embleton
8 Elsdon	Parishes of Brinkburn, Elsdon, Hesleyhurst, Hollinghill, Nunykirk, Rothley, Whitton and Tosson
9 Felton	Parishes of Acklington, Felton and Newton-on-the-Moor & Swarland
10 Harbottle	Parishes of Alnham, Alwington, Biddlestone, Harbottle, Hepple, Netherton and Snitter
11 Hedgeley	Parishes of Eglington, Hedgeley and Newton-by-the-Sea
12 Lesbury	Parishes of Alnmouth, Denwick, Lesbury and Rennington
13 Longframlington	Parish of Longframlington
14 Longhoughton	Parish of Longhoughton
15 Rothbury	Parishes of Rothbury and Thropton
16 Shilbottle with Warkworth	Parishes of Shilbottle and Warkworth
17 Whittingham	Parishes of Callaly, Cartington, Edlington, Glanton and Whittingham

Figure B2:
The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Alnwick

Ward name	1996				2001 (Projected)		
	Number of councillors	Electorate	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Alnwick Castle	3	2,590	863	1	2,750	917	-2
2 Alnwick Clayport	2	1,685	843	-1	1,775	888	-5
3 Alnwick Hotspur	2	1,694	847	-1	1,996	998	6
4 Amble Central	2	1,780	890	4	1,796	898	-4
5 Amble East	2	1,862	931	9	2,094	1,047	12
6 Amble West	2	1,436	718	-16	1,852	926	-1
7 Craster and Embleton	1	877	877	3	987	987	5
8 Elsdon	1	824	824	-3	828	828	-12
9 Felton	2	1,696	848	-1	1,832	916	-2
10 Harbottle	1	787	787	-8	793	793	-15
11 Hedgeley	1	809	809	-5	809	809	-14
12 Lesbury	2	1,724	862	1	1,816	908	-3
13 Longframlington	1	792	792	-7	830	830	-12
14 Longhoughton	1	920	920	8	1,066	1,066	14
15 Rothbury	2	1,854	927	9	2,186	1,093	17
16 Shilbottle with Warkworth	3	2,514	838	-2	2,846	949	1
17 Whittingham	1	896	896	5	942	942	0
Totals	29	24,740	—	—	27,198	—	—
Average	—	—	853	—	—	938	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Alnwick District Council's submission.

Notes: 1 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.

2 Since the publication of the Commission's draft recommendations, an amendment to the electorate in Amble East ward has been made.