

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Bury

February 2003

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Contents

	Page
What is The Boundary Committee for England?	5
Summary	7
1 Introduction	11
2 Current electoral arrangements	13
3 Submissions received	17
4 Analysis and draft recommendations	19
5 What happens next?	31
Appendices	
A Draft recommendations for Bury: Detailed mapping	33
B Code of practice on written consultation	35

What is The Boundary Committee for England?

The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of The Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. The functions of the Local Government Commission for England were transferred to The Electoral Commission and its Boundary Committee on 1 April 2002 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001 (SI 2001 No. 3692). The Order also transferred to The Electoral Commission the functions of the Secretary of State in relation to taking decisions on recommendations for changes to local authority electoral arrangements and implementing them.

Members of the Committee are:

Pamela Gordon (Chair)
Professor Michael Clarke CBE
Robin Gray
Joan Jones
Ann M. Kelly
Professor Colin Mellors

Archie Gall (Director)

We are required by law to review the electoral arrangements of every principal local authority in England. Our aim is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, the number of councillors and ward names.

Summary

We began a review of the electoral arrangements for Bury on 14 May 2002.

- **This report summarises the submissions we received during the first stage of the review, and makes draft recommendations for change.**

We found that the current arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Bury:

- **in five of the 16 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10% from the average for the borough, and three wards vary by more than 20% from the average;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to improve slightly, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10% from the average in five wards and by more than 20% in one ward.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 98–99) are that:

- **Bury Borough Council should have 51 councillors, three more than at present;**
- **there should be 17 wards, one more than at present;**
- **the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified.**

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

- **In all of the proposed 17 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10% from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 10% from the average for the borough in 2006.**

This report sets out our draft recommendations on which comments are invited.

- **We will consult on these proposals for eight weeks from 25 February 2003. We take this consultation very seriously. We may decide to move away from our draft recommendations in the light of comments or suggestions that we receive. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission which will be responsible for implementing changes to local authority electoral arrangements.**
- **The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. It will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to us at the address below by 22 April 2003:

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

Table 1: Draft recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Large map reference
1	Besses	3	Part of Besses ward; part of Pilkington Park ward	3
2	Church	3	Part of Church ward; part of Radcliffe North ward	2
3	East	3	Part of East ward; part of Redvales ward	2
4	Elton	3	Part of Elton ward; part of Ramsbottom ward; part of Tottington ward	1 and 2
5	Holyrood	3	Holyrood ward; part of St Mary's ward	3
6	Moorside	3	Part of East ward; part of Moorside ward	1 and 2
7	North Manor	3	Part of Moorside ward; part of Ramsbottom ward; part of Tottington ward	1 and 2
8	Pilkington Park	3	Part of Pilkington Park ward; part of Radcliffe South ward	3
9	Radcliffe East	3	Part of Radcliffe Central ward; part of Radcliffe North ward; part of Radcliffe South ward	2 and 3
10	Radcliffe North	3	Part of Radcliffe Central ward; part of Radcliffe North ward	2 and 3
11	Radcliffe West	3	Part of Radcliffe Central ward; part of Radcliffe South ward	3
12	Ramsbottom	3	Part of Ramsbottom ward; part of Tottington ward	1
13	Redvales	3	Part of Redvales ward; part of Unsworth ward	2 and 3
14	St Mary's	3	Part of St Mary's ward	3
15	Sedgley	3	Part of St Mary's ward; Sedgley ward	3
16	Tottington	3	Part of Church ward; part of Elton ward; part of Tottington ward	1 and 2
17	Unsworth	3	Part of Besses ward; part of Pilkington Park ward; part of Unsworth ward	2 and 3

Notes:

- 1) *The whole borough is unparished.*
- 2) *The wards on the above table are illustrated on Map 2 and the large maps.*
- 3) *We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors.*

Table 2: Draft recommendations for Bury

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Besses	3	7,779	2,593	-5	7,932	2,644	-4
2	Church	3	8,767	2,922	7	8,708	2,903	5
3	East	3	7,750	2,583	-6	8,013	2,671	-3
4	Elton	3	8,330	2,777	1	8,270	2,757	0
5	Holyrood	3	8,770	2,923	7	8,616	2,872	4
6	Moorside	3	8,879	2,960	8	8,801	2,934	6
7	North Manor	3	8,223	2,741	0	8,089	2,696	-2
8	Pilkington Park	3	7,993	2,664	-3	8,101	2,700	-2
9	Radcliffe East	3	8,629	2,876	5	8,720	2,907	5
10	Radcliffe North	3	8,902	2,967	8	8,773	2,924	6
11	Radcliffe West	3	7,468	2,489	-9	7,756	2,585	-6
12	Ramsbottom	3	8,627	2,876	5	8,754	2,918	6
13	Redvales	3	8,007	2,669	-3	8,230	2,743	-1
14	St Mary's	3	8,051	2,684	-2	8,166	2,722	-1
15	Sedgley	3	8,702	2,901	6	8,597	2,866	4
16	Tottington	3	7,554	2,518	-8	7,677	2,559	-7
17	Unsworth	3	7,500	2,500	-9	7,493	2,498	-9
	Totals	51	139,931	-	-	140,696	-	-
	Averages	-	-	2,744	-	-	2,759	-

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

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

1 Introduction

1 This report contains our proposals for the electoral arrangements for the borough of Bury, on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the 10 metropolitan boroughs in Greater Manchester as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. The programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to finish in 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Bury. Bury's last review was carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission, which reported to the Secretary of State in January 1978 (Report no. 277).

3 In carrying out these metropolitan reviews we must have regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3692), i.e. the need to:
 - reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
 - secure effective and convenient local government; and
 - achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

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

5 Our task is to make recommendations to The Electoral Commission on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards.

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

7 We are not prescriptive on council size. However, we believe that any proposals relating to council size, whether these are for an increase, a reduction or no change, should be supported by evidence and argumentation. Given the stage now reached in the introduction of new political management structures under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, it is important that whatever council size interested parties may propose to us they can demonstrate that their proposals have been fully thought through, and have been developed in the context of a review of internal political management and the role of councillors in the new structure. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified. In particular, we do not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

8 Under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 there is no limit on the number of councillors which can be returned from each metropolitan borough ward. However, the figure must be divisible by three. In practice, all metropolitan borough wards currently return three councillors. Where our recommendation is for multi-member wards, we believe that the number of councillors to be returned from each ward should not exceed three, other than in very exceptional circumstances. Numbers in excess of three could result in an unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate and we have not, to date, prescribed any wards with more than three councillors.

9 The review is in four stages (see Table 3).

Table 3: Stages of the review

Stage	Description
One	Submission of proposals to us
Two	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	Final deliberation and report to The Electoral Commission

10 Stage One began on 14 May 2002, when we wrote to Bury Metropolitan Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified the Greater Manchester Police Authority, the Local Government Association, the National Association of Local Councils, Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, Members of the European Parliament for the North West Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Bury Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 16 September 2002.

11 At Stage Two we considered all the submissions received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

12 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 25 February 2003 and will end on 22 April 2003, involves publishing the draft proposals in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.**

13 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to modify them, and submit final recommendations to The Electoral Commission. It will then be for it to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If The Electoral Commission accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, it will make an Order. The Electoral Commission will determine when any changes come into effect.

2 Current electoral arrangements

14 The Metropolitan Borough of Bury is situated in the north of Greater Manchester and is bounded by Bolton, Salford, Manchester and Rochdale to the west, south, south-east and east respectively, and by Lancashire and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council to the north and north-west respectively. The borough lies broadly in the valley of the River Irwell and includes the areas of Bury, Prestwich, Radcliffe, Ramsbottom, Tottington and Whitefield, together with a more rural hinterland. The borough is the northern railhead of the Metrolink and the M60 and M66 motorways run through it. The East Lancashire Steam Railway from Bury to Rawtenstall provides transport with a difference.

15 The electorate of the borough is 139,931 (December 2001). The Council presently has 48 members who are elected from 16 wards, the majority of which are relatively urban, although Ramsbottom, Tottington and Moorside wards in the north of the borough contain more rural areas. All wards are three-member wards. The borough is unparished.

16 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,915 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,931 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in five of the 16 wards varies by more than 10% from the borough average and three wards by more than 20%. The worst imbalance is in Ramsbottom ward, where each of the councillors represents 28% more electors than the borough average.

17 To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward (the councillor:elector ratio) varies from the borough average in percentage terms. In the text which follows this calculation may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

Map 1: Existing wards in Bury

Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate 2001	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate 2006	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Besses	3	6,941	2,314	-21	6,999	2,333	-20
2	Church	3	8,938	2,979	2	8,876	2,959	1
3	East	3	7,608	2,536	-13	7,793	2,598	-11
4	Elton	3	9,239	3,080	6	9,189	3,063	4
5	Holyrood	3	8,214	2,738	-6	8,068	2,689	-8
6	Moorside	3	8,321	2,774	-5	8,229	2,743	-6
7	Pilkington Park	3	7,910	2,637	-10	8,131	2,710	-8
8	Radcliffe Central	3	8,804	2,935	1	8,916	2,972	1
9	Radcliffe North	3	10,691	3,564	22	10,534	3,511	20
10	Radcliffe South	3	8,196	2,732	-6	8,443	2,814	-4
11	Ramsbottom	3	11,175	3,725	28	11,266	3,755	28
12	Redvales	3	8,232	2,744	-6	8,337	2,779	-5
13	St Mary's	3	9,169	3,056	5	9,265	3,088	5
14	Sedgley	3	8,143	2,714	-7	8,048	2,683	-8
15	Tottington	3	10,205	3,402	17	10,258	3,419	17
16	Unsworth	3	8,145	2,715	-7	8,345	2,782	-5
	Totals	48	139,931	-	-	140,697	-	-
	Averages	-	-	2,915	-	-	2,931	-

Source: *Electorate figures are based on information provided by Bury Borough 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 borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Besses ward were relatively over-represented by 21%, while electors in Ramsbottom ward were relatively under-represented by 28%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.*

3 Submissions received

18 At the start of the review members of the public and other interested parties were invited to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Bury Metropolitan Borough Council.

19 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Committee visited the area and met officers and members from the Borough Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received nine representations during Stage One, including borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council and the Bury North & Bury South Conservative Associations (supported by the Conservative Group on the Council), all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the Borough Council.

Bury Metropolitan Borough Council

20 The Borough Council proposed a council of 51 members (an increase of three) representing 17 wards. The Council's proposals resulted in amendments to all 16 existing wards, with detailed evidence and argumentation provided for the 17 proposed wards. Detailed argumentation was also provided in support of the proposed council size. The Council carried out a thorough consultation process in the borough on three proposed schemes (or 'options'), before submitting a scheme which took account of the views received. Under the Council's proposals, all the wards would vary by less than 10% from the borough average by 2006.

Bury North and Bury South Conservative Associations

21 Bury North and Bury South Conservative Associations (the Conservatives) proposed a scheme based on retaining the existing 48 councillors. Their proposals would create 16 revised wards, although they provided limited evidence and argumentation to support their proposed wards. However, some detailed argumentation was provided in support of the proposed council size. They contended that their scheme had been based on minimal change in order to redress the imbalance of representation in the borough. Under the Conservatives' proposals, all the wards would vary by less than 10% from the borough average by 2006.

Other representations

22 A further seven representations were received, from a community association and six local residents. A local resident did not support the proposed increase in council size, contending that this would only increase costs. He also supported the inclusion of the Orchard Drive area in Redvales ward.

23 Hollins Village Community Association proposed that the Hollins Village name 'should be recognised' and that Hollins should be known as a ward in its own right. It also proposed that the area should be included in the Bury South parliamentary constituency.

24 A local resident proposed that the River Irwell and M60 motorway be retained as boundaries as there are limited crossing points. He also proposed that the three wards to the south of the M60 (St Mary's, Sedgley and Holyrood) remain unchanged, although suggested that Holyrood ward be renamed St Margaret's. Another local resident proposed minor amendments to the boundaries between St Mary's, Sedgley and Holyrood wards to secure a better balance of representation. He also suggested that St Mary's ward should be renamed Prestwich West to better reflect the identity of that area. One other local resident broadly supported the Council's proposals in the Prestwich area, but did not believe that the Metrolink was a natural boundary, proposing that Nursery Road be used as a boundary between Holyrood and St Mary's wards. He also proposed retaining the existing ward names in that area.

25 A local resident opposed the retention of Parr Lane as the boundary between Unsworth and Besses wards. Another local resident proposed that an additional ward should be created in the north of the borough in order to reduce the size of the Ramsbottom and Tottington wards.

4 Analysis and draft recommendations

26 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Bury and welcome comments from all those interested relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors and ward names. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

27 As described earlier, the prime aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Bury is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended): the need to secure effective and convenient local government; reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and secure the matters referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (equality of representation). Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

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

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

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

Electorate forecasts

31 Since 1975 there has been around a 9% increase in the electorate of Bury borough. The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of 0.5% from 139,931 to 140,697 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in Radcliffe South and Pilkington Park wards, although a significant amount is also expected in Unsworth and East wards. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to unitary development plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

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

Council size

33 Bury Metropolitan Borough Council presently has 48 members. During Stage One the Borough Council consulted locally on draft schemes based on 48 councillors and 51 councillors.

Following this consultation it submitted a scheme based on a council size of 51 members. It included extensive evidence to support this increase, providing details of the Leader and Cabinet style of political management structure that it had piloted since May 1999 and formally adopted in November 2001. It provided details of the varied roles of councillors, the full Council and the Executive (Leader and Cabinet), in addition to the Scrutiny & Review panels and the regulatory and non-executive committees. The Council also outlined its Area Board structure. It provided evidence of the variety of representational roles that councillors undertake, contending that 'the role of Members as ward representatives and community leaders is actively promoted through Area Boards, public meetings and members' political surgeries'.

34 The Council argued that 'the implementation of the new structures under the modernisation agenda has not led to a reduction in the number of meetings attended by elected members' further stating that while the number of committees (as under the old traditional structure) had decreased, the number of meetings required by the different panels and bodies outlined above had increased. It contended that, overall, a 24% increase in the number of Member meetings had resulted largely from the doubling of scrutiny panels and Area Board meetings, together with the creation of Scrutiny Task Groups.

35 The Council concluded that 'the pressures being placed on councillors as a result of the increase in the number of meetings to attend, particularly Scrutiny Commission/Panels and their Sub-Groups and Area Boards, and their continuing and increasing representative role appears to indicate a council size of at least the current number of members and probably a small increase to 51 members would not be unreasonable in order to relieve current pressures'. It also contended that 'a reduction would certainly overburden members putting the new political management structures at risk'. The Council therefore proposed that a council of 51 members would be an appropriate size 'in order to secure the continuation of convenient and effective local government for the area'.

36 The Conservatives proposed retaining the existing council size of 48 members. They stated that 'the present system of 16 wards ... seems to be ideal for the Borough and has been successful over many years'. They also stated that they saw no justification for the increase in costs associated with an additional three councillors. After reviewing the argumentation received from the Conservatives, the Committee was of the opinion that further argumentation and evidence regarding the specifics of how Bury Borough Council operates effectively under the existing council size was required.

37 Accordingly, the Committee requested further evidence to this effect, which the Conservatives provided. They provided a virtually identical factual description of the new political management structure and its variety of panels, committees and functions to that which the Council provided. However, the Conservatives contended that 'apart from a few senior members in each of the political groups who have substantial workloads, many members of all groups feel that their roles have been downgraded and that they have a substantially reduced role in deciding or even influencing major policy decisions'. They also asserted the view that 'the new political management structure of Leader and Cabinet adopted since May 1999, together with the Full Council, Overview and Scrutiny, Regulatory and Non-Executive Committees and the Area Boards has proved over the three years to leave many councillors with few responsibilities and much time for carrying out their ward representational requirements'. The Conservatives concluded that 'in the light of the political management structure now in place 48 councillors is the appropriate size for the Council to operate effective local government'.

38 A local resident did not support the proposed increase in council size, contending that this would only increase costs.

39 We have carefully considered all the representations and further evidence received and we note that a large amount of information has been provided. We also note that both the Council and the Conservatives refer to other metropolitan authorities when justifying their proposed

council sizes for Bury. However, as outlined in our *Guidance*, we do not take this approach when considering council size and are of the view that each area should be considered on its own merits.

40 Having carefully considered all the argumentation and evidence provided, we are of the view that the Borough Council's argumentation provided more thorough, detailed justification for a slight increase of three members, to a council size of 51. Aspects of the Conservatives' justification appeared to be based on assertion, particularly in relation to councillor workload, whereas the Council had provided evidence to support its arguments. We also note that the Borough Council's 51-member scheme would provide for a better balance of representation within Bury, addressing the notable under-representation in the north of the borough.

41 Having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we conclude that the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 51 members.

Electoral arrangements

42 Having considered all the representations received at Stage One, we noted that both borough-wide schemes secured improved electoral equality. However, as a consequence of our decision to adopt the Borough Council's proposed council size of 51, we propose basing our draft recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme. We note that this scheme has been developed following local consultation. We have been persuaded by the evidence and argumentation received that it would provide a better balance between achieving good levels of electoral equality and satisfying the other statutory criteria than the current arrangements or other schemes submitted at Stage One. Given our decision to base our recommendations on a council size of 51, we have only been able to give limited consideration to the Conservatives' proposals (based on a council size of 48). However, we do recognise that there are some areas of consensus between the two schemes, notably the use of the M60 motorway and the River Irwell as strong geographical boundaries.

43 While we are basing our draft recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme, we have decided to make two minor amendments to its proposals in order to provide for more identifiable boundaries and a better reflection of local communities. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- a) Ramsbottom and Tottington wards;
- b) Church and Elton wards;
- c) East, Moorside and Redvales wards;
- d) Radcliffe Central, Radcliffe North and Radcliffe South wards;
- e) Besses, Pilkington Park and Unsworth wards;
- f) Holyrood, St Mary's and Sedgley wards.

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

Ramsbottom and Tottington wards

45 The existing wards of Ramsbottom and Tottington are situated in the north of the borough. Each ward is represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements, both wards are notably under-represented, with Ramsbottom and Tottington wards containing 28% and 17% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively, both now and by 2006.

46 At Stage One the Council proposed modifications to the existing Ramsbottom and Tottington wards in order to facilitate the provision of a new ward in this area and improve

electoral equality. It proposed a revised Ramsbottom ward by amending the existing ward's southern boundary so that it followed a tributary of the River Irwell to the north of Bass Lane, before following the River Irwell, the northern boundary of the The Spinnings residential development, and then the southern boundary of the Nuttall Lane housing estate. The boundary would then follow the rear of properties on the eastern side of Ripon Hall Avenue and the eastern boundary of Woodhey High School playing fields until Holcombe Brook. The boundary would then follow Holcombe Brook westwards to the junction of Bolton Road West, Bolton Road and Longsight Road, where it would meet the existing boundary. The Council contended that its revised boundary would 'separate the town of Ramsbottom from the smaller but distinctive settlements of Summerseat, Holcombe Brook, Greenmount and Hawkshaw'.

47 The Council further proposed that the part of the existing Ramsbottom ward to the south of its revised boundary (less Old Hall Primary School which would be transferred to a revised Elton ward) would form part of a new North Manor ward. The new North Manor ward would also include the northern part of the existing Moorside ward (the area to the north of Pigs Lee Brook, Mather Road and Avon Drive) in addition to the northern part of Tottington ward (the area to the north of Brandlesholme Road, Shepherd Street, the brook to the south of Brookhouse Mill, the area to the north of Old Kays Park and the area to the north of Turton Road). The Council stated that this ward would contain 'the villages of Walmersley, Summerseat and Nangreaves to the east, Hawkshaw and Holly Mount to the west, together with the expanded village settlements of Greenmount and Holcombe Brook at the centre'. It also contended that the ward's southern boundary 'separates the village settlement of Walmersley from the Seedfield / Limefield areas of Bury', would retain Greenmount Cricket Club with the settlement of Greenmount and would separate the more rural areas of Hawkshaw from Tottington itself.

48 The Council also proposed that the majority of the remainder of Tottington ward would form a revised Tottington ward, together with the eastern part of the existing Elton ward and a small section of the existing Church ward. The Council proposed amending the existing boundary between Tottington and Elton wards so that it moved away from Kirklees Brook to run to the east of the former Courtaulds Textiles Works, following the eastern perimeter of the proposed Kirklees housing scheme (to ensure that all of the residential development be wholly contained within Tottington ward). The Council further proposed that the existing boundary also be amended to include all of Bowes Close in Elton ward to address a boundary anomaly. From Bury Road the existing boundary would be amended to follow the track to the rear of properties in Horridge Street/Lomond Drive before following the centre of Walshaw Road and then the rear of properties on Cotswold Crescent, Bourton Close and Cranham Close. The Council also proposed including the area around Moreton Drive, from the existing Church ward, in its revised Tottington ward to unite all of the Walshaw Park residential estate in the revised Tottington ward. The Council stated that its revised ward would contain 'the main settlement of Tottington with the smaller villages of Walshaw to the south and Affetside to the west'.

49 Under the Borough Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Ramsbottom, North Manor and Tottington wards would be 5% above, equal to and 8% below the borough average initially (6% above, 2% below and 7% below by 2006).

50 A local resident proposed that an additional ward should be created in the north of the borough in order to reduce the size of the Ramsbottom and Tottington wards. He proposed that a new ward should 'encompass the areas of Holcombe Village, Holcombe Brook, Summerseat, Rowlands, Gollinrod, Greenmount, Hawkshaw and Affetside', suggesting that this would 'still keep the predominant and distinctive West Pennine Moors (Southern Pennines Landscape Character Area 36) geographical locality definition in a new ward rather than a solution which would mix urban and rural communities'. However, he did not submit any more detailed proposals.

51 We have carefully considered the representations received during Stage One regarding this area. We have noted that, under its proposed council size of 51, the Council proposed creating

an additional ward in this area. We have also noted that this was supported by a local resident, who proposed a new ward which was broadly similar to the Council's proposed North Manor ward. As outlined earlier, we are proposing to adopt the Council's proposals in this area as part of our draft recommendations. We have been persuaded by the evidence and argumentation put forward that they provide for improved electoral equality while also adequately reflecting local community identities. We acknowledge that the constraint of having to secure a uniform pattern of three-member wards has resulted in the new North Manor ward comprising a number of settlements. However, officers from the Committee having visited the area, we are satisfied that there are sufficient links between them. Furthermore, the proposed North Manor ward unites the Holcombe Brook area within one ward.

52 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Ramsbottom, North Manor and Tottington wards would be the same as under the Council's proposals.

Church and Elton wards

53 The existing wards of Church and Elton are situated broadly in the north of the borough, covering the western part of Bury. Each ward is represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements Church and Elton wards contain 2% and 6% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1% and 4% more by 2006).

54 At Stage One the Council proposed revised Elton and Church wards. As detailed earlier, the Council proposed amendments to the existing Elton ward's western and northern boundaries, to provide a better reflection of local communities and more identifiable boundaries. It retained the remainder of the ward's existing boundaries, contending that 'the River Irwell forms a largely impenetrable natural boundary to the east, with no vehicular access across the river and only one cycle/pedestrian crossing'. The Council proposed broadly retaining the existing Church ward except for the minor amendment to its northern boundary, around Moreton Drive, as detailed earlier, in addition to a minor amendment to its southern boundary so that properties on and around Spen Fold would be included within the revised Church ward. The Council contended that these properties have greater affinity to the Seddons Farm estate to the north and east than with properties further away to the west, within the existing Radcliffe North ward.

55 Under the Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Church and Elton wards would be 7% and 1% above the borough average initially (5% above and equal to the average by 2006).

56 The Conservatives' proposals in this area had some similarities to the Council's scheme, as they proposed retaining the existing Church ward's southern boundary and retaining the existing eastern boundary to follow the River Irwell.

57 We have carefully considered the representations received during Stage One regarding this area. As outlined earlier, we have been persuaded by the evidence and argumentation provided that the Council's proposals in this area would provide for a good balance between electoral equality and the other statutory criteria. We therefore propose adopting the Council's proposals as part of our draft recommendations, particularly as there is some broad consensus in this area. We have noted that the revised wards would continue to utilise the River Irwell as a boundary and we agree that this is a very identifiable boundary.

58 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Church and Elton wards would be the same as under the Council's proposals.

East, Moorside and Redvales wards

59 The existing wards of East, Moorside and Redvales are situated broadly in the north of the borough, covering the eastern part of Bury. Each ward is represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements, East, Moorside and Redvales wards are slightly over-represented, containing 13%, 5% and 6% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (11%, 6% and 5% fewer by 2006).

60 At Stage One the Council proposed revised East, Moorside and Redvales wards. It proposed transferring the northern part of Moorside ward to a new North Moor ward as detailed earlier. The remainder of the existing Moorside ward would be combined with the north-western part of the existing East ward (the area to the north of Rochdale Old Road and broadly to the west of Woodgate Hill Road). The Council acknowledged that the M66 motorway could have been used as a boundary in this area, but contended that its revised Moorside ward would ensure that all of the Bird Estate would be included within one ward, pointing out that the estate, which is 'identified locally as one area', preceded the building of the motorway and that there are 'numerous subways that link the eastern and western halves of the estate'.

61 The Council also proposed that the remainder of the existing East ward be combined with the northern part of the existing Redvales ward (the area to the north of the East Lancashire railway, the Metrolink and Baron Street) to form a revised East ward. The Council stated that its modifications in this area would allow 'the whole of the town centre, as designated in the Borough Unitary Plan, to fall within a single ward (East)'.

62 The Council finally proposed that the remainder of the existing Redvales ward be combined with the northern part of the existing Unsworth ward (the area to the north-west of the River Roch) to form a revised Redvales ward. It contended that the River Roch 'acts as a good natural boundary' as there is only one vehicular crossing point along this stretch of the river (at Blackford Bridge), also contending that to the north the East Lancashire railway 'serves as a good boundary due to the limited number of bridges ... that cross the line'.

63 Under the Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in the proposed East, Moorside and Redvales wards would be 6% below, 8% above and 3% below the borough average initially (3% below, 6% above and 1% below by 2006).

64 A local resident supported the inclusion of the Orchard Drive area within Redvales ward, contending that they share more geographical and community links with other properties off Gigg Lane (in Redvales ward) than with Unsworth ward.

65 We have carefully considered the representations received during Stage One regarding this area. As outlined earlier, we have been persuaded by the evidence and argumentation provided that the Council's proposals in this area would provide for a better balance between electoral equality and the other statutory criteria. We have noted that the revised wards would continue to utilise the River Irwell as a boundary, along with the Rochdale Old Road, East Lancashire railway and the River Roch. We agree that these are all very identifiable boundaries which would facilitate the provision of effective and convenient local government. We have also noted the Council's justification for breaching the M66 motorway in order to unite the Bird Estate within the proposed Moorside ward. We also agree that this would better reflect local community identity. We therefore propose adopting the Council's proposals as part of our draft recommendations. However, we propose one minor amendment to the boundary between the proposed East and Redvales ward so that all of St Gabriels RC High School can be united within Redvales ward. This amendment would not affect any electors.

66 Under the our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed East, Moorside and Redvales wards would be the same as under the Council's proposals.

Radcliffe Central, Radcliffe North and Radcliffe South wards

67 The existing wards of Radcliffe Central, Radcliffe North and Radcliffe South are situated in the west of the borough. Each ward is represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements Radcliffe Central, Radcliffe North and Radcliffe South wards contain 1% more, 22% more and 6% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1% more, 20% more and 4% fewer by 2006).

68 At Stage One the Council proposed a new Radcliffe East ward comprising part of the existing Radcliffe North ward (to the east of Starling Road, Higher Ainsworth Road and Ainsworth Road, less the area around Spen Fold, as detailed earlier), part of the existing Radcliffe Central ward (to the east of Ainsworth Road) and part of the existing Radcliffe South ward (to the north-east of Water Street, Blackburn Street, Pilkington Way and New Road). The Council also proposed a revised Radcliffe North ward comprising the remainder of the existing Radcliffe North ward, together with part of the existing Radcliffe Central ward (the area to the north of Stopes Road).

69 The Council further proposed a new Radcliffe West ward comprising the remainder of the existing Radcliffe Central ward (to the south of Stopes Road and to the west of Ainsworth Road) together with a large part of the existing Radcliffe South ward (the area to the south-west of Water Street, Blackburn Street, Pilkington Way, New Road and the Metrolink line, to the west of the James Halstead factory and to the north-west of Stand Golf Course). The Council also proposed a minor amendment to the existing southern boundary of Radcliffe South ward, so that the new Radcliffe West ward's southern boundary would follow a longer section of the centre of Ringley Road West.

70 In its justification for its proposals in this area, the Council stated that it had utilised the centre of Starling Road/Higher Ainsworth Road/Ainsworth Road as a boundary between the proposed Radcliffe North and Radcliffe East wards as, in its view, 'to propose a boundary line to the rear of properties along the main roads would have produced an over complicated and arbitrary division in a high density and relatively homogeneous area of housing'. It also stated that its proposed boundary between the new Radcliffe East and Radcliffe West 'follows an easily identifiable route along the town centre by-pass which allows the key town centre landmarks such as the former Town Hall building, bus station, Market Hall, swimming baths, Civic Hall, St Thomas's Church, Metrolink etc to be contained within the same ward'. The Council further argued that its proposed southern boundary of the new Radcliffe West ward 'separates the Chapelfield and Outwood residential areas of Radcliffe from the Stand area of Whitefield'.

71 Under the Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Radcliffe East, Radcliffe North and Radcliffe West wards would be 3% above, 10% above and 9% below the borough average initially (3% above, 8% above and 6% below by 2006).

72 In this area the Conservatives also proposed retaining the River Irwell as a boundary in addition to utilising Higher Ainsworth Road/Ainsworth Road as a boundary.

73 We have carefully considered the representations received during Stage One regarding this area. As outlined earlier, we propose basing our draft recommendations on the Council's proposals as we have been persuaded by the evidence and argumentation received that they would secure the best balance between electoral equality and the other statutory criteria. However, we are proposing a boundary amendment so that all the properties on the eastern side of Starling Road, and those properties which gain access via the eastern side of Starling Road (including the eastern end of Bury and Bolton Road), are included within Radcliffe East ward. Officers from the Committee having visited the area, we are of the view that this amendment would provide for a better reflection of local communities. We acknowledge that the Council had considered this option in formulating its scheme but concluded that this would

result in a less identifiable boundary. However, we are of the view that the benefit gained in a better reflection of communities justifies this slightly less identifiable boundary. Furthermore, this amendment would also secure a slightly better level of electoral equality overall. We would welcome views on this proposal during Stage Three.

74 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Radcliffe East, Radcliffe North and Radcliffe West wards would be 5% above, 8% above and 9% below the borough average initially (5% above, 6% above and 6% below by 2006).

Besses, Pilkington Park and Unsworth wards

75 The existing wards of Besses, Pilkington Park and Unsworth are situated broadly in the centre of the borough. Each ward is represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements Besses, Pilkington Park and Unsworth wards are over-represented, containing 21%, 10% and 7% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (20%, 8% and 5% fewer by 2006).

76 At Stage One the Council proposed revised Besses, Pilkington Park and Unsworth wards. Its revised Unsworth ward would comprise the remainder of the existing Unsworth ward (the area to the south-east of the River Roch), together with the north-east part of the existing Pilkington Park ward (that area to the north of the Park 17 industrial units on Stanley Road and broadly to the north-east of Whitefield Park and Whitefield district shopping area), in addition to the area broadly to the east of Pole Lane and the M66, and to the north of the M62, from the existing Besses ward. The Council argued that 'the M62 and M66 both provide good, strong boundaries due to their impenetrable nature, ie the limited number of crossing points'. Furthermore, the Council contended that its revised eastern boundary 'places the rural areas to the east of the M66 within a single ward', in addition to ensuring that 'Unsworth Cricket Club, a focal point for the community, is located within Unsworth ward'.

77 The Council proposed a revised Besses ward, comprising the remainder of the existing Besses ward together with two areas from the existing Pilkington Park ward (the area to the north of Lower Moss Lane/Moss Lane and to the east of the Metrolink line around the Park 17 industrial area) and the area to the east of Bury New Road (the A56) and to the south of Moss Lane. The Council stated that Bury New Road was a 'significant physical barrier' in this area as it has 'up to six traffic lanes and few pedestrian crossing points'.

78 The Council's revised Pilkington Park ward would comprise the remainder of the existing Pilkington Park ward together with the eastern part of the existing Radcliffe South ward (the areas to the south and east of Stand Golf Course and the Lily Hill area to the north-east of the Metrolink). As detailed earlier, the existing Pilkington Park ward's northern boundary would also be amended so that it would follow a longer section of the centre of Ringley Road West.

79 The Council contended that the M60 motorway 'provides a strong physical barrier which acts as an appropriate and logical boundary line' in this area as it has 'only limited vehicular and pedestrian crossing points'. It also contended that the revised north-eastern boundary of Pilkington Park ward 'allows key facilities and landmarks associated with Whitefield District Centre, such as the library, Metrolink station, Whitefield Park etc, to be contained entirely within a single ward (Pilkington Park) and the Park 17 Industrial Estate to be wholly within Besses ward'.

80 Under the Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Besses, Pilkington Park and Unsworth wards would be 5%, 3% and 9% below the borough average initially (4%, 2% and 9% below by 2006).

81 The Conservatives also proposed retaining the M60 motorway as a boundary in this area. Hollins Village Community Association proposed that the Hollins Village name 'should be

recognised' and that Hollins should be known as a ward in its own right. It also proposed that the area should be included in the Bury South parliamentary constituency. A local resident opposed the retention of Parr Lane as the boundary between Unsworth and Besses wards, contending that this splits 'what is an autonomous area of Unsworth'.

82 We have carefully considered the representations received during Stage One regarding this area. As outlined earlier, we have been persuaded by the evidence and argumentation provided that the Council's proposals in this area would provide for a better balance between electoral equality and the other statutory criteria. We therefore propose adopting the Council's proposals as part of our draft recommendations. We have noted that the M60/M62 motorways would continue to form the southern boundaries of the revised Pilkington Park and Besses wards and agree that these are identifiable boundaries. We have also been persuaded that the River Roch, the M66 and the Bury New Road (A56) also provide for identifiable boundaries and would therefore facilitate effective and convenient local government. We have noted the local resident's comments regarding the use of Parr Lane as a boundary, however, we have not been persuaded to move away from the Council's proposals in this area.

83 We have noted the Hollins Village Association's views, however, we do not propose adopting its proposals. Given the requirement for a uniform pattern of three-member wards, the Hollins area is not sufficiently large to form a ward in its own right. Furthermore, it only forms a small part of the ward within which it is situated. Therefore, we are of the view that the ward should be named Unsworth, which has been put forward by the Council following local consultation. However, we would welcome further views on this issue during Stage Three. We have also noted the Association's desire to be included within the Bury South constituency. However, as outlined in our *Guidance*, we do not take account of, nor are we able to change, parliamentary constituency boundaries as part of a periodic electoral review (PER). However, the new ward boundaries implemented following a PER will be taken into account by the Parliamentary Boundary Commission when it conducts its review of constituencies.

84 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Besses, Pilkington Park and Unsworth wards would be the same as under the Council's proposals.

Holyrood, St Mary's and Sedgley wards

85 The existing wards of Holyrood, St Mary's and Sedgley are situated in the far south of the borough, to the south of the M62 motorway. Each ward is represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements Holyrood, St Mary's and Sedgley wards contain 6% fewer, 5% more and 7% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (8% fewer, 5% more and 8% fewer by 2006).

86 At Stage One the Council proposed two boundary amendments in this area. It proposed amending the boundary between St Mary's and Holyrood wards to follow the Metrolink line until it reached the existing boundary at the junction of Heys Road/Fairfax Road. The Council argued that 'this slight amendment provides a more identifiable and appropriate boundary than currently exists due to the limited opportunities for pedestrians and vehicles to cross the Metrolink line in this area'.

87 The Council also proposed amending the boundary between St Mary's and Sedgley wards so that it followed the centre of Hilton Lane before following the eastern perimeter of Prestwich Golf Club to the borough boundary. It argued that this amendment 'allows the whole of the Sedgley Park District Shopping Centre, located along Bury New Road, to be sited within the Sedgley ward. Mountheath Industrial Estate and the residential properties to the east of Prestwich Golf Course are primarily accessed from Bury New Road, hence their inclusion in Sedgley ward. Furthermore, the open character of the golf course provides an identifiable and logical boundary between the proposed wards'.

88 As outlined earlier, the Council reiterated its view that the M60 motorway 'acts as a strong physical barrier' in this area.

89 Under the Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Holyrood, St Mary's and Sedgley wards would be 7% above, 2% below and 6% above the borough average initially (4% above, 1% below and 4% above by 2006).

90 The Conservatives also proposed utilising the Metrolink line as a boundary between St Mary's and Holyrood ward, but proposed retaining the existing boundary between St Mary's and Sedgley wards. They also proposed retaining the M60 motorway as a boundary in this area.

91 A local resident proposed that the River Irwell and M60 motorway be retained as boundaries as there are limited crossing points. He also proposed that the three wards to the south of the M60 (St Mary's, Sedgley and Holyrood) remain unchanged, although suggested that Holyrood ward be renamed St Margaret's 'after the main church in the area, and because it forms a pattern with St Mary's [ward]'.

92 Another local resident proposed minor amendments to the boundaries between St Mary's, Sedgley and Holyrood wards to secure a better balance of representation. His revised boundary between St Mary's and Sedgley wards was the same as under the Council's scheme. However, he proposed that the boundary between St Mary's and Holyrood wards should follow the centre of Nursery Road rather than the Metrolink. He also suggested that St Mary's ward should be renamed Prestwich West to better reflect the identity of that area.

93 One other local resident broadly supported the Council's proposals in the Prestwich area, but did not believe that the Metrolink was a natural boundary, also proposing that Nursery Road be used as a boundary between Holyrood and St Mary's wards. He also proposed retaining the existing ward names in that area.

94 We have carefully considered the representations received during Stage One. As outlined earlier, we have been persuaded by the evidence and argumentation provided that the Council's proposals in this area would provide for a better balance between electoral equality and the other statutory criteria. These proposals have also received a degree of local support. We therefore propose adopting the Council's proposals in this area as part of our draft recommendations.

95 We have noted the alternative boundary between St Mary's and Holyrood wards, along Nursery Road, proposed by two local residents. However, we have not been persuaded that this would provide for a more identifiable boundary or a better reflection of communities than the Council's scheme and do not propose adopting this amendment. We have also noted that there have been some alternative ward names put forward. However, we propose retaining the existing ward names in this area which have been put forward by the Council and which have received a degree of local support. We would welcome views on this issue during Stage Three.

96 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Holyrood, St Mary's and Sedgley wards would be the same as under the Council's proposals.

Electoral cycle

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

Conclusions

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

- there should be a council of 51 members;
- there should be 17 wards;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one ward.

99 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the Borough Council's proposals, but propose to depart from them in the following areas:

- we propose that the boundary between the proposed East and Redvales wards be modified so that all of St Gabriels RC High School can be united within Redvales ward;
- we propose that the boundary between the proposed Radcliffe East and Radcliffe North wards be amended so that the area around and to the east of Starling Road be included in Radcliffe East ward.

100 Table 5 shows how our draft recommendations will affect electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements (based on 2001 electorate figures) and with forecast electorates for the year 2006.

Table 5: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	2001 Electorate		2006 Electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	48	51	48	51
Number of wards	16	17	16	17
Average number of electors per councillor	2,915	2,744	2,931	2,759
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	5	0	5	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	3	0	1	0

101 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for Bury Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from five to none, both initially and by 2006.

Draft recommendation

Bury Borough Council should comprise 51 councillors serving 17 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A and the large maps.

Map 2: Draft recommendations for Bury

5 What happens next?

102 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Bury contained in this report. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 22 April 2003. Any received *after* this date may not be taken into account. All responses may be inspected at our offices and those of the Borough Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

103 Express your views by writing directly to us:

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

104 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, ***whether or not*** they agree with our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to The Electoral Commission, which cannot make the Order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after it receives them.

Appendix A

Draft recommendations for Bury: Detailed mapping

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

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

The **large maps** illustrate the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Bury.

Map A1: Draft recommendations for Bury: Key map

Appendix B

Code of practice on written consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm, requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Public bodies, such as The Boundary Committee for England, are encouraged to follow the Code.

The Code of Practice applies to consultation documents published after 1 January 2001, which should reproduce the criteria, give explanations of any departures, and confirm that the criteria have otherwise been followed.

Table B1: Boundary Committee for England's compliance with Code criteria

Criteria	Compliance/departure
Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process for a policy (including legislation) or service from the start, so that it has the best prospect of improving the proposals concerned, and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage.	We comply with this requirement.
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose.	We comply with this requirement.
A consultation document should be as simple and concise as possible. It should include a summary, in two pages at most, of the main questions it seeks views on. It should make it as easy as possible for readers to respond, make contact or complain.	We comply with this requirement.
Documents should be made widely available, with the fullest use of electronic means (though not to the exclusion of others), and effectively drawn to the attention of all interested groups and individuals.	We comply with this requirement.
Sufficient time should be allowed for considered responses from all groups with an interest. Twelve weeks should be the standard minimum period for a consultation.	We consult on draft recommendations for a minimum of eight weeks, but may extend the period if consultations take place over holiday periods.
Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed, and reasons for decisions finally taken.	We comply with this requirement.
Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated.	We comply with this requirement.