

Final recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements for  
Durham County Council

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

*August 2000*

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

The Local Government Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament. Our task is to review and make recommendations to the Government on whether there should be changes to the structure of local government, the boundaries of individual local authority areas, and their electoral arrangements.

Members of the Commission are:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)  
Professor Michael Clarke CBE (Deputy Chairman)  
Peter Brokenshire  
Kru Desai  
Pamela Gordon  
Robin Gray  
Robert Hughes CBE

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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## Local Government Commission for England

22 August 2000

Dear Secretary of State

On 24 August 1999 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Durham County Council under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in February 2000 and undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although some modifications have been made (see paragraph 209) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to the electoral arrangements of Durham County Council.

We recommend that Durham County Council should be served by 63 councillors representing 63 divisions, and that changes should be made to division boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

The Local Government Bill, containing legislative proposals for a number of changes to local authority electoral arrangements, is currently being considered by Parliament. However, until such time as that new legislation is in place we are obliged to conduct our work in accordance with current legislation, and to continue our current approach to periodic electoral reviews.

I would like to thank members and officers of the County 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 Durham County Council on 24 August 1999. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 22 February 2000, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

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

We found that the existing electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in County Durham:

- **In 25 of the 61 divisions, each of which is represented by a single councillor, the number of electors varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the county, and 10 divisions vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2004 electoral inequality is expected to worsen, with the number of electors forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 27 divisions, and by more than 20 per cent in 11 divisions.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 208–209) are that:

- **Durham County Council should have 63 councillors, two more than at present, representing 63 divisions;**
- **as the divisions are based on district wards which have themselves changed as a result of the recent district reviews, the boundaries of all except 13 divisions will be subject to change.**

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

- **In 41 of the proposed 63 divisions the number of electors would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the county average, with only one division varying by more than 20 per cent.**
- **This improved electoral equality is forecast to deteriorate slightly, with the number of electors in 37 divisions expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the county in 2004, with only three divisions expected to vary by more than 20 per cent.**

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

- **new warding arrangements for the parishes of Cassop-cum-Quarrington, Seaham, Great Aycliffe and Spennymoor.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 3 October 2000:

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

Figure 1: The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

<b>Division name (by district council area)</b>	<b>Constituent district wards</b>
<b>CHESTER-LE-STREET DISTRICT</b>	
1 Chester-le-Street North & East	Chester East ward; Chester North ward
2 Chester-le-Street South	Chester South ward; Edmondsley & Waldrige ward
3 Chester-le-Street West Central	Chester Central ward; Chester West ward; Pelton Fell ward
4 Lumley	<i>Unchanged</i> (Bournmoor ward; Lumley ward)
5 Ouston & Urpeth	Grange Villa & West Pelton ward; Ouston ward; Urpeth ward
6 Pelton	North Lodge ward; Pelton ward
7 Sacriston	Kimbleworth & Plawsworth ward; Sacriston ward
<b>DERWENTSIDE DISTRICT</b>	
8 Annfield Plain	Annfield Plain ward; Catchgate ward
9 Benfieldside	Benfieldside ward; Blackhill ward (part)
10 Burnopfield & Dipton	Burnopfield ward; Dipton ward
11 Consett North	Blackhill ward (part); Consett North ward
12 Craghead & South Moor	Craghead & South Stanley ward (part); South Moor ward
13 Delves Lane & Consett South	Consett East ward; Consett South ward; Delves Lane ward
14 Esh	<i>Unchanged</i> (Cornsay ward; Esh ward)
15 Lanchester	<i>Unchanged</i> (Burnhope ward; Castleside ward; Lanchester ward)
16 Leadgate & Medomsley	Ebchester & Medomsley ward; Leadgate ward
17 Stanley	Craghead & South Stanley ward (part); Havannah ward (part); Stanley Hall ward
18 Tanfield	Havannah ward (part); Tanfield ward
<b>DURHAM CITY</b>	
19 Belmont	Belmont ward; Carrville & Gilesgate Moor ward (part – Carrville parish ward of Belmont parish)
20 Brandon	Brancepath, Langley Moor & Meadowfield ward (part – the East and South parish wards of Brandon & Byshottles parish); Brandon ward
21 Coxhoe	Cassop-cum-Quarrington ward (part); Kelloe ward
22 Deerness Valley	Brancepath, Langley Moor & Meadowfield ward (part – the parish of Brancepath); Deerness ward; New Brancepath & Ushaw Moor ward
23 Durham South	Cassop-cum-Quarrington ward (part); Shincliffe ward

<b>Division name (by district council area)</b>	<b>Constituent district wards</b>
24 Elvet	Elvet ward; St Nicholas ward
25 Framwellgate Moor	Bearpark & Witton Gilbert ward; Framwellgate Moor ward (part)
26 Gilesgate	Carrville & Gilesgate Moor ward (part – Gilesgate Moor parish ward of Belmont parish); Pelaw & Gilesgate ward
27 Neville's Cross	Crossgate & Framwelgate ward; Neville's Cross ward
28 Newton Hall	<i>Unchanged</i> (Framwellgate Moor ward (part); Newton Hall North ward; Newton Hall South ward)
29 Sherburn	<i>Unchanged</i> (Pittington & West Rainton ward; Shadforth & Sherburn ward)
<b>EASINGTON DISTRICT</b>	
30 Blackhalls	<i>Unchanged</i> (Blackhalls ward; Hutton Henry ward (part – Hutton Henry parish ward of Hutton Henry parish, Hesleden parish ward of Monk Hesleden parish and the parishes of Nesbitt and Sheraton with Hulam); Wingate ward (part – Station Town parish ward of Hutton Henry parish))
31 Dawdon	Dawdon ward; Seaham Harbour ward (part)
32 Deneside	Deneside ward; Seaham North ward (part)
33 Easington	<i>Unchanged</i> (Easington Colliery ward; Easington Village & South Hetton ward (part – the parishes of Easington Village and Hawthorn))
34 Horden	<i>Unchanged</i> (Horden North ward; Horden South ward)
35 Murton	Murton East ward; Murton West ward
36 Peterlee East	Dene House ward; Edenhill ward
37 Peterlee West	Acre Rigg ward; Howletch ward
38 Seaham	Seaham Harbour ward (part); Seaham North ward (part)
39 Shotton	<i>Unchanged</i> (Easington Village & South Hetton ward (part – the parish of South Hetton); Haswell & Shotton ward)
40 Thornley	<i>Unchanged</i> (Thornley & Wheatley Hill ward; Wingate ward (part – the parish of Trimdon Foundry))
41 Wingate	Passfield ward; Hutton Henry ward (part – the parish of Castle Eden); Wingate ward (part – the parish of Wingate)
<b>SEDFIELD BOROUGH</b>	
42 Aycliffe East	Neville & Simpasture ward (part – the proposed Neville parish ward of Great Aycliffe parish); Shafto St Marys ward (part – the proposed Shafto St Marys parish ward of Great Aycliffe parish)
43 Aycliffe North	Shafto St Marys ward (part – the proposed Woodham South parish ward of Great Aycliffe parish); Woodham ward
44 Aycliffe West	Neville & Simpasture ward (part – the proposed Simpasture parish ward of Great Aycliffe parish); West ward
45 Chilton	Bishop Middleham & Cornforth ward (part – the parish of Cornforth); Chilton ward; Middlestone ward (part – the proposed Merrington parish ward of Spennymoor parish)

<b>Division name (by district council area)</b>	<b>Constituent district wards</b>
46 Ferryhill	Broom ward; Ferryhill ward
47 Sedgfield	<i>Unchanged</i> (Bishop Middleham & Cornforth ward (part – the parish of Bishop Middleham); Sedgfield ward)
48 Shildon East	Greenfield Middridge ward; Thickley ward
49 Shildon West	Byerley ward; Sunnydale ward
50 Spennymoor & Middlestone	Middlestone ward (part – the Byers Green and the proposed Middlestone parish wards of Spennymoor parish); Spennymoor ward
51 Trimdon	<i>Unchanged</i> (Fishburn & Old Trimdon ward; New Trimdon & Trimdon Grange ward)
52 Tudhoe	Low Spennymoor & Tudhoe Grange ward; Tudhoe ward
<b>TEESDALE DISTRICT</b>	
53 Barnard Castle East	Barnard Castle East ward; Barnard Castle North ward; Eggleston ward; Gainford & Winston ward; Ingleton ward; Staindrop ward; Streatlam & Whorlton ward
54 Barnard Castle West	Barnard Castle West; Barningham & Ovington ward; Cotherstone with Lartington ward; Greta ward; Middleton-in-Teesdale ward; Romalldkirk ward; Startforth ward
55 Evenwood	<i>Unchanged</i> (Cockfield ward; Etherley ward; Evenwood, Ramshaw & Lands ward; Hamsterley & South Bedburn ward; Lynesack ward)
<b>WEAR VALLEY DISTRICT</b>	
56 Bishop Auckland Town	Bishop Auckland Town ward; Cockton Hill ward
57 Coundon	Coundon ward; Dene Valley ward
58 Crook North & Tow Law	Crook North ward; Howden ward; Tow Law & Stanley ward
59 Crook South	Crook South ward; Wheatbottom & Helmington Row ward
60 Weardale	St John's Chapel ward; Stanhope ward; Wolsingham & Witton-le-Wear ward
61 West Auckland	Escomb ward; West Auckland ward
62 Willington	Hunwick ward; Willington Central ward; Willington West End ward
63 Woodhouse Close	Henknowle ward; Woodhouse Close ward

*Notes: 1 The constituent district wards are those resulting from the electoral reviews of the seven County Durham districts which were completed in 1998. Where whole district wards do not form the building blocks, constituent parishes and parish wards are listed where appropriate.*

*2 The large map inserted at the back of the report illustrates the proposed divisions outlined above. The maps in Appendix A illustrate some of the proposed boundaries in more detail.*

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendation for Durham

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Variance from average %
<b>CHESTER-LE-STREET DISTRICT</b>					
1 Chester-le-Street North & East	1	6,636	7	6,699	7
2 Chester-le-Street South	1	6,670	7	6,933	11
3 Chester-le-Street West Central	1	6,217	0	6,295	0
4 Lumley	1	5,757	-7	6,331	1
5 Ouston & Urpeth	1	6,380	3	6,433	3
6 Pelton	1	6,781	9	6,904	10
7 Sacriston	1	5,178	-17	5,274	-16
<b>DERWENTSIDE DISTRICT</b>					
8 Annfield Plain	1	6,222	0	6,120	-2
9 Benfieldside	1	5,404	-13	5,508	-12
10 Burnopfield & Dipton	1	6,112	-2	6,007	-4
11 Consett North	1	5,801	-7	5,799	-7
12 Craghead & South Moor	1	5,997	-4	5,885	-6
13 Delves Lane & Consett South	1	7,310	17	7,231	15
14 Esh	1	5,161	-17	5,150	-18
15 Lanchester	1	5,983	-4	5,882	-6
16 Leadgate & Medomsley	1	7,280	17	7,170	14
17 Stanley	1	6,590	6	6,766	8
18 Tanfield	1	6,467	4	6,388	2
<b>DURHAM CITY</b>					
19 Belmont	1	5,303	-15	5,350	-15
20 Brandon	1	7,407	19	7,554	21
21 Coxhoe	1	5,193	-17	5,302	-15
22 Deerness Valley	1	7,247	16	7,291	16
23 Durham South	1	4,960	-20	5,082	-19
24 Elvet	1	6,803	9	7,005	12

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Variance from average %
25 Framwellgate Moor	1	7,116	14	7,288	16
26 Gilesgate	1	5,874	-6	5,828	-7
27 Neville's Cross	1	6,703	8	6,946	11
28 Newton Hall	1	6,575	6	6,614	6
29 Sherburn	1	7,074	14	7,440	19
<b>EASINGTON DISTRICT</b>					
30 Blackhalls	1	6,143	-1	6,071	-3
31 Dawdon	1	5,311	-15	5,209	-17
32 Deneside	1	5,640	-9	5,576	-11
33 Easington	1	5,977	-4	6,383	2
34 Horden	1	6,479	4	6,381	2
35 Murton	1	5,780	-7	5,665	-10
36 Peterlee East	1	6,121	-2	6,072	-3
37 Peterlee West	1	5,918	-5	5,981	-5
38 Seaham	1	5,632	-9	6,098	-3
39 Shotton	1	6,503	5	6,429	3
40 Thornley	1	5,666	-9	5,551	-11
41 Wingate	1	7,216	16	7,164	14
<b>SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH</b>					
42 Aycliffe East	1	5,064	-19	4,995	-20
43 Aycliffe North	1	5,471	-12	5,520	-12
44 Aycliffe West	1	5,846	-6	5,792	-8
45 Chilton	1	6,954	12	6,855	9
46 Ferryhill	1	7,689	24	7,638	22
47 Sedgfield	1	5,290	-15	5,309	-15
48 Shildon East	1	6,694	8	6,723	7
49 Shildon West	1	5,655	-9	5,596	-11
50 Spennymoor & Middlestone	1	7,226	16	7,641	22
51 Trimdon	1	5,716	-8	5,715	-9
52 Tudhoe	1	6,985	12	6,916	10

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Variance from average %
<b>TEESDALE DISTRICT</b>					
53 Barnard Castle East	1	6,830	10	6,821	9
54 Barnard Castle West	1	6,264	1	6,295	0
55 Evenwood	1	6,862	10	6,848	9
<b>WEAR VALLEY DISTRICT</b>					
56 Bishop Auckland Town	1	6,099	-2	6,110	-2
57 Coundon	1	5,561	-11	5,576	-11
58 Crook North & Tow Law	1	5,544	-11	5,540	-12
59 Crook South	1	6,148	-1	6,173	-1
60 Weardale	1	6,537	5	6,580	5
61 West Auckland	1	6,135	-1	6,165	-2
62 Willington	1	6,453	4	6,431	3
63 Woodhouse Close	1	6,402	3	6,385	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>392,012</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>394,679</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>6,222</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>6,265</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on material provided by Durham County Council.

Note: The electorate columns denote the number of electors represented by each councillor as each division is represented by a single councillor. The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors represented by each councillor varies from the average for the county. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for Durham County Council. Our review of the county is part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 In each two-tier county, our approach is first to complete the PERs of all the constituent districts and, when Orders for the resulting changes in those areas have been made by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, then to commence a PER of the county council's electoral arrangements. The Secretary of State made Orders for new electoral arrangements in the districts in Durham, which we reviewed at the start of the PER programme in 1997/98, in September 1999.

## **Our Approach to County Reviews**

3 In undertaking all our PERs we must have regard to:

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

4 We also have regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (third edition published in October 1999) on our approach to county reviews.

5 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the County Council, and the number, boundaries and names of electoral divisions. Current legislation requires that county council electoral divisions should each return one councillor. In addition, the statutory Rules set out in the 1972 Act provide that each division should be wholly contained within a single district and that division boundaries should not split unwarded parishes or parish wards.

6 In considering the approach we should take to county reviews we valued the responses to the consultation we undertook in 1995 prior to the start of our PER programme, and the more recent discussions we have had with county council officers and the Local Government Association. We have also welcomed the opportunity to brief chief officers and, on an all-party basis, members of individual county councils, about our policies and procedures.

7 As with all our reviews, we wish wherever possible to build on schemes which have been prepared locally on the basis of careful and effective consultation. Local interests are normally in a better position to judge what council size and configuration are most likely to secure effective and convenient local government in their areas, while allowing proper reflection of the identities and interests of local communities.

8 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the county as a whole. Our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable, having regard to our statutory criteria. We will require justification for schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any division. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in exceptional circumstances, and will require strong justification.

9 Similarly, we will seek to ensure that the number of county councillors representing each district area within the county is commensurate with the district's proportion of the county's electorate.

10 The Rules provide that, in considering county council electoral arrangements, we should have regard to the boundaries of district wards. We attach considerable importance to achieving coterminosity between the boundaries of divisions and wards. Where wards or groups of wards are not coterminous with county divisions, this can cause confusion for the electorate at local elections, lead to increased election costs and, in our view, may not be conducive to effective and convenient local government.

11 We recognise, however, that we are unlikely to achieve optimum electoral equality and complete coterminosity throughout a county area. Our objective will be to achieve the best balance between the two, taking into account our statutory criteria. While the proportion of electoral divisions that will be coterminous with the boundaries of district wards is likely to vary between counties, we would normally expect coterminosity to be achieved in a significant majority of divisions.

12 Where coterminosity is not possible in parished areas, and a district ward is to be split between electoral divisions, we would normally expect this to be achieved without dividing (or further dividing) a parish between divisions. There are likely to be exceptions to this, however, particularly where larger parishes are involved.

13 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the general assumption that the existing council size already secures effective and convenient local government in that county but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified; in particular, we do not accept that an increase in a county's electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, or that changes should be made to the size of a county council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other counties.

14 A further area of difference between county and district reviews is that we recognise it will not always be possible to avoid the creation of some county divisions which contain diverse communities, for example, combining urban and rural areas. We have generally sought to avoid this in district reviews, in order to reflect the identities and interests of local communities. Some of the existing county council electoral divisions comprise a number of distinct communities, which is inevitable given the larger number of electors represented by each councillor, and we would expect that similar situations will continue under our recommendations in seeking the best balance between electoral equality, coterminosity and the statutory criteria.

15 Before we started our county reviews, the Government published a White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, in July 1998, setting out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. The Government’s proposals provided for elections by halves in alternate years for all two-tier authorities. This would mean that district and county councils would each move to a cycle of elections by halves, with elections for district councils and county councils taking place in alternate years. The White Paper also refers to local accountability being maximised where the whole electorate in a council’s area is involved in elections each time they take place, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member divisions in county councils to reflect a system of elections by halves. The proposals were taken forward in a Local Government Bill, published in December 1999, and are currently being considered by Parliament.

16 In October 1998 we wrote to all local authorities, setting out our understanding of the White Paper proposals, following discussions with the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, the Local Government Association and the Association of London Government. In brief, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, and our present *Guidance*, until such time as the legislation changes. We have power only to recommend single-member divisions in county council areas.

17 As part of this review we may also make recommendations for change to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils in the county. However, we made some recommendations for new parish electoral arrangements as part of our district reviews. Furthermore, this is now a power that is open to district and unitary councils. We therefore only expect to put forward such recommendations during county reviews on an exceptional basis. In any event, we are *not* able to review the administrative boundaries *between* local authorities or parishes, or consider the establishment of new parish areas, as part of this review.

## **The Review of Durham**

18 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Durham County Council. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in November 1980 (Report No. 406).

19 Stage One of this review began on 24 August 1999, when we wrote to Durham County Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified the seven district councils in the county, the Durham Police Authority, the local authority associations, the Durham Association of Parish and Town Councils, parish and town councils in the county, Members of Parliament and the Member of the European Parliament with constituency interests in the county, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the County Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 14 December 1999. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

20 Stage Three began on 22 February 2000 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Durham County Council*, and ended on 17 April 2000. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.



## 2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

21 The county of Durham comprises the seven districts of Chester-le-Street, Derwentside, Durham City, Easington, Sedgefield, Teesdale and Wear Valley. With a population of approximately 492,000, covering some 223,000 hectares, the county has a population density of just over two persons per hectare. The county borders Cumbria to the west, Northumberland to the north-west, the metropolitan boroughs of Gateshead and Sunderland to the north-east, the unitary authorities of Hartlepool, Stockton-on-Tees and Darlington to the south-east and North Yorkshire to the south-west.

22 The western part of the county is mainly moorland with settlements concentrated in the three main valleys of the Derwent, Wear and Tees. The eastern part of the county is more urban with the largest centre of population being the main administrative centre and county town of Durham City. There are a number of other smaller towns including Chester-le-Street, Seaham, Peterlee, Newton Aycliffe, Bishop Auckland, Stanley and Consett.

23 To compare levels of electoral inequality between divisions, we calculated the extent to which the number of electors represented by the councillor for each division varies from the county average in percentage terms. In the text which follows, this calculation may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

24 The electorate of the county is 392,012 (February 1999). The Council presently has 61 members, with one member elected from each division (Figure 4).

25 Since the last review of the County Council's electoral arrangements there has been a slight increase in the electorate in County Durham, with around 1 per cent more electors than two decades ago. The most significant growth in the county has occurred in Chester-le-Street district, with around 13 per cent more electors than 20 years ago. Other notable increases have been in the City of Durham and Teesdale district. However, these increases in electorate have been largely offset by static or declining electorates elsewhere in the county, most notably in Easington which has 6 per cent fewer electors than two decades ago.

26 At present, each councillor represents an average of 6,426 electors, which the County Council forecasts will increase marginally to 6,470 by the year 2004 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 25 of the 61 divisions varies by more than 10 per cent from the county average, in 10 divisions by more than 20 per cent and in three divisions by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalances are in Sacriston division (in Chester-le-Street district) and Spennymoor division (in Sedgefield borough), where the councillors each represent 40 per cent more electors than the county average. The difference in the numbers of electors represented by each county councillor can best be illustrated by the fact that the councillor for the Spennymoor division presently represents around 9,010 electors while the councillor for the Dawdon division (in Easington district) represents around 4,173 electors.

27 As mentioned previously, in considering the County Council's electoral arrangements, we must have regard to the boundaries of district wards. Following the completion of the reviews of district warding arrangements in County Durham, we are therefore faced with a new starting point for considering electoral divisions; our proposals for county divisions will be based on the

new district wards as opposed to those which existed prior to the recent reviews. In view of the effect of the new district wards and changes in the electorate over the past 20 years which have resulted in electoral imbalances across the county, changes to most, if not all, of the existing county electoral divisions are inevitable.

28 In considering county council electoral arrangements, we have regard to the boundaries of district wards. The term ‘coterminosity’ is used throughout the report and refers to situations where the boundaries of county electoral divisions and district wards are the same, that is to say, where county divisions comprise either one or more whole district wards.

Figure 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Variance from average %
<b>CHESTER-LE-STREET DISTRICT</b>					
1 Chester-le-Street Central	1	6,716	5	6,779	5
2 Chester-le-Street North East	1	7,456	16	7,527	16
3 Chester-le-Street South	1	6,738	5	6,804	5
4 Lumley	1	5,757	-10	6,328	-2
5 Pelton	1	7,976	24	8,099	25
6 Sacriston	1	8,976	40	9,332	44
<b>DERWENTSIDE DISTRICT</b>					
7 Annfield Plain	1	5,425	-16	5,323	-18
8 Benfieldside	1	8,083	26	8,105	25
9 Burnopfield & Dipton	1	6,112	-5	6,002	-7
10 Consett	1	5,658	-12	5,560	-14
11 Craghead & South Moor	1	5,267	-18	5,147	-20
12 Delves Lane	1	4,973	-23	5,129	-21
13 Esh	1	5,161	-20	5,136	-21
14 Lanchester	1	5,983	-7	5,909	-9
15 Leadgate & Medomsley	1	7,081	10	6,968	8
16 Stanley	1	6,630	3	6,796	5
17 Tanfield	1	7,954	24	7,831	21
<b>DURHAM CITY</b>					
18 Belmont	1	7,667	19	7,718	19
19 Brandon	1	7,407	15	7,522	16
20 Coxhoe	1	8,014	25	8,213	27
21 Deerness Valley	1	6,901	7	6,960	8
22 Elvet	1	6,625	3	6,836	6
23 Framwellgate Moor	1	6,999	9	7,138	10
24 Gilesgate	1	6,398	0	6,347	-2
25 Neville's Cross	1	6,595	3	6,808	5
26 Newton Hall	1	6,575	2	6,606	2
27 Sherburn	1	7,074	10	7,552	17

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Variance from average %
<b>EASINGTON DISTRICT</b>					
28 Blackhalls	1	6,143	-4	6,057	-6
29 Dawdon	1	4,173	-35	4,078	-37
30 Deneside	1	5,889	-8	5,834	-10
31 Easington	1	5,977	-7	6,406	-1
32 Horden	1	6,479	1	6,435	-1
33 Murton	1	5,531	-14	5,416	-16
34 Peterlee Central	1	6,494	1	6,408	-1
35 Peterlee Dene	1	6,286	-2	6,287	-3
36 Seaham	1	6,770	5	7,251	12
37 Shotton	1	6,503	1	6,420	-1
38 Thornley	1	5,666	-12	5,559	-14
39 Wingate	1	6,475	1	6,429	-1
<b>SEDFIELD BOROUGH</b>					
40 Aycliffe East	1	5,064	-21	5,032	-22
41 Aycliffe North	1	6,932	8	6,978	8
42 Aycliffe West	1	4,834	-25	4,780	-26
43 Chilton	1	6,088	-5	5,963	-8
44 Ferryhill	1	7,689	20	7,631	18
45 Sedgfield	1	5,290	-18	5,303	-18
46 Shildon North East	1	5,922	-8	5,996	-7
47 Shildon South West	1	5,978	-7	5,885	-9
48 Spennymoor	1	9,010	40	9,414	45
49 Trimdon	1	5,716	-11	5,715	-12
50 Tudhoe	1	6,067	-6	6,003	-7
<b>TEESDALE DISTRICT</b>					
51 Barnard Castle East	1	6,401	0	6,323	-2
52 Barnard Castle West	1	6,693	4	6,869	6
53 Evenwood	1	6,862	7	6,772	5

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Variance from average %
<b>WEAR VALLEY DISTRICT</b>					
54 Bishop Auckland Town	1	7,240	13	7,237	12
55 Coundon	1	5,277	-18	5,285	-18
56 Crook North	1	6,268	-2	6,256	-3
57 Crook South	1	6,176	-4	6,207	-4
58 Weardale	1	6,146	-4	6,175	-5
59 West Auckland	1	5,926	-8	5,957	-8
60 Willington	1	6,112	-5	6,121	-5
61 Woodhouse Close	1	5,734	-11	5,722	-12
<b>Totals</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>392,012</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>394,679</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>6,426</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>6,470</b>	<b>-</b>

*Source: Electorate figures are based on Durham County Council's submission.*

*Note: Each division is represented by a single councillor, hence the electorate columns denote the number of electors represented by each councillor. The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors represented by each councillor varies from the average for the county. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1999, electors in Dawdon division in Easington district were relatively over-represented by 35 per cent, while electors in Sacriston division in Chester-le-Street district were significantly under-represented by 40 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.*



### 3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

29 During Stage One we received six representations: from the County Council, Chester-le-Street District Council, two parish councils, the North Durham Constituency Labour Party and a joint submission from a county councillor and three district councillors. Only the County Council submitted a county-wide scheme, although the North Durham Constituency Labour Party put forward proposals for electoral divisions in the North Durham constituency area (covering all of Chester-le-Street district and part of Derwentside district) which were the same as those put forward by the County Council. In the light of these representations and the evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Durham County Council*.

30 Our draft recommendations were based on the County Council's scheme, which we considered would improve the level of electoral imbalance which exists under the current arrangements. However, its proposals would not achieve a high level of coterminosity – only 19 of its proposed 63 county divisions (30 per cent) would be formed from whole district council wards. We considered that a better balance of all the criteria governing this review (ie securing electoral equality, coterminosity and effective and convenient local government, and reflecting the identities and interests of local communities) could be achieved. Consequently, we incorporated the proposals submitted by Pelton Parish Council and the county councillor and the three district councillors, in addition to putting forward some of our own proposals. We proposed that:

- Durham County Council should be served by 63 councillors;
- there should be 63 electoral divisions, involving changes to the boundaries of all but 12 of the existing divisions.

**Draft Recommendation**

Durham County Council should comprise 63 councillors serving the same number of divisions.

31 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 41 of the 63 electoral divisions varying by no more than 10 per cent from the county average and only two varying by more than 20 per cent. This improved electoral equality was forecast to deteriorate slightly, with the number of electors in 36 divisions expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the county in 2004, with only three divisions expected to vary by more than 20 per cent.



## 4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

32 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, we received 42 representations, from the County Council, three district councils, 12 parish and town councils, five county councillors, one district councillor, six political groups and 14 local residents. All representations may be inspected at the offices of the County Council and the Commission by appointment. A list of respondents is available on request from the Commission.

### **Durham County Council**

33 The County Council supported the proposal for a council size of 63 members which would provide for greater equality of representation between the seven districts in the county. However, it stated that it wished “to confine its response to the generality of the Commission’s recommendations”. It was of the view that electoral equality was the “first of four mandatory criteria” and that “the issue of coterminosity is the last of a group of three, what may be described as, subsidiary factors”. It contended that “coterminosity appears to acquire considerable weight in the Commission’s deliberations and is in danger of usurping the Commission’s own declared ‘primary’ objective of electoral equality”.

34 The County Council also stated that in its original submission it was “at great pains to keep to a minimum the number of divisions with a variance of more than 10 per cent”, and contended that “bearing in mind the Rules, the County Council did not regard the achievement of coterminosity with district wards as amounting to sufficient justification *in itself* for variations above 10 per cent, let alone above 20 per cent”. It compared the levels of electoral equality and coterminosity secured under our draft recommendations and under its own Stage One submission, arguing that its proposals were “significantly better than the Commission’s in terms of securing electoral equality”. It further contended that it believed “that the Commission’s assumption that the achievement of coterminosity with the district wards will automatically provide for effective and convenient local government as well as securing more identifiable boundaries is misconceived”.

35 The County Council concluded that it “stands by its original scheme which it believes achieves a better balance than the Commission’s between the considerations which the law requires must be taken into account”, contending that the draft recommendations “do not correctly adhere to the approach required in the 1972 Act”. It also noted two slight numerical inaccuracies in our proposed electorate figures which had occurred as a result of inaccurate figures being provided to the County Council (and hence the Commission at Stage One).

### **District and Borough Councils**

36 Derwentside District Council stated that it supported our draft recommendations, but expressed some concern over the splitting of Blackhill district ward between two divisions. City of Durham Council stated that it was “dissatisfied” with the draft recommendations for the south-west and south-east areas of the borough “but felt unable to recommend an alternative solution without redrafting the proposals for the whole of the district”. Sedgfield Borough Council noted two slight numerical inaccuracies in our proposed electorate figures.

## **Parish and Town Councils**

37 We received representations direct from 12 parish and town councils. In the borough of Durham City, Brandon & Byshottles Parish Council expressed its concern at the proposal to transfer the Meadowfield area from Brandon division to Durham South division, arguing that Meadowfield “enjoys an affinity with Brandon”. Belmont Parish Council expressed concern that Gilesgate Moor parish ward (of Belmont parish) would not be included within the boundaries of Belmont division, contending that the existing Belmont division should be retained.

38 In Easington district, Seaham Town Council stated that it had no objections to the draft recommendations and Peterlee Town Council stated that it had no observations to make.

39 In Sedgefield borough, Sedgefield Town Council, Mordon Parish Meeting and Bradbury & the Isle Parish Meeting all opposed our proposal to transfer the parishes of Bradbury & the Isle and Mordon from the Sedgefield division into Aycliffe East division. They argued that there are close ties between the two parishes and Sedgefield town, and that the parishes are included in the Sedgefield ward for district council purposes.

40 Great Aycliffe Town Council opposed our proposed Greenfield, Middridge & Sunnydale division as it would separate the western part of Newton Aycliffe from the remainder of the town. It contended that it would like Newton Aycliffe to be considered as one entity “to encourage a sense of belonging among residents”. Shildon Town Council opposed the Commission’s proposals to include part of the town of Shildon in the same division as part of Newton Aycliffe, arguing that Shildon has “different needs”.

41 Middridge Parish Council proposed that the Greenfield Middridge & Sunnydale division should be named Middridge Greenfield & Sunnydale. Spennymoor Town Council pointed out an incorrect spelling in our draft recommendations report.

42 In Wear Valley, Wolsingham Parish Council expressed concern about our proposal to include Thornley village in a division with Tow Law, contending that Thornley parish ward should be included in Weardale division with the remainder of Wolsingham parish.

## **Elected Members**

43 County Councillor Knox, representing the Chester-le-Street Central division in Chester-le-Street district, opposed our proposal to include the Newfield area in a revised Pelton division. He argued that Pelton Fell and Newfield are separate communities to Pelton, citing a number of reasons to support his view, including local transport links, schools, housing and local amenities shared by Pelton Fell and Newfield.

44 County Councillor Clive Robson, representing the Consett division in Derwentside district, supported our draft recommendations for Derwentside district.

45 In Sedgefield borough, County Councillor Porter, representing the Chilton division, argued that the existing Chilton division should be retained unchanged, but he also considered that our proposed Chilton division was better than the County Council’s Stage One proposal. He also submitted copies of representations from the parish councils of Chilton and Cornforth which each

wanted to retain both parishes within the existing Chilton division. County Councillor Ernest Foster, representing the Spennymoor division, contended that “the status quo should prevail”, also arguing “it would be detrimental to the village of Kirk Merrington if it were split from North Close because of the strong community links which are already well established”.

46 Sedgefield District Councillor Willis, representing Sedgefield ward, opposed our proposal to transfer the parishes of Bradbury & the Isle and Mordon from the Sedgefield division into Aycliffe East division. She argued that there are close ties between the two parishes and Sedgefield, and that they have no identity or shared interest with Newton Aycliffe. She also noted that under our draft recommendations three of the highest electoral imbalances would be within county divisions in Sedgefield borough.

47 County Councillor Shuttleworth, representing the Weardale division in Wear Valley district, argued that Thornley parish ward should not be split from the remainder of Wolsingham parish and included in the Crook North & Tow Law division. He stated that he supported the County Council’s proposed Weardale, Crook North and Crook South divisions “as better reflecting community identities” and as they would secure “a far superior level of electoral equality”. He also contended that “a large rural division ... should have a much lower [number of electors than] the average ... to represent because of the greater difficulties of keeping in touch with the smaller communities and farms scattered throughout”.

## **Other Representations**

48 We received a further 20 representations. Chester-le-Street South Branch Labour Party objected to our proposed Chester-le-Street South division, arguing that Edmondsley parish should be included in the Sacriston division.

49 Durham City Labour Group contended that our proposals in the south-eastern and south-western areas of borough would be “unworkable” and argued that the Commission had concentrated too much on electoral equality rather than local communities. City of Durham Constituency Labour Party opposed the proposed Durham South and Coxhoe divisions. It argued that our proposals had not “adequately observed” the statutory criteria as the proposed divisions would not be coterminous, would split the communities of Langley Moor and Meadowfield, and Bowburn and the Cassop-cum-Quarrington villages, and would not secure effective and convenient local government “as councillors could live a long way from their constituents ... which will decrease their accessibility”.

50 Bowburn Labour Party opposed our proposed Durham South and Coxhoe divisions, arguing that they would split the village of Bowburn and the parish of Cassop-cum-Quarrington, which would adversely affect community ties. It also contended that the inclusion of part of Bowburn village in Durham South division would be an “artificial union with ... quite different and even distant communities”. It further argued that too much consideration had been given to electoral variances. A local resident also expressed his opposition to our proposal to split the parish of Cassop-cum-Quarrington.

51 A local resident from the Meadowfield area of the borough of Durham City opposed our proposal to transfer the Meadowfield area from the Brandon division to Durham South division. He argued that Meadowfield and Brandon are “entwined geographically, socially and

economically”, and put forward six revised divisions for the southern, central and eastern parts of the borough. All of his proposed divisions would secure electoral variances of less than 10 per cent but none would be coterminous.

52 In Sedgfield borough, Aycliffe North Branch Labour Party objected to our proposal to exclude the Greenfield-Byerley area from an Aycliffe division and include it in a division with part of Shildon. It contended that Newton Aycliffe is “a discrete demographic and administrative unit” and that “Greenfield-Byerley has for 30 years been fully integrated into and within Newton Aycliffe”. It further commented that it felt that the proposed Greenfield Middridge & Sunnydale division “appears to be the agglomeration of ... remnants left after neighbouring divisions have been more appropriately constructed”, stating that it supported the County Council’s Stage One proposals for the Newton Aycliffe area. It also stated that it did not accept the proposed changes to Shafto St Mary’s parish ward.

53 A local resident also opposed our proposed Greenfield, Middridge & Sunnydale and Shildon South West divisions. He contended that Thicklely ward has closer “physical and geographical” ties with Greenfield Middridge (and Newton Aycliffe), proposing that these two wards should form a revised Shildon East ward. He also argued that the consequential Shildon West division (comprising Sunnydale and Byerley wards) would secure better levels of electoral equality than our proposed Greenfield, Middridge & Sunnydale division. However, another local resident supported our draft recommendations for divisions in the Shildon area.

54 Spennymoor Liberal Democrats objected to the Commission’s proposal for Spennymoor & Middlestone division, supporting the County Council’s Stage One proposal. Eight local residents of Bradbury & the Isle parish opposed our proposal to include the parish in the Aycliffe East division, arguing that it has closer links with the town of Sedgfield.

55 A local resident in Wear Valley also opposed our proposal to include Thornley parish ward in a division with Tow Law, arguing that they are different communities with no common interests or links.

56 A local resident contended that the number of county councillors should be reduced by two-thirds in the light of the *Modernising Local Government* White Paper but submitted no other detailed evidence.

## 5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

57 As with our reviews of districts, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for County Durham is, so far as reasonably practicable and consistent with the statutory criteria, to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the identities and interests of local communities – and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

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

59 We have discussed in Chapter One the additional parameters which apply to reviews of county council electoral arrangements and the need to have regard to the boundaries of district wards and coterminosity. In addition, our approach is to ensure that the number of county councillors representing each district council area within the county is commensurate with the district’s proportion of the county’s electorate.

60 It is impractical to design an electoral scheme which provides for exactly the same number of electors in every division of a county. 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.

61 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable, especially when also seeking to achieve coterminosity in order to facilitate convenient and effective local government. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, the objective of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review.

62 We therefore recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of electoral equality, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as the boundaries of district wards and community identity. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates. Our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable, having regard to the statutory criteria. We will require justification for schemes which result in, or retain, an imbalance of over 10 per cent in any division. Any imbalances of 20 per cent and over should arise only in exceptional circumstances and will require strong justification.

### **Electorate Forecasts**

63 The County Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting a marginal increase in the electorate of just under 1 per cent, from 392,012 to 394,679, over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expected most of the growth to be in the Chester-le-Street and

Durham City areas. The County Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the County Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to division boundaries was obtained. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could be made at the time.

64 We received no comments on the Council's electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates presently available.

## **Council Size**

65 As explained earlier in this report, the Commission's starting point is to assume that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case.

66 Durham County Council presently has 61 members. At Stage One the County Council proposed a council size of 63 members in order to provide for greater equality of representation between the seven districts within the county. It proposed that the districts of Chester-le-Street and Durham should each receive one additional county councillor and that Derwentside, Easington, Sedgefield, Teesdale and Wear Valley districts maintain their existing levels of representation. The North Durham Constituency Labour Party also proposed that Chester-le-Street district be represented by an additional county councillor.

67 In our draft recommendations report we stated that the Commission does not generally seek a substantial increase or decrease in council size but is prepared to consider the case for change where there is persuasive evidence. Given the general consensus regarding the number of councillors that should represent County Durham, and in view of the fact that under a council size of 63 the number of county councillors representing each district area within the county would be commensurate with its proportion of the county's electorate, and having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we concurred with the County Council's proposals in respect of council size and concluded that the achievement of electoral equality, the statutory criteria and coterminosity would best be met by a council size of 63 members.

68 At Stage Three the County Council reiterated its support for a 63-member council. A local resident contended that the number of county councillors should be reduced by two-thirds but submitted no other detailed evidence to support his view. We have considered the representations received, and, in the light of the County Council's support and given that we have not received any evidence during Stage Three to persuade us to move away from our draft recommendation, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendation for a council size of 63 as final.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

69 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including the county-wide scheme from the County Council. From these representations, some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations. As detailed above, we concluded that a council size

of 63 would provide a fair level of representation across the county and facilitate a good electoral scheme.

70 We acknowledged that the County Council's scheme would improve the level of electoral equality across the county, with no divisions having an electoral imbalance greater than 20 per cent, and only 12 divisions having an electoral imbalance greater than 10 per cent by 2004. However, despite this significant improvement in equality of representation, we noted that its proposals would result in a low level of coterminosity between the boundaries of divisions and wards, with only 19 of the proposed 63 county divisions (30 per cent) achieving complete coterminosity (ie being formed from whole district council wards).

71 As outlined above, we seek to achieve coterminosity between the boundaries of divisions and wards in formulating new county electoral arrangements, where possible, as this can be conducive to the provision of effective and convenient local government. We acknowledge, however, that the size and configuration of a number of district wards (the 'building blocks' of the new divisions) across the county do not facilitate the creation of coterminous ward and division boundaries.

72 In our draft recommendations report we expressed our gratitude for the positive approach taken by the County Council in putting forward proposals for new electoral arrangements which would improve the electoral imbalances which exist under the current arrangements. However, we considered that a better balance between all the criteria governing this review (ie effective and convenient local government, including coterminosity, and reflecting the identities and interests of local communities) and electoral equality could be achieved. Consequently, while we based our draft recommendations on the County Council's scheme, we also incorporated proposals submitted by Pelton Parish Council and a county councillor and three district councillors, in addition to putting forward some of our own proposals.

73 At Stage Three, in response to our draft recommendations report, the County Council took issue with the balance we had sought to strike between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. The County Council stated it was of the view that electoral equality was the "first of four mandatory criteria" and that "the issue of coterminosity is the last of a group of three, what may be described as, subsidiary factors". It contended that "coterminosity appears to acquire considerable weight in the Commission's deliberations and is in danger of usurping the Commission's own declared 'primary' objective of electoral equality". It stated further that in its submission it was "at great pains to keep to a minimum the number of divisions with a variance of more than 10 per cent", and contended that "bearing in mind the Rules, the County Council did not regard the achievement of coterminosity with district wards as amounting to sufficient justification *in itself* for variations above 10 per cent, let alone above 20 per cent".

74 The County Council compared the levels of electoral equality and coterminosity secured under our draft recommendations and under its own Stage One submission, arguing that its proposals were "significantly better than the Commission's in terms of securing electoral equality". The County Council concluded that it "stands by its original scheme which it believes achieves a better balance than the Commission's between the considerations which the law requires must be taken into account".

75 We have considered the County Council's comments and acknowledge that we cannot give an authoritative interpretation of the statute governing the review; ultimately that is the prerogative of the courts. However, we remain of the view that the value judgements made in formulating the draft recommendations (based on the legal requirements of the statute) are compatible with, and provide the best balance between, the statutory criteria. Furthermore, we do not accept that the order in which the Rules are set out (in paragraph 1(2) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972) necessarily reflects the weight required to be given to them; it is a matter of balance and judgement in every case.

76 We advanced the above points in a written reply to the County Council. We observed that the reason that we had departed from the County Council's Stage One proposals was because, on the facts of the case, we had attached greater weight to the importance of coterminosity than had the Council. We reiterated the point that we are of the view that the level of coterminosity between county division and district ward boundaries is an important factor to be taken into account in considering the extent to which our recommendations for electoral change will provide effective and convenient local government for local electors (thereby contributing towards the meeting of the statutory criteria). We offered the County Council additional time to submit any further information or evidence, in the light of our response to their representation; however, none was submitted.

77 We have reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. We have considered the County Council's comments relating to the comparative levels of coterminosity and electoral equality achieved under its own scheme and under our draft recommendations. However, it should be noted that the Commission attempts to apply a consistent approach in balancing coterminosity, electoral equality and community identities when reviewing county council electoral arrangements, and, in a wider context, under our draft recommendations for Durham County Council, we accepted the lowest overall level of coterminosity out of all of the county council reviews that the Commission had completed to date: 59 per cent. In the light of this, and given that our draft recommendations would, in our view, secure a better balance between electoral equality, coterminosity and the reflection of local community interests, we have not been persuaded to adopt the County Council's proposals and accept a much lower level of coterminosity.

78 We have also noted the numerical inaccuracies in our proposed electorate figures of which the County Council and Sedgefield Borough Council notified us during Stage Three. These had resulted from inaccurate electorate data being given to us at Stage One. In Durham City the revised electorate figures related to the forecast electorate for the proposed divisions of Belmont and Gilesgate. The consequence of this correction is that the 2004 electoral variance for the proposed Belmont division increased by 1 per cent to 15 per cent, although the Gilesgate division remained the same at 7 per cent.

79 In Sedgefield borough the proposed divisions of Chilton and Spennymoor & Middlestone were affected by these modifications. As a consequence, electoral equality in both the proposed divisions would deteriorate, with the number of electors in the proposed Chilton and Spennymoor & Middlestone divisions being 23 per cent below and 20 per cent above the average for the county initially (25 per cent below and 25 per cent above by 2004). Given this deterioration in electoral equality, and in the light of other representations received during the consultation period, we are proposing modifications to our draft recommendations.

80 The submissions received from parish and town councils and other local interests have highlighted specific local issues, particularly in terms of local community identities and interests, and have been valuable in drawing up our final proposals. Taking all relevant factors into account, we have concluded that the optimum level of electoral equality can be achieved across County Durham, having regard to the statutory criteria, with a council size of 63, two more than at present (see also the section earlier in this chapter relating to council size); however, we judge that modifications should be made to some of our proposed boundaries and names of divisions.

81 Our proposals would involve the re-warding of four parishes – Cassop-cum-Quarrington, Seaham, Great Aycliffe and Spennymoor – in order to meet the requirements of Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. While we generally seek to avoid further warding of parishes as part of a county review, in the case of Durham County Council we believe this is unavoidable if the best possible balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria is to be achieved. These parishing proposals are detailed later in this chapter. For the purposes of county electoral divisions, the seven district areas in County Durham are considered in turn, as follows:

- (a) Chester-le-Street district;
- (b) Derwentside district;
- (c) Durham City;
- (d) Easington district;
- (e) Sedgefield borough;
- (f) Teesdale district;
- (g) Wear Valley district.

82 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated in Appendix A and on the large map at the back of this report.

### **Chester-le-Street district**

83 Under the current arrangements the district of Chester-le-Street is represented by six county councillors serving six county divisions: Chester-le-Street Central, Chester-le-Street North East, Chester-le-Street South, Lumley, Pelton and Sacriston. There is a degree of electoral imbalance in these divisions, with the number of electors in three of the six divisions varying by more than 10 per cent from the average for the county, and in two divisions by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in the Sacriston division which is currently under-represented by 40 per cent (44 per cent in 2004).

84 The district has experienced an increase in electorate since the last review such that it is now under-represented overall on the County Council. At Stage One both the County Council and the North Durham Constituency Labour Party proposed that Chester-le-Street be represented by an additional (seventh) county councillor. Under our proposed 63-member scheme Chester-le-Street would be correctly represented by seven county councillors.

85 The County Council submitted district-wide proposals for Chester-le-Street during Stage One. Under these proposals electoral equality would improve, with the number of electors in all seven of the proposed divisions varying by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the county both initially and in 2004. However, a poor level of coterminosity would be achieved, with only three of the seven divisions comprising whole district wards. The North Durham Constituency Labour Party put forward proposals for seven divisions in Chester-le-Street district

which were the same as those proposed by the County Council. We also received a joint submission from a county councillor and three Chester-le-Street district councillors contending that the small area of Newfield should be incorporated into a revised Pelton division. Similarly, Pelton Parish Council proposed including Newfield in Pelton division, arguing that it shares close community ties with Pelton village and that both areas are included in the same district council ward.

86 Having considered all the representations that we received during Stage One we noted that, while the County Council's scheme would secure good electoral equality, it would not provide for a high level of coterminosity between division and district ward boundaries. We therefore built on the County Council's scheme, incorporating the modifications put forward by Pelton Parish Council, the county councillor and three district councillors, and our own modifications, in order to secure an improved degree of coterminosity.

87 In the east of the district the County Council proposed a Lumley division, based on the existing boundary, comprising the district wards of Lumley and Bournmoor. The number of electors in the proposed division would be 7 per cent below the average for the county initially (1 per cent above in 2004). Given the good electoral equality and coterminous boundaries that would be secured, we endorsed the County Council's proposed Lumley division as part of our draft recommendations.

88 In the north of the district the County Council proposed a new Ouston & Urpeth division (comprising the district wards of Ouston, Urpeth and Grange Villa & West Pelton) and a new Pelton division (comprising North Lodge district ward and the majority of Pelton ward, less the unparished area around Newfield). The number of electors in the Council's proposed divisions of Ouston & Urpeth and Pelton would vary from the average for the county initially by 3 per cent and 6 per cent respectively (3 per cent and 7 per cent in 2004). Given that the Council's proposed Ouston & Urpeth division would secure good electoral equality and be fully coterminous, we adopted it as part of our draft recommendations. However, we were of the view that the Council's proposed Pelton division could be modified slightly in order to secure improved coterminosity, thus providing for effective and convenient local government. We therefore included the Newfield area in the revised Pelton division, as proposed by a number of respondents. The number of electors in our proposed Pelton division would vary from the county average by 9 per cent initially (10 per cent in 2004).

89 In and around the town of Chester-le-Street, the County Council proposed a new Chester-le-Street West Central division (comprising the district wards of Chester Central, Chester West and Pelton Fell, and the Newfield area from Pelton ward), a revised Chester-le-Street North East division (comprising the district wards of Chester North and Chester East) and a revised Chester-le-Street South division (comprising Chester South district ward and the unparished area and Waldrige parish from Edmondsley & Waldrige district ward). The number of electors in the Council's proposed divisions of Chester-le-Street West Central and Chester-le-Street North East divisions would vary from the average for the county by 3 per cent and 7 per cent respectively, both initially and in 2004. The number of electors in the Council's proposed Chester-le-Street South division would be almost equal to the county average initially (varying by 4 per cent in 2004).

90 As outlined above, we included the Newfield area in a revised Pelton division. As a consequence of this modification, the Council's proposed Chester-le-Street West Central division

would also be coterminous with district ward boundaries and would secure improved electoral equality, with the number of electors in the division almost equalling the average for the county both initially and in 2004. In the light of this improved coterminosity and electoral equality we put it forward as part of our draft recommendations. Similarly, given the good electoral equality and coterminosity of boundaries secured under the Council's proposed Chester-le-Street North East division, we endorsed it as part of our draft recommendations. However, we were of the view that it would be a more accurate description of the areas comprising this division if it were named Chester-le-Street North & East.

91 We considered the County Council's proposed Chester-le-Street South division and noted that the County Council proposed splitting Edmondsley & Waldrige district ward. It proposed including the Edmondsley parish ward with the district wards of Sacriston and Kimblesworth & Plawsworth in a revised Sacriston division, in order to secure a good level of electoral equality: 10 per cent initially (9 per cent by 2004). However, if the whole of the Edmondsley & Waldrige district ward were included in the proposed Chester-le-Street South division, thus achieving coterminosity of boundaries, the number of electors in the modified Chester-le-Street South division would vary from the county average by 7 per cent initially (11 per cent in 2004) and the number of electors in the modified Sacriston division would vary from the county average by 17 per cent initially (16 per cent in 2004). Although electoral equality would worsen slightly under these modified proposals, we were of the view that they would provide for more effective and convenient local government, in terms of coterminosity of boundaries. We therefore put forward the revised divisions of Chester-le-Street South and Sacriston as part of our draft recommendations.

92 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors in six of the proposed seven divisions in Chester-le-Street would vary by less than 10 per cent from the county average, with Sacriston division varying by 17 per cent (16 per cent in 2004). This level of electoral equality would deteriorate slightly by 2004, when two divisions would vary by more than 10 per cent. Under these proposals all of the seven divisions would be formed from whole district wards.

93 At Stage Three the County Council reiterated its support for its own Stage One proposals. County Councillor Knox, representing the Chester-le-Street Central division, opposed our proposal to include the Newfield area in a revised Pelton division. He submitted a detailed submission arguing that Pelton Fell and Newfield are separate communities to Pelton, citing a number of reasons to support his view, including local transport links, schools, housing and local amenities shared by Pelton Fell and Newfield.

94 Chester-le-Street South Branch Labour Party supported our recommendation that the district be represented by seven county councillors overall. However, it objected to our proposed Chester-le-Street South division, arguing that Edmondsley should be included in the Sacriston division as this would maintain "Edmondsley's traditional community links with Sacriston" and secure better electoral equality.

95 We have carefully considered the representations received; however, we have not been persuaded to move away from our draft recommendations. We remain of the view that the Newfield area should be included in the Pelton division. We are aware that this area is part of the Pelton ward at district level and, officers from the Commission having visited the area, we consider that it would not have a detrimental effect on community ties if the area were included in the Pelton division, as it is linked to the Pelton Lane Ends area (and subsequently Pelton itself)

via Pelton Lane/Edward Terrace. We remain of the view that our draft proposals would secure the best balance between coterminosity of boundaries (thus effective and convenient local government), securing reasonable electoral equality and reflecting community identities.

96 We have also considered Chester-le-Street South Branch Labour Party's proposal that Edmondsley should be included in the Sacriston division. Officers from the Commission having visited the area, we have noted that Edmondsley does share some links with Sacriston, but we have noted that there is a good road link between Edmondsley, Waldrige and the western part of Chester-le-Street (via Waldrige Road), and that Edmondsley is included in a ward with Waldrige for district purposes. As outlined in our draft recommendations report, while we acknowledge that electoral equality would be slightly worse under our proposals, they would provide for more effective and convenient local government, in terms of coterminosity of boundaries, without, in our opinion, having a significantly detrimental effect on local communities.

97 We remain of the view that our draft recommendations for divisions in Chester-le-Street district would secure the best balance of the statutory criteria, and we are therefore content to endorse them as final, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

## **Derwentside district**

98 Derwentside district is currently represented by 11 county councillors serving 11 divisions: Annfield Plain, Benfieldside, Burnopfield & Dipton, Consett, Craghead & South Moor, Delves Lane, Esh, Lanchester, Leadgate & Medomsley, Stanley and Tanfield. There are considerable electoral imbalances within the district area, with the number of electors represented by each councillor in seven of the 11 divisions varying by more than 10 per cent from the county average, and in three divisions by more than 20 per cent.

99 The most over-represented divisions in the district are Delves Lane and Esh, which are over-represented by 23 per cent and 20 per cent respectively. However, the over-representation in these divisions is somewhat balanced by the under-representation in Benfieldside and Tanfield divisions which are under-represented by 26 per cent and 24 per cent respectively. Overall, at present Derwentside district is slightly over-represented on the County Council. However, under our proposed 63-member scheme the district would be correctly represented by 11 county councillors.

100 At Stage One the County Council submitted district-wide proposals for Derwentside. Under these proposals electoral equality would improve, but they would provide for a poor level of coterminosity, with only four of the 11 divisions comprising whole district wards. The number of electors in all but one of the 11 proposed divisions would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the county both initially and in 2004. The worst electoral imbalance would be in the proposed Esh division, which would vary by 17 per cent initially (18 per cent in 2004). The North Durham Constituency Labour Party put forward proposals for divisions in the part of Derwentside district included in the North Durham constituency which were the same as those proposed by the County Council.

101 We considered all the representations that we received regarding this area, and given the local consensus in support of the County Council's scheme, and having considered alternative configurations of district wards to create electoral divisions, we were of the view that the

majority of the County Council's proposals would provide for a reasonable balance between electoral equality, coterminosity and the reflection of the identities and interests of local communities. However, we modified four of the County Council's proposed divisions, in and around the town of Consett, in order to secure an increased level of coterminosity.

102 In the southern, parished part of the district the County Council proposed an Esh division, based on the existing boundary (comprising the district wards of Esh and Cornsay), and a Lanchester division, based on the existing boundary (comprising the district wards of Lanchester, Burnhope and Castleside). The Council's proposed Esh and Lanchester divisions would be over-represented by 17 per cent and 4 per cent initially (18 per cent and 6 per cent in 2004). Given the constraints of the external district boundary, and in view of the fact that both the proposed divisions would comprise whole district wards, therefore providing for effective and convenient local government, and would facilitate a good electoral scheme elsewhere in the district, we were prepared to accept such a level of electoral imbalance and therefore adopted the Council's proposed Esh and Lanchester divisions as part of our draft recommendations.

103 In the central and northern parts of the district the County Council put forward a revised Annfield Plain division (comprising the district wards of Annfield Plain and Catchgate) and a revised Burnopfield & Dipton division (comprising the district wards of Burnopfield and Dipton). The number of electors in the Council's proposed Annfield Plain and Burnopfield & Dipton divisions would be initially equal to and 2 per cent below the average for the county respectively (2 per cent below and 4 per cent below by 2004). Given the good electoral equality and the coterminosity of boundaries that would be secured under these proposals, we put forward the County Council's proposed Annfield Plain and Burnopfield & Dipton divisions as part of our draft recommendations.

104 In the eastern part of the district, in and around the town of Stanley, the Council put forward three revised divisions. It proposed a revised Tanfield division (comprising the district ward of Tanfield and a part of Havannah district ward, to the north of East Stanley), a revised Stanley division (comprising all of Stanley Hall district ward, the southern part of Havannah district ward and two areas from the northern part of Craghead & South Stanley ward: the area to the east of Durham Road and to the north-east of Mendip Terrace, and the area to the west of Durham Road north of Stanley Burn) and a revised Craghead & South Moor division (comprising the remaining southern part of Craghead & South Stanley district ward and all of South Moor district ward). The number of electors in the Council's proposed Tanfield, Stanley and Craghead & South Stanley divisions would vary from the average for the county by 4 per cent, 6 per cent and 4 per cent respectively (2 per cent, 8 per cent and 6 per cent in 2004).

105 We considered the County Council's proposals for three county divisions in this area and were of the view that they would provide for the best balance between electoral equality, coterminosity and the reflection of local communities. As the area as a whole comprises five three-member district wards, it is not possible to achieve coterminous divisions without having a detrimental effect on electoral equality. Therefore, given the consensus locally in support of these proposals, we put forward the Council's proposed Tanfield, Stanley and Craghead & South Moor divisions as part of our draft recommendations.

106 In the north-western part of the district, the Council proposed four divisions covering the area in and around the town of Consett. It proposed a revised Leadgate & Medomsley division (comprising the district ward of Leadgate and the majority of the Ebchester & Medomsley district

ward, excluding an area around Shotley Bridge) and a revised Benfieldside division (comprising the remainder of Ebchester & Medomsley district ward, all of Benfieldside district ward and two areas from Blackhill ward: the western part of the ward to the west of Pemberton Road, and the area to the west of Queen's Road and to the north of Durham Road). The number of electors in the Council's proposed divisions of Leadgate & Medomsley and Benfieldside would vary from the average for the county by 10 per cent and 6 per cent initially (8 per cent and 5 per cent in 2004).

107 The County Council also proposed a revised Consett division (comprising the remaining south-eastern part of Blackhill district ward, the majority of Consett North district ward, except an area in the centre of the ward to the south of Belle Vue park and to the north of Park Road, and all of Consett South district ward) and a revised Delves Lane division (comprising the remaining central part of Consett North district ward, Consett East district ward and Delves Lane district ward). The number of electors in the Council's proposed Consett and Delves Lane divisions would vary from the average for the county by 8 per cent and 3 per cent initially (7 per cent and 1 per cent in 2004).

108 Notwithstanding the good level of electoral equality that would be secured under the Council's proposals, we were of the view that they could be modified to achieve greater coterminosity, thus providing for more effective and convenient local government and a better reflection of the identities of local communities. We therefore included all of Ebchester & Medomsley ward in a modified Leadgate & Medomsley division. The number of electors in the revised division would vary from the county average by 17 per cent initially (improving to 14 per cent in 2004). As a consequence, the number of electors in our modified Benfieldside division would vary from the county average by 13 per cent initially (12 per cent in 2004). Although electoral equality under our proposed divisions would be slightly worse than under the County Council's scheme, we were of the view that this is justified by the improvement in coterminosity that would be achieved.

109 Similarly, we modified the Council's proposed Consett and Delves Lane divisions. We noted that the Council proposed including the central part of Consett North in a revised Delves Lane division, but we did not believe that this proposal would secure identifiable boundaries or provide for the most appropriate reflection of local communities: there are limited links between the different areas comprising the division and some of the electors resident in the northern part of Consett North ward would be effectively 'cut off' from the remainder of the ward and would have to travel through the proposed Delves Lane division to reach the southern part of Consett.

110 We considered alternative configurations of district wards in this area and modified the Council's proposals in order to achieve improved coterminosity while in our opinion providing for a better reflection of local communities. We therefore combined the district wards of Delves Lane, Consett East and Consett South to form a new Delves Lane & Consett South division (areas linked by the A692 road) and joined the eastern part of Blackhill ward with Consett North ward to create a new Consett North division (linked by Durham Road and Park Road). The number of electors in our proposed Delves Lane & Consett South division and Consett North division would vary from the county average by 17 per cent and 7 per cent initially (15 per cent and 7 per cent in 2004). While we acknowledged that these proposals would not secure as good electoral equality as the Council's proposals, we were of the view that this configuration would provide improved coterminosity and more identifiable boundaries (thus providing for more effective and convenient local government) and a slightly better reflection of local communities.

111 Overall in Derwentside district under our draft recommendations seven of the proposed 11 divisions would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the county average, with all divisions varying by less than 20 per cent, both initially and in 2004. The worst electoral imbalance would be in Esh division, which would vary by 17 per cent initially (18 per cent by 2004). Under these proposals six of the proposed 11 divisions would be coterminous.

112 At Stage Three, the County Council stated that it continued to support its Stage One proposals. Derwentside District Council stated that it supported our draft recommendations for the county divisions in the district, but expressed some concern over the splitting of Blackhill district ward between two divisions.

113 County Councillor Clive Robson, representing the Consett division, supported our draft recommendations for Derwentside district, “especially the four divisions covering the area in and around the town of Consett”. He acknowledged that the County Council’s Stage One proposals secured good electoral equality but contended that they did not “offer improvements for a more effective and convenient working relationship with the people living in or surrounding the town centre of Consett”. He further stated that “the modified version [the draft recommendations] is totally justified in that it clearly achieves greater coterminosity”.

114 We have considered the representations received and have noted the broad support for our draft recommendations. We have also noted the County Council’s comments, however, we remain of the view that our draft recommendations, which were substantially based on the County Council’s Stage One proposals, would secure a slightly better level of coterminosity and reflection of local community identities, particularly in the town of Consett, as highlighted by County Councillor Robson. We are therefore content to confirm our draft recommendations as final, as shown on Maps A1 and A2 in Appendix A and on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

## **Durham City**

115 At present, Durham City district area is served by 10 county councillors, representing the 10 divisions of Belmont, Brandon, Coxhoe, Deerness Valley, Elvet, Framwellgate Moor, Gilesgate, Neville’s Cross, Newton Hall and Sherburn. The number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the county average in three divisions, with one, Coxhoe, varying by 25 per cent (27 per cent in 2004). The district has experienced an increase in electorate since the last review such that it is now significantly under-represented overall on the County Council. As detailed earlier in this chapter, the County Council proposed that Durham City district be represented by an additional (eleventh) county councillor. Under our proposed 63-member scheme, Durham City district would be correctly represented by 11 county councillors.

116 The Council put forward a district-wide scheme during Stage One. Seven of its proposed 11 divisions would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the county average initially, with no division varying by more than 20 per cent from the average. By 2004 five divisions would vary by more than 10 per cent from the county average, with the worst electoral imbalance being 19 per cent in the proposed Sherburn division. However, the County Council’s proposals would secure coterminosity in only three of its proposed 11 divisions. It also proposed a detached division in the north-eastern part of the city of Durham, linking Belmont district ward with the majority of Pelaw & Gilesgate ward and a small eastern area of St Nicholas district ward.

117 In our draft recommendations report we stated that we had some concern over the use of detached divisions (as outlined in our *Guidance*). We are of the view that they do not lend themselves to the creation of electoral areas which reflect local community identities, and we will not normally put them forward as our recommendations, other than to recognise the particular circumstances of, for example, offshore islands. In view of this, and in order to improve the level of coterminosity in the district (thus providing for more effective and convenient local government), we modified some of the Council's divisions. However, we recognised that the size and configuration of the district wards and constituent parishes in the district do not facilitate the creation of coterminous divisions and acknowledge that a large part of the Council's proposals provided the best balance available between electoral equality, coterminosity and the reflection of local communities.

118 In the south-eastern part of the district the Council highlighted the fact that the large parish of Cassop-cum-Quarrington effectively 'cuts off' the district ward of Coxhoe from the rest of the district. It further noted that if the whole of Cassop-cum-Quarrington ward were joined with Coxhoe ward to form a revised Coxhoe division it would vary above the county average by 43 per cent. Even if only the parish of Cassop-cum-Quarrington were joined with Coxhoe ward to form a division the resultant electoral variance would still be unacceptable at 29 per cent above the county average. In view of this, the County Council proposed warding the parish of Cassop-cum-Quarrington (using the A1 motorway as the parish ward boundary) and including the eastern part of the parish in a revised Coxhoe division. It consequently proposed including the western part of Cassop-cum-Quarrington parish and the parish of Croxdale & Hett (ie the remainder of Cassop-cum-Quarrington district ward) in a new Durham South division, together with Shincliffe district ward and the South parish ward of the parish of Brandon & Byshottles from Brancepath, Langley Moor & Meadowfield district ward. The number of electors in the Council's proposed divisions of Coxhoe and Durham South would vary from the average for the county initially by 17 per cent and 5 per cent respectively (15 per cent and 7 per cent in 2004).

119 We considered alternative configurations of district wards, parishes and parish wards in this southern part of the district to create new electoral divisions. However, we concluded that the Council's proposals would provide the best balance between securing electoral equality, providing for effective and convenient local government and reflecting local communities. Any alternative configuration would result in unacceptable levels of electoral imbalance or have a detrimental effect on the provision of an effective electoral scheme elsewhere in the district. We therefore agreed with its proposal that Cassop-cum-Quarrington parish should be warded in order to achieve a reasonable level of electoral equality, and that the A1 motorway would provide an easily identifiable boundary, and consequently adopted the Council's proposed divisions of Coxhoe and Durham South as part of our draft recommendations.

120 In the south-western part of the district the Council proposed a revised Brandon division comprising Brandon district ward and the remainder of Brancepath, Langley Moor & Meadowfield ward – the East parish ward of Brandon & Byshottles parish and the parish of Brancepath. It also proposed a revised Deerness Valley division comprising the district wards of Deerness and New Brancepath & Ushaw Moor. In the Council's proposed Brandon and Deerness Valley divisions the number of electors would be initially 1 per cent below and 11 per cent above the average for the county respectively (almost equal to and 11 per cent above in 2004).

121 Given the constraints of the district boundary in this area and the consequent effect of the Council's proposed Durham South division, we considered that the Council's proposals would provide the most appropriate balance between electoral equality, securing identifiable boundaries and reflecting local community identity. We therefore put them forward as part of our draft recommendations.

122 In the northern part of the district the Council proposed a revised Newton Hall division (comprising the district wards of Newton Hall North and Newton Hall South and the unparished area around Priors Road from Framwellgate Moor ward) and a revised Framwellgate Moor division (comprising the remainder of Framwellgate Moor ward and Bearpark & Witton Gilbert ward). The number of electors in the proposed Newton Hall and Framwellgate Moor divisions would vary from the county average by 6 per cent and 14 per cent respectively (6 per cent and 16 per cent in 2004). Given the constraints of the district boundary to the north and west of this area, and the River Wear to the east, we were of the view that the Council's proposals would secure the best balance of the statutory criteria in this part of the district and adopted them as part of our draft recommendations.

123 In the north-eastern part of the district the Council put forward a Sherburn division, based on the existing boundary (comprising the district wards of Pitlington & West Rainton and Shadforth & Sherburn). The number of electors in the proposed division would vary above the county average by 14 per cent initially (19 per cent in 2004). In our draft recommendations report we noted that this proposal would result in a fairly high electoral imbalance by 2004; however, we considered that this was acceptable given that the division would comprise whole district wards and provide a good reflection of local communities, in addition to facilitating a good scheme in the south-eastern and central parts of the district. We therefore put forward the Council's proposed Sherburn division as part of our draft recommendations.

124 In the central part of the district, in and around Durham City, the Council put forward four divisions. It proposed a revised Neville's Cross division (comprising the district wards of Neville's Cross and Crossgate & Framwellgate) and a revised Elvet division (comprising Elvet ward and the majority of St Nicholas ward, to the west of the A690 Leazes Road). The number of electors in the Council's proposed Neville's Cross and Elvet divisions would initially vary from the county average by 8 per cent and 1 per cent respectively (11 per cent and 4 per cent in 2004).

125 While we put forward the Council's proposed Neville's Cross division as part of our recommendations, as it would comprise whole district wards and secure reasonable electoral equality, we modified the proposed Elvet division to include the whole of St Nicholas ward in order to improve coterminosity. A reasonable level of electoral equality would still be achieved in our modified Elvet division, with the number of electors in the division varying from the county average by 9 per cent initially (12 per cent in 2004).

126 The Council further proposed a detached division of Gilesgate, comprising the district ward of Belmont, the small eastern area of St Nicholas ward not included in Elvet division and the majority of Pelaw & Gilesgate ward (less an area to the north of Sunderland Road). It also proposed a revised Belmont division comprising Carrville & Gilesgate Moor ward and the remainder of Pelaw & Gilesgate ward. The number of electors in the Council's proposed Gilesgate and Belmont divisions would vary from the average for the county by 4 per cent and 8 per cent initially (5 per cent and 8 per cent in 2004).

127 As detailed earlier, we do not seek to put forward detached divisions, therefore we modified the Council's proposed divisions in this area in order to secure a better reflection of local community identities and interests, while securing reasonable electoral equality and identifiable boundaries. We put forward a modified Belmont division (comprising the district ward of Belmont and the Carrville parish ward of Belmont parish from Carrville & Gilesgate Moor ward) and a modified Gilesgate division (comprising the district ward of Pelaw & Gilesgate and the Gilesgate Moor parish ward of Belmont parish from Carrville & Gilesgate ward). The number of electors in our proposed divisions of Belmont and Gilesgate would vary from the average for the county by 15 per cent and 6 per cent respectively (14 per cent and 7 per cent in 2004). We were of the view that these proposals would provide for more cohesive divisions and secure a more identifiable boundary between the two (ie the A1 motorway), thus providing for more effective and convenient local government.

128 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors in all of the proposed divisions in the Durham City area would vary by less than 20 per cent from the county average initially and in 2004. The worst electoral imbalance in 2004 would be in Sherburn division which would vary by 19 per cent from the county average, but we consider that this is acceptable in order to achieve coterminosity of district ward and division boundaries, therefore providing for effective and convenient local government, and in order to facilitate a good scheme elsewhere in the district.

129 In our draft recommendations we noted that while only four out of the 11 proposed divisions would be formed from whole district wards, a relatively poor level of coterminosity is almost inevitable given the size and configuration of a number of the multi-member district wards under a 63-member county council size. However, parish and parish ward boundaries had been utilised to divide wards as appropriate, in addition to creating two new parish wards in Cassop-cum-Quarrington parish, with the new parish boundary following the A1 motorway. We acknowledged that satisfying all the competing criteria is difficult in Durham City district, but we were of the view that our proposals represented a good balance of the competing criteria governing this review.

130 At Stage Three the County Council reiterated its support for its Stage One scheme. City of Durham Council stated that it was "dissatisfied" with the draft recommendations for the south-west and south-east areas of the district "but felt unable to recommend an alternative solution without redrafting the proposals for the whole of the district". It further expressed concern at "the Commission's over-emphasis on electoral variance as opposed to the more important considerations of geographical make-up and community identities". Durham City Labour Group contended that our proposals in the south-eastern and south-western areas of the district would be "unworkable" and that the Commission had "over-emphasised the importance of electoral equality".

131 City of Durham Constituency Labour Party expressed concern about the proposed Durham South and Coxhoe divisions. It argued that our proposals had not "adequately observed" the statutory criteria as the proposed divisions would not be coterminous, would split the communities of Langley Moor and Meadowfield, and Bowburn and the other villages within Cassop-cum-Quarrington parish, and would not secure effective and convenient local government as "councillors could live a long way from their constituents ... which will decrease their accessibility".

132 Bowburn Labour Party also opposed our proposed Durham South and Coxhoe divisions, arguing that they would split the village of Bowburn and the parish of Cassop-cum-Quarrington, which would adversely affect community ties. It also contended that the inclusion of part of Bowburn village in Durham South division would be an “artificial union with ... quite different and even distant communities”. It further argued that too much consideration had been given to electoral variances. A local resident also expressed his opposition to our proposal to split the parish of Cassop-cum-Quarrington.

133 Brandon & Byshottles Parish Council expressed its concern at the proposal to transfer the Meadowfield area from Brandon division to Durham South division, arguing that Meadowfield “enjoys an affinity with Brandon” and that our proposal would “split the communities of Brandon and Meadowfield”. It contended that the two communities share numerous local amenities including a library, schools and community hall.

134 A local resident also opposed our proposal to transfer the Meadowfield area from the Brandon division to Durham South division. He argued that Meadowfield shares geographic, social and economic ties with Brandon and put forward six revised divisions for the southern, central and eastern parts of the district. All of his proposed divisions would secure electoral variances of less than 10 per cent but none would be fully coterminous with district wards.

135 Belmont Parish Council expressed concern that Gilesgate Moor parish ward (of Belmont parish) would not be included within the boundaries of Belmont division. It contended that the existing Belmont division should be retained and that as a consequence a higher electoral variance should be accepted.

136 We have carefully considered all the representations received at Stage Three, and have noted that there is considerable opposition to our proposals in the south-east and south-west of the district. We have considered the representations opposing our proposal to divide the parish of Cassop-cum-Quarrington, however, we have not been persuaded to modify our draft recommendations. As argued in our draft recommendations report, if all of the parish of Cassop-cum-Quarrington were joined with Coxhoe ward to form a division, the resultant electoral variance would be 29 per cent above the county average. We remain of the view that this level of electoral imbalance is unacceptable and, in the absence of any viable alternative being put forward for this area, we are proposing to confirm our proposed Coxhoe division, as shown on Map A3 in Appendix A and on the large map inserted at the back of this report, as final. Consequent proposals in respect of the electoral arrangements of Cassop-cum-Quarrington Parish Council are outlined at the end of this chapter.

137 We have also noted the opposition to our proposed Durham South division, which was put forward by the County Council as part of its Stage One submission. Officers from the Commission having visited the area, we concur with the view that the links between the different areas within the division are very limited. We also agree that the Meadowfield area (the South parish ward of Brandon & Byshottles parish) shares very close links with the remainder of the more urban area of the parish.

138 In the light of the representations received, and in view of the strength of local opposition to our draft proposals, we are proposing to modify our draft recommendations in this area, in order to better reflect the identities and interests of local communities, while still securing reasonable electoral equality. We have considered the alternative proposals put forward by a local

resident, but we have noted that while they would secure good electoral equality they would not be coterminous. Furthermore, we are of the view that while they would reflect the identities and interests of local communities in and around the Meadowfield area, they would have a detrimental effect on the reflection of communities in the more eastern parts of the district.

139 We have considered alternative configurations of wards and parishes and this area and have decided that, in order to better reflect local communities in that area, the South parish ward of Brandon & Byshottles parish should be transferred out of the proposed Durham South division into a revised Brandon division. Consequently, the number of electors in the revised Durham South division would be 20 per cent below the average for the county initially (19 per cent below by 2004). We acknowledge that this proposal would result in a poorer level of electoral equality than our draft recommendation however, we are of the view that this is acceptable given the better reflection of community identity that would result.

140 As a consequence of our revised Durham South division, electoral equality in the revised Brandon division would deteriorate to 25 per cent above the average for the county initially (26 per cent above the average by 2004). Therefore, in order to improve electoral equality we are proposing that Brancepath parish (from the Brancepath, Langley Moor & Meadowfield district ward) be included in the Deerness Valley division. The number of electors in our proposed Brandon and Deerness Valley divisions would be 19 per cent above and 16 per above the average for the county initially (21 per cent above and 16 per cent above by 2004). We acknowledge that this would reduce the level of coterminosity secured within the borough, and would not secure as good a level of electoral equality as under our draft recommendations, but we are of the view that it would give a better reflection of community identity and is therefore acceptable.

141 We have also considered the views of Belmont Parish Council; however, we have noted that if Belmont parish formed a single division, it would be under-represented by 23 per cent and the consequential effects would not facilitate a good electoral scheme across the remainder of the district. We are therefore not proposing any further modifications to our draft recommendations in the district and remain of the view that they provide the best balance available between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. As detailed earlier, however, as a consequence of corrected electorate data being provided to us there is a slight adjustment to the electoral variance of our proposed Belmont division: the number of electors would be 15 per cent below the average for the county both initially and in 2004. Our final recommendations are shown on Maps A3, A4 and A5 in Appendix A and on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

## **Easington district**

142 Under the current arrangements, Easington is represented by 12 county councillors serving the divisions of Blackhalls, Dawdon, Deneside, Easington, Horden, Murton, Peterlee Central, Peterlee Dene, Seaham, Shotton, Thornley and Wingate. The number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the county average in three divisions, with one, Dawdon, varying by 35 per cent (37 per cent in 2004). The district has experienced a decrease in electorate since the last review, such that under the current arrangements it is over-represented on the County Council. However, under our proposed 63-member council the district would continue to be entitled to 12 county councillors.

143 During Stage One the County Council submitted a district-wide scheme for Easington. It noted that following the district review some of the new district wards, which would form the

‘building blocks’ for the new county divisions, had significantly increased in size. It argued that most of the existing divisions in the district had reasonable electoral equality and that “to substantially disturb those divisions to try and address other imbalances would have a knock-on effect throughout the district and was, therefore, deemed counter-productive”.

144 Under the County Council’s scheme three of its proposed 12 divisions would vary by more than 10 per cent from the county average initially, and no division would vary by more than 20 per cent from the average. By 2004 four divisions would vary by more than 10 per cent from the county average, with the worst electoral imbalance being 17 per cent in the proposed Dawdon division. However, the County Council’s proposals would secure coterminosity in only three of the proposed 12 divisions in the district.

145 Having considered alternative configurations of district wards to create electoral divisions, we were of the view that the majority of the Council’s proposals provided the best balance between electoral equality, coterminosity and the reflection of community identities and interests. We agreed that the configuration of district wards in Easington (predominantly two and three-member) did not lend themselves to the creation of coterminous divisions and made a lack of coterminosity almost inevitable if reasonable electoral equality was to be attained. We therefore adopted the Council’s scheme as our draft recommendations in this area, albeit with one slight modification which would slightly improve coterminosity.

146 In the south of the district the Council proposed a Blackhalls division, based on the existing boundary (comprising Blackhalls ward, the majority of Hutton Henry ward excluding Castle Eden parish, and the Station Town parish ward of Hutton Henry parish from Wingate ward) and a revised Wingate division (comprising Wingate parish from Wingate ward, Castle Eden parish from Hutton Henry ward and all of the Passfield ward). The number of electors in the proposed divisions of Blackhalls and Wingate would vary from the average for the county by 1 per cent and 16 per cent (3 per cent and 14 per cent in 2004). We were of the view that these proposals would provide for the best balance available between electoral equality and coterminosity. Any alternative configuration of wards and parishes in this area would result in an unacceptable level of electoral imbalance and have a detrimental effect on the coterminosity of the Council’s proposed divisions in the remainder of Peterlee and in Horden. We therefore put forward these divisions as part of our draft recommendations.

147 In the remaining area of the town of Peterlee, the Council proposed two coterminous divisions: Peterlee East (comprising the district wards of Dene House and Eden Hill) and Peterlee West (comprising the district wards of Acre Rigg and Howletch). The number of electors in the proposed Peterlee East and Peterlee West divisions would vary from the average for the county by 2 per cent and 5 per cent initially (3 per cent and 5 per cent in 2004). The Council also proposed a coterminous Horden division, based on the existing boundary, comprising the district wards of Horden North and Horden South. The number of electors in the proposed Horden division would vary from the county average by 4 per cent initially (2 per cent in 2004). Given the very good electoral equality and coterminosity of boundaries that would be secured under the Council’s proposals in this area we adopted them as part of our draft recommendations.

148 In the western part of the district the Council proposed a Thornley division, based on the existing boundary (comprising Thornley & Wheatley Hill ward and Trimdon Foundry parish from Wingate ward) and a Shotton division, based on the existing boundary (comprising Haswell & Shotton ward and South Hetton parish from the Easington Village & South Hetton ward). The

number of electors in the proposed Thornley and Shotton divisions would vary from the county average by 9 per cent and 5 per cent initially (11 per cent and 3 per cent in 2004). We were of the view that the Council's proposals provided the best balance available of the statutory criteria, particularly given the constraints of the district boundary in this area, and endorsed them as part of our draft recommendations.

149 To the north of Peterlee, the Council proposed an Easington division, based on the existing boundary (comprising Easington Colliery ward and the parishes of Easington Village and Hawthorn from Easington Village & South Hetton ward). The number of electors in the proposed division would be 4 per cent below the county average initially (2 per cent above in 2004). We noted in our draft recommendations report that the configuration of district wards and constituent parishes in this area does not lend itself to the creation of coterminous divisions, since any configurations of whole wards would result in an unacceptably high level of electoral imbalance. For example, if the district wards of Easington Colliery and Easington Village & South Hetton were joined in a single division the resultant electoral variance would be 34 per cent above the average for the county. We therefore put forward the Council's proposed Easington division as part of our draft recommendations.

150 In the northern part of the district, in and around the town of Seaham, the Council proposed four divisions. It proposed a revised Murton division (comprising Murton West ward and the Murton East parish ward of Murton parish from Murton East ward), a revised Dawdon division (comprising Dawdon ward and the southern part of Seaham Harbour ward), a revised Deneside division (comprising Deneside ward, Dalton Village parish ward from Murton East ward and the West Lea area of Seaham parish from Seaham North ward) and a revised Seaham division (comprising the remainder of Seaham North ward and the northern part of Seaham Harbour ward). The number of electors in the Council's proposed Murton, Dawdon, Deneside and Seaham divisions would initially vary from the average for the county by 11 per cent, 15 per cent, 5 per cent and 9 per cent respectively (14 per cent, 17 per cent, 7 per cent and 3 per cent in 2004).

151 We considered the Council's proposals in this area and acknowledged that, given the configuration of the district wards and parishes in the area, and in order to secure reasonable electoral equality while reflecting local community identities, a lower than desirable level of coterminosity would have to be accepted.

152 We were of the view that the majority of the Council's proposals would secure the best balance of the statutory criteria governing the review in this area. However, we proposed one minor modification which would slightly improve coterminosity without having too significant an effect on electoral equality. We included the whole of Murton East ward in the Murton division, resulting in the number of electors in the modified division varying from the county average by 7 per cent initially (10 per cent in 2004). As a consequence of this modification, the number of electors in the revised Deneside division would vary from the county average by 9 per cent initially (11 per cent in 2004).

153 Overall in Easington district under our draft recommendations 10 of the proposed 12 divisions would vary initially by no more than 10 per cent from the county average, with all divisions varying by less than 20 per cent. This level of electoral equality would worsen slightly in 2004, when only eight of the divisions would vary by no more than 10 per cent, with the worst electoral imbalance being in Dawdon division which would vary by 17 per cent at that time.

154 In our draft recommendations report we noted that under these proposals only four of the proposed 12 divisions would comprise whole district wards. However, a relatively poor level of coterminosity is almost inevitable in Easington under a 63-member council size given the pattern of multi-member wards in the district. Nevertheless, we believed that good boundaries have been utilised to divide wards as appropriate and we were of the view that our proposals provided for a better balance of the competing criteria governing our work.

155 At Stage Three the County Council reiterated its support for its Stage One proposals. Seaham Town Council stated that it had no objections to our draft recommendations and Peterlee Town Council stated that it had no observations to make.

156 We have noted the representations received, and given that our draft recommendations were predominantly based on the County Council's proposals and have received broad support from the other respondents, we remain of the view that they would provide the best balance between securing good electoral equality, reflecting the identities and interests of local communities and coterminosity. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations, as shown in Maps A6 and A7 in Appendix A and the large map inserted at the back of this report, as final. Consequent proposals in respect of the electoral arrangements of Seaham Town Council are outlined at the end of this chapter.

## **Sedgefield borough**

157 Under the current arrangements, Sedgefield borough is represented by 11 county councillors serving the divisions of Aycliffe East, Aycliffe North, Aycliffe West, Chilton, Ferryhill, Sedgefield, Shildon North East, Shildon South West, Spennymoor, Trimdon and Tudhoe. There are electoral imbalances within the borough area, with the number of electors represented by each councillor in six of the 11 divisions varying by more than 10 per cent from the county average, and in three divisions by more than 20 per cent.

158 The most over-represented divisions in the borough are Aycliffe East, Aycliffe West and Sedgefield, which are over-represented by 21 per cent, 25 per cent and 18 per cent respectively. However, the over-representation in these divisions is somewhat balanced by the under-representation in Ferryhill and Spennymoor divisions which are under-represented by 20 per cent and 40 per cent respectively. Overall, under the current arrangements Sedgefield is slightly over-represented. However, under our proposed 63-member scheme the borough would be correctly represented by 11 county councillors.

159 At Stage One, in the eastern part of the borough the Council proposed a Trimdon division, based on the existing boundary (comprising the borough wards of New Trimdon & Trimdon Grange and Fishburn & Old Trimdon). It also proposed a revised Sedgefield division (comprising the borough ward of Bishop Middleham & Cornforth and the parish of Sedgefield from Sedgefield borough ward). The number of electors in the Council's proposed Trimdon and Sedgefield divisions would vary from the average for the county by 8 per cent and 11 per cent initially (9 per cent and 10 per cent in 2004).

160 Cornforth Parish Council stated that the existing Chilton division (of which it is currently part) should be retained unchanged. It opposed the County Council's proposals affecting its area and suggested an alternative division comprising the whole of Sedgefield borough ward, the parish of Bishop Middleham from Bishop Middleham ward and the Aycliffe Village parish ward

of Great Aycliffe parish from Neville & Simpasture ward. The number of electors in the proposed division would vary below the average for the county by 4 per cent, both initially and in 2004.

161 Having considered both the representations that we received during Stage One for this area, we noted that while Cornforth Parish Council's proposed Sedgefield division would secure good electoral equality it would result in two borough wards being split, as compared to the Council's proposed division which would only split one borough ward between divisions. We were of the view, therefore, that the Council's proposed Sedgefield division would provide for a slightly better balance between securing electoral equality, providing for effective and convenient local government and reflecting local community identities. We therefore adopted the Council's proposed Trimdon and Sedgefield divisions as part of our draft recommendations.

162 In the north-western part of the borough the Council proposed a revised Ferryhill division (comprising the borough ward of Broom, the north-eastern part of Ferryhill ward and the Ferryhill Station parish ward of Ferryhill parish from Chilton ward), a revised Tudhoe division (comprising the borough ward of Tudhoe and the eastern part of Low Spennymoor & Tudhoe Grange ward), a revised Spennymoor division (comprising the borough ward of Spennymoor and the remaining western part of Low Spennymoor & Tudhoe Grange ward) and a new Middlestone & Dean Bank division (comprising the borough ward of Middlestone and the south-western part of Ferryhill ward). The number of electors in the Council's proposed divisions of Ferryhill, Tudhoe, Spennymoor and Middlestone & Dean Bank would vary from the county average initially by 2 per cent, 2 per cent, 19 per cent and 4 per cent respectively (3 per cent, 4 per cent, 13 per cent and 3 per cent in 2004).

163 We considered the Council's proposals in this area and noted that, notwithstanding the good electoral equality that would be secured, none of its four proposed divisions would comprise whole borough wards. Additionally, its proposals would also result in the consequential re-warding of both Ferryhill and Spennymoor parishes. In view of this we considered alternative configurations of borough wards in this area and concluded that it was possible to improve coterminosity and avoid any consequential parish warding by being slightly less strict on pure arithmetical electoral equality. We therefore modified the Council's proposed divisions in this area.

164 We put forward a Ferryhill division (comprising the borough wards of Ferryhill and Broom), a Tudhoe division (comprising the borough wards of Tudhoe and Low Spennymoor & Tudhoe Grange), a Spennymoor & Middlestone division (comprising the borough ward of Spennymoor and the parish wards of Byers Green and Middlestone of Spennymoor parish from Middlestone borough ward) and a Chilton division (comprising the borough ward of Chilton and the Merrington parish ward of Spennymoor parish from Middlestone ward). The number of electors in our proposed divisions of Ferryhill, Tudhoe, Spennymoor & Middlestone and Chilton (on the electorate figures provided to us at Stage One; please refer to paragraphs 78–79 above) would vary from the average for the county initially by 24 per cent, 12 per cent, 16 per cent and 20 per cent respectively (22 per cent, 10 per cent, 22 per cent and 21 per cent in 2004).

165 We acknowledged that a poorer level of electoral equality would be secured under our proposals than under the Council's proposals. However, we were of the view that this level of electoral imbalance was acceptable, given that our proposals would secure more easily identifiable boundaries (thus providing for more effective and convenient local government),

while still reflecting the identities and interests of local communities. Furthermore, our proposals would only split one borough ward and would facilitate achieving an improved level of coterminosity across the borough as a whole.

166 In the western part of the borough the Council proposed a new Chilton & Sunnydale division (comprising Sunnydale ward and the parishes of Chilton and Windlestone from the Chilton borough ward) and a revised Shildon South West division (comprising the borough wards of Byerley and Thickley and the parish of Middridge from Greenfield Middridge ward). The number of electors in the Council's proposed divisions of Chilton & Sunnydale and Shildon South West would vary from the average for the county by 1 per cent and 7 per cent initially (3 per cent and 9 per cent in 2004).

167 As a consequence of our proposed Chilton division (notwithstanding the good electoral equality that would be secured under the Council's proposals in this western area), we modified the Council's proposals in order to secure improved coterminosity, therefore providing for more effective and convenient local government. We put forward a Greenfield Middridge & Sunnydale division (comprising the borough wards of Greenfield Middridge and Sunnydale) and a Shildon South West division (comprising the borough wards of Byerley and Thickley). The number of electors in our proposed divisions of Greenfield Middridge & Sunnydale and Shildon South West would vary from the average for the county by 11 per cent and 12 per cent initially (11 per cent and 14 per cent in 2004). We were of the view that these divisions would provide for the best balance of the criteria governing this review.

168 In and around the town of Newton Aycliffe the Council proposed three revised divisions: Aycliffe West (comprising the Byerley Park, Horndale & Cobblers Hall parish ward of Great Aycliffe parish from Greenfield Middridge ward and the southern part of the West borough ward); an Aycliffe North division (comprising Woodham borough ward, the remaining northern part of the West borough ward and the western part of Shafto St Marys ward); and an Aycliffe East division (comprising the borough ward of Neville & Simpasture, the remaining eastern part of Shafto St Marys ward and the parishes of Bradbury & the Isle and Mordon from Sedgfield ward). The number of electors in the Council's proposed divisions of Aycliffe West, Aycliffe North and Aycliffe East would vary from the average for the county initially by 9 per cent, 8 per cent and 10 per cent respectively (9 per cent, 8 per cent and 8 per cent in 2004).

169 We acknowledged that the size and configuration of the borough wards in this area did not lend themselves to the creation of coterminous divisions; however, as a consequence of our proposed Greenfield Middridge & Sunnydale division, and in order to facilitate a good electoral scheme across the borough as a whole, we built on the Council's proposals in this area.

170 We put forward for consultation, as providing a better balance of the competing criteria governing our work, an Aycliffe West division (comprising West borough ward and an area in the north-western part of Neville & Simpasture borough ward, to the west of St Cuthbert's Way), an Aycliffe North division (comprising Woodham borough ward and the western part of Shafto St Marys ward) and an Aycliffe East division (comprising the remaining eastern part of Shafto St Marys ward, the remaining eastern part of Neville & Simpasture ward and the parishes of Bradbury & the Isle and Mordon from Sedgfield ward). The number of electors in our proposed divisions of Aycliffe West, Aycliffe North and Aycliffe East would vary from the average for the county by 6 per cent, 12 per cent and 13 per cent respectively (8 per cent, 12 per cent and 15 per

cent in 2004). Consequential proposals in respect of the electoral arrangements of Great Aycliffe Parish Council are outlined at the end of this chapter.

171 Under our draft recommendations three divisions would vary from the county average by slightly more than 20 per cent in 2004. However, we were of the view that this deterioration in electoral equality was justified in order to secure a higher level of coterminosity while also adhering to the statutory criteria. The worst electoral imbalances by 2004 would be in our proposed Ferryhill and Spennymoor & Middlestone divisions, which would both be under-represented by 22 per cent, and the proposed Chilton division, which would be over-represented by 21 per cent (based on the original electorate figures provided at Stage One). Overall, under our draft recommendations five out of 11 divisions in Sedgefield would be coterminous.

172 At Stage Three the County Council reiterated its support for its own Stage One proposals. The County Council and Sedgefield Borough Council noted two numerical inaccuracies in our proposed electorate figures. As a consequence of the revised electorate figures, electoral equality in the proposed divisions of Chilton and Spennymoor & Middlestone would deteriorate, with the number of electors in the proposed divisions being 23 per cent below and 20 per cent above the average for the county respectively (25 per cent below and 25 per cent above by 2004).

173 Sedgefield Town Council, Mordon Parish Meeting, Bradbury & the Isle Parish Meeting and eight local residents all opposed our proposal to transfer the parishes of Bradbury & the Isle and Mordon from the Sedgefield division and include them in Aycliffe East division. They argued that there are close ties between the two parishes and Sedgefield, and that the parishes are included in the Sedgefield ward for borough council purposes. Borough Councillor Wills, representing Sedgefield ward, also opposed our proposal to transfer the parishes of Bradbury and the Isle and Mordon into Aycliffe East division. She argued that there are close ties between the two parishes and Sedgefield and that they have no common identity or shared interest with Newton Aycliffe.

174 Great Aycliffe Town Council opposed our proposed Greenfield, Middridge & Sunnydale division, as it would separate the western part of Newton Aycliffe from the remainder of the town, contending that Newton Aycliffe should be considered as a single entity. Aycliffe North Branch Labour Party also objected to our proposal to exclude the Greenfield-Byerley area from an Aycliffe division, contending that Newton Aycliffe is “a discrete demographic and administrative unit”. It further stated that it supported the County Council’s Stage One proposals for the Newton Aycliffe area, but did not accept the proposed changes to Shafto St Mary’s parish warding.

175 Shildon Town Council opposed the Commission’s proposals to include part of the town of Shildon in the same division as part of Newton Aycliffe, arguing that Shildon has “different needs”. Middridge Parish Council proposed that the Greenfield Middridge & Sunnydale division should be named Middridge Greenfield & Sunnydale.

176 A local resident opposed our proposed Greenfield, Middridge & Sunnydale and Shildon South West divisions. He contended that Thickley ward has closer ties with Greenfield Middridge (and Newton Aycliffe), proposing that these two wards should form a revised Shildon East ward, which would be coterminous with borough wards and secure an electoral variance of 9 per cent initially (11 per cent by 2004). He further argued that the consequential Shildon West division (comprising Sunnydale and Byerley wards) would secure better levels of

electoral equality than our proposed Greenfield, Middridge & Sunnydale division, with an electoral variance of 8 per cent (7 per cent by 2004). Another local resident supported our draft recommendations for divisions in the Shildon area.

177 County Councillor Porter, representing Chilton division, argued that the existing Chilton division should be retained unchanged, but he considered that our proposed Chilton division was better than the County Council's Stage One proposal. He also submitted copies of representations from the parish councils of Chilton and Cornforth which each wanted to retain both parishes within the existing Chilton division.

178 County Councillor Ernest Foster, representing Spennymoor division, contended that "the status quo should prevail", also arguing that "it would be detrimental to the village of Kirk Merrington if it were split from North Close because of the strong community links which are already well established". Spennymoor Liberal Democrats objected to the Commission's proposal for Spennymoor & Middlestone division, supporting the County Council's Stage One proposal.

179 We have carefully considered all the representations received during Stage Three and have noted that there is considerable opposition to a number of our proposals. We have also noted the corrected electorate figures submitted by the County Council and Sedgefield Borough Council regarding our proposed Chilton and Spennymoor & Middlestone divisions. We are therefore proposing modifications to our draft recommendations in order to better reflect the identities and interests of local communities and secure improved electoral equality.

180 We have noted the strength of opposition to our proposed Sedgefield division and have considered the proposal, put forward by a number of respondents, to include the parishes of Bradbury & the Isle and Mordon within the Sedgefield division. We have also considered the representations put forward by a county councillor (and supported by both the parishes concerned) proposing that the parish of Cornforth should be included within the same division as Chilton parish. Officers from the Commission have visited the area, and in order to better reflect the identities and interests of local communities while still securing reasonable electoral equality, we are proposing a revised Sedgefield division, comprising all of the Sedgefield borough ward and the parish of Bishop Middleham from the Bishop Middleham & Cornforth borough ward. The number of electors in our proposed Sedgefield division (consequently based on the existing boundary) would be 15 per cent below the average for the county both initially and in 2004.

181 As a consequence of our proposal to transfer the parishes of Bradbury & the Isle and Mordon into Sedgefield division, the number of electors in the modified Aycliffe East division (as shown on Map A8 in Appendix A) would be 19 per cent below the average for the county initially (20 per cent below in 2004). We acknowledge that electoral equality would worsen under this revised division, however, we are of the view that this would be acceptable given the better reflection of community identities that would be secured.

182 We have also considered the representations received regarding our proposals for Newton Aycliffe and Shildon in the south-western part of the borough. Given the strength of opposition to our proposal to include the western part of Newton Aycliffe in the same division as part of Shildon, we have considered alternative ward configurations to create revised divisions in this area. However, we have noted that the distribution of electorate, combined with the configuration

of borough wards and parishes in this area, does not lend itself to the creation of divisions which secure good electoral equality, reflect the identities and interests of local communities and achieve coterminosity.

183 We have noted that the parish of Shildon, under a 63-member council size, would be entitled to 1.35 county councillors initially (1.33 in 2004). Consequently, if it were represented by only one county councillor it would be under-represented by 35 per cent initially (32 per cent in 2004), a level of electoral imbalance that, in our opinion, is unacceptable. In view of this, it is therefore necessary for part of Shildon to be joined with a neighbouring area to form a county division. Given that Shildon itself is bounded to the north, west and south by the borough boundary, it can only be incorporated with an area to the east of the town. Having considered the options available and officers from the Commission having visited the area, we are of the view that, as there are limited transport links between Shildon and the parish of Windlestone (which, in our view, shares closer links with the parish of Chilton), it should be joined with the only other possible area: the parish of Middridge. Furthermore, in order to secure coterminosity and reasonable electoral equality, we remain of the view that the whole of the Greenfield Middridge borough ward should be incorporated into the division.

184 While we acknowledge that this may not be the most ideal combination of local communities, we remain of the view that utilising the four borough wards of Byerley, Sunnydale, Thickley and Greenfield Middridge to create two county divisions would secure the best balance available between reflecting local communities, securing reasonable electoral equality and achieving coterminosity. This approach was supported by two local residents – one who supported our draft recommendations for the area, and another who put forward a very detailed submission proposing an alternative configuration of borough wards to create two divisions: a Shildon East division (comprising the borough wards of Greenfield Middridge and Thickley) and Shildon West (comprising the borough wards of Byerley and Sunnydale). The number of electors in the proposed Shildon East and Shildon West divisions would be 9 per cent above and 8 per cent below the average for the county initially (11 per cent above and 7 per cent below in 2004).

185 We have considered these alternative proposals and the evidence submitted to support them. Officers from the Commission have visited the area, and we are of the view that they would provide for a better reflection of local community identities and secure better electoral equality than our draft recommendations, while remaining completely coterminous. We therefore propose adopting these modified divisions, as shown on the large map at the back of this report, as part of our final recommendations.

186 We have also considered the representations received relating to our proposed Chilton and Spennymoor & Middlestone divisions. As detailed earlier in this chapter, the County Council and Sedgefield Borough Council noted that our electorate figures for these proposed divisions were inaccurate and that the correct electorate figures would result in the proposed Chilton division being over-represented by 25 per cent and the proposed Spennymoor division being under-represented by 25 per cent. As a consequence of these revised figures, we considered modifying our draft recommendations in this area.

187 As outlined above, we also noted the support for Cornforth parish to be included within the Chilton division, and, officers from the Commission having visited the area, we agree that there are sufficient links between the two areas and that Cornforth parish should be included within the revised Chilton division. However, we have also noted the comments made by County

Councillor Foster to the effect that it would be detrimental to existing community links if the North Close area were not included in the same division as Kirk Merrington. Furthermore, we have noted that if North Close were transferred into Chilton division, electoral equality in the proposed Spennymoor & Middlestone division would improve slightly. We therefore propose modifying the boundary between our proposed Chilton and Spennymoor & Middlestone divisions, as shown on Map A9 in Appendix A. Consequent proposals in respect of the electoral arrangements of Spennymoor Parish Council are outlined at the end of this chapter.

188 Our revised Chilton division would therefore comprise Chilton borough ward, the parish of Cornforth from Bishop Middleham & Cornforth borough ward and the modified Merrington parish ward in Spennymoor parish from the Middlestone borough ward. Our proposed Spennymoor & Middlestone division would comprise Spennymoor borough ward and the Byers Green and proposed Middlestone parish wards of Spennymoor parish from the Middlestone borough ward. The number of electors in the proposed Chilton and Spennymoor & Middlestone divisions would be 12 per cent above and 16 per cent above the average for the county initially (9 per cent above and 22 per cent above the average in 2004). We acknowledge that electoral equality within the proposed Spennymoor & Middlestone division would still vary slightly above 20 per cent, however, we are of the view that this is acceptable given the better reflection of community identities and improved electoral equality secured in the surrounding areas.

189 Under our final recommendations two divisions would vary from the county average by slightly more than 20 per cent in 2004: Ferryhill and Spennymoor & Middlestone divisions would both be under-represented by 22 per cent. Our final recommendations, as detailed on Maps A8 and A9 in Appendix A and on the large map inserted at the back of this report, would secure the same level of coterminosity as under our draft recommendations, with five of the 11 divisions comprising whole borough wards.

## **Teesdale district**

190 Teesdale is currently represented by three county councillors serving the divisions of Barnard Castle East, Barnard Castle West and Evenwood. The number of electors represented by each councillor in all three of the divisions varies by less than 10 per cent from the average for the county. Compared to other districts in the county, Teesdale is correctly represented on the County Council at present.

191 As part of its Stage One submission the County Council proposed that Teesdale continue to be represented by three county councillors. It put forward an Evenwood division, based on existing boundaries, comprising the district wards of Cockfield, Etherley, Evenwood, Ramshaw & Lands, Hamsterley & South Bedburn and Lynesack. The number of electors in the Council's proposed Evenwood division would vary from the county average by 10 per cent initially (9 per cent in 2004). Given the reasonable electoral equality that would be secured, the coterminous boundaries that would be achieved and in order to facilitate a good electoral scheme elsewhere in the district, we endorsed the Council's proposed Evenwood division as part of our draft recommendations.

192 The Council also proposed a revised Barnard Castle East division (comprising the district wards of Barnard Castle East, Barnard Castle North, Gainford & Winston, Ingleton, Staindrop, Streatlam & Whorlton, the Marwood Rural parish ward of Marwood parish from Eggleston ward and the parishes of Barforth, Hutton Magna, Ovington and Wycliffe with Thorpe from

Barningham & Ovington ward) and a revised Barnard Castle West division (comprising the district wards of Barnard Castle West, Cotherstone with Larthington, Greta, Middleton-in-Teesdale, Romalduke, Startforth, the parish of Eggleston from Eggleston ward and the parishes of Barningham, Hope and Scargill from Barningham & Ovington ward). The number of electors in the Council's proposed Barnard Castle East and Barnard Castle West divisions would vary from the average for the county initially by 9 per cent and 1 per cent respectively (8 per cent and 1 per cent in 2004).

193 Notwithstanding the good electoral equality that would be secured under the Council's proposals, we were of the view that they could be built upon in order to achieve greater coterminosity of boundaries, thus providing for effective and convenient local government. We therefore modified the boundary between the two divisions so that the whole of Eggleston district ward would be included in the proposed Barnard Castle East division, and the whole of Barningham & Ovington district ward would be included in the proposed Barnard Castle West division. Under our modified divisions of Barnard Castle East and Barnard Castle West the number of electors would be initially 10 per cent and 1 per cent above the average for the county respectively (9 per cent above and almost equal to the average in 2004).

194 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors in all three of the proposed divisions would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the county, both initially and in 2004, and all three divisions would be formed from whole district wards.

195 At Stage Three the County Council reiterated its support for its Stage One proposals, and we did not receive any other representations for county divisions in this district. We have considered the County Council's comments, however, we have not been persuaded to move away from our draft recommendations and remain of the view that they would secure a better level of coterminosity than the County Council's proposals while also securing good electoral equality. We are therefore confirming them as final, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

## **Wear Valley district**

196 Under the current arrangements Wear Valley is served by eight county councillors representing the divisions of Bishop Auckland Town, Coundon, Crook North, Crook South, Weardale, West Auckland, Willington and Woodhouse Close. The number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the county average in three divisions, with the worst electoral imbalance being in Coundon division which varies by 18 per cent (18 per cent in 2004). Under the current arrangements, Wear Valley is slightly over-represented, but under our proposed 63-member scheme the district would be correctly represented by eight county councillors.

197 The Council put forward a district-wide scheme during Stage One. All but one of its proposed eight divisions would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the county average, both initially and in 2004, with no division varying by more than 20 per cent. The worst electoral imbalance would be 11 per cent in the proposed Coundon division, both initially and in 2004. However, the County Council's proposals would secure coterminosity in only four of the proposed eight divisions in the district. It also proposed a detached division in the central part of the district, linking Tow Law with the northern part of Crook.

198 In and around the town of Bishop Auckland, the Council proposed four revised divisions: Bishop Auckland Town (comprising the district wards of Bishop Auckland Town and Cockton Hill), Coundon (comprising the district wards of Coundon and Dene Valley), Woodhouse Close (comprising the district wards of Woodhouse Close and Henknowle) and West Auckland (comprising the district wards of West Auckland and Escomb). The number of electors in the Council's proposed divisions of Bishop Auckland Town, Coundon, Woodhouse Close and West Auckland would initially vary from the average for the county by 2 per cent, 11 per cent, 3 per cent and 1 per cent respectively (2 per cent, 11 per cent, 2 per cent and 2 per cent in 2004).

199 Given that all four of the Council's proposed divisions in this part of the district would comprise whole district wards, thus providing for effective and convenient government, and in view of the reasonable electoral equality that would be secured, we adopted these proposals as part of our draft recommendations.

200 In the central and western parts of the district the Council proposed four further divisions. It proposed a revised Willington division (comprising the district wards of Willington Central and Willington West End and the eastern part of Hunwick ward) and a revised Crook South division (comprising the district wards of Howden and Wheatbottom & Helmington Row, the eastern part of Crook South ward, the western part of Hunwick ward and the south-eastern corner of Wolsingham & Witton-le-Wear ward (the new parish of Witton-le-Wear)). The number of electors in the Council's proposed Willington and Crook South divisions would be 2 per cent below and 1 per cent below the average for the county initially (3 per cent below and 1 per cent below in 2004).

201 The Council also proposed a detached Crook North division (comprising the remaining western part of Crook South ward, Crook North ward and the majority of Tow Law & Stanley ward, excluding Thornley parish ward) and a revised Weardale division (comprising the district wards of St John's Chapel and Stanhope, the western part of Wolsingham & Witton-le-Wear ward and the Thornley parish ward from Tow Law & Stanley ward). The number of electors in the Council's proposed divisions of Crook North and Weardale would initially be 1 per cent above and 1 per cent below the average for the county respectively (almost equal to and 1 per cent below in 2004).

202 In our draft recommendations report we stated that while we acknowledged the very good level of electoral equality that would be secured by the County Council's proposals in this area, we do not seek to put forward detached divisions as we believe these do not support convenient and effective local government. We considered that a better balance of all the criteria governing this review (ie securing electoral equality, coterminosity and effective and convenient local government, and reflecting the identities and interests of local communities) could be achieved. We therefore modified the Council's proposed divisions in this area.

203 We proposed a Willington division (comprising the district wards of Willington Central, Willington West End and Hunwick), a Crook South division (comprising the district wards of Crook South and Wheatbottom & Helmington Row), a Crook North & Tow Law division (comprising the district wards of Crook North, Tow Law & Stanley and Howden) and a Weardale division (comprising the district wards of St John's Chapel, Stanhope and Wolsingham & Witton-le-Wear). The number of electors in our modified divisions of Willington, Crook South, Crook North & Tow Law and Weardale would vary from the average for the county initially by

4 per cent, 1 per cent, 11 per cent and 5 per cent respectively (3 per cent, 1 per cent, 12 per cent and 5 per cent in 2004).

204 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors in six of the proposed eight divisions in Wear Valley would vary by less than 10 per cent from the county average, both initially and in 2004. The worst level of electoral imbalance would be in the proposed divisions of Coundon and Crook North & Tow Law, which would both vary from the county average initially by 11 per cent (11 per cent and 12 per cent respectively in 2004). Under these proposals all eight divisions would be formed from whole district wards.

205 At Stage Three the County Council reiterated its support for its Stage One proposals. County Councillor Shuttleworth, representing the Weardale division, stated that he supported the County Council's Stage One proposals for revised Weardale, Crook North and Crook South divisions "as better reflecting community identities" and as they would secure "a far superior level of electoral equality". He argued that Thornley parish ward should not be split from the remainder of Wolsingham parish and included in the Crook North & Tow Law division. He also contended that "a large rural division ... should have a much lower [number of electors than] the average ... to represent because of the greater difficulties of keeping in touch with the smaller communities and farms scattered throughout".

206 Wolsingham Parish Council expressed concern about our proposal to include Thornley village in a division with Tow Law, proposing that Thornley parish ward be included in Weardale division with the remainder of Wolsingham parish. It argued that Wolsingham and Thornley are "very much rural communities" and that the local community in Tow Law has "more in common with Crook than Wolsingham". A local resident of Thornley also opposed our proposal to include Thornley parish ward in a division with Tow Law, arguing that they are different communities with no common interests or links.

207 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three we are aware that there is some opposition to our proposed divisions, particularly in the northern and western parts of the district. We have also noted that the County Council reiterated its support for its Stage One proposals, which included a detached Crook North division, which was also supported by County Councillor Shuttleworth. However, as argued in our draft recommendations report, we will not normally put forward detached divisions as we are of the view that they do not lend themselves to the creation of electoral areas which reflect local community identities or facilitate convenient and effective local government. While we acknowledge the comments made by Wolsingham Parish Council and a local resident that Thornley parish ward should be included in a division with the remainder of Wolsingham parish, we are aware that the parish is already divided between wards at district level. We therefore remain of the view that our proposals would provide for a better balance of the statutory criteria than the County Council's proposals and are confirming them as final, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

## Conclusions

208 Having considered all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we propose that:

- there should be an increase in council size from 61 to 63, serving 63 divisions;
- changes should be made to the boundaries of 48 of the 61 existing divisions.

209 We have decided substantially to endorse our draft recommendations, subject to the following amendments:

- in Durham City, Durham South division should comprise the borough ward of Shincliffe and the parish of Croxdale & Hett and the proposed Cassop-cum-Quarrington West parish ward of Cassop-cum-Quarrington parish from Cassop-cum-Quarrington borough ward; Brandon division should comprise the borough ward of Brandon and the East and South parish wards of Brandon & Byshottles parish from the Brancepath, Langley Moor & Meadowfield borough ward; Deerness Valley division should comprise the borough wards of Deerness and New Brancepath & Ushaw Moor and the parish of Brancepath from the Brancepath, Langley Moor & Meadowfield borough ward;
- in Sedgefield borough, Aycliffe East division should comprise the proposed Neville parish ward of Great Aycliffe parish from Neville & Simpasture borough ward and the proposed Shafto St Marys parish ward of Great Aycliffe parish from Shafto St Marys borough ward; Chilton division should comprise the borough ward of Chilton, the parish of Cornforth from the Bishop Middleham & Cornforth borough ward and the proposed Merrington parish ward of Spennymoor parish from the Middlestone borough ward; Sedgefield division should comprise the borough ward of Sedgefield and the parish of Bishop Middleham from the Bishop Middleham & Cornforth borough ward; Shildon East division should comprise the borough wards of Greenfield Middridge and Thickley; Shildon West division should comprise the borough wards of Byerley and Sunnydale; Spennymoor & Middlestone division should comprise the borough ward of Spennymoor and the Byers Green and proposed Middlestone parish wards of Spennymoor parish from the Middlestone borough ward.

210 Figure 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1999 electorate figures and with forecast electorates for the year 2004.

Figure 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	1999 electorate		2004 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors / divisions	61	63	61	63
Average number of electors per councillor	6,426	6,222	6,470	6,265
Number of divisions with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	25	22	27	26
Number of divisions with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	10	1	11	3

211 As shown in Figure 4, our final recommendations for Durham County Council would result in a reduction in the number of divisions with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from the county average from 25 to 22. By 2004, 26 divisions are forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average. However, in only three divisions would variances exceed 20 per cent from the average. Our final recommendations are set out in more detail in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Maps A1 to A9 in Appendix A and on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

### **Final Recommendation**

Durham County Council should comprise 63 councillors serving the same number of divisions, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2 and illustrated in Appendix A and on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

## **Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements**

212 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Local Government Act. The Schedule provides that, if a parish is to be divided between different county divisions, it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single division of the county. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Cassop-cum-Quarrington, Seaham, Great Aycliffe and Spennymoor to reflect the proposed county divisions in those areas.

213 The parish of Cassop-cum-Quarrington is currently served by 15 councillors and is unwarded. In our draft recommendations report, in order to reflect the proposed county divisions in the area, we proposed that the parish be divided into two new parish wards: Cassop-cum-Quarrington East parish ward (represented by four parish councillors) and Cassop-cum-Quarrington West parish ward (represented by 11 parish councillors).

214 At Stage Three a number of respondents opposed our proposal to divide the parish of Cassop-cum-Quarrington. However, as detailed in the main body of this report, given the constraints of the borough boundary in the south-eastern part of the borough, and in order to secure good electoral equality, it is necessary to divide the parish. In order to comply with the legislation governing our work, which stipulates that no parish or ward of a parish should be divided by a division boundary, it is therefore necessary to ward the parish.

215 As outlined earlier in this report, we have not been persuaded to move away from our draft recommendations for county divisions in this area, and as a consequence we are confirming our draft recommendations as final.

**Final Recommendation**

That part of Cassop-cum-Quarrington parish which lies within the proposed Coxhoe county division should be named Cassop-cum-Quarrington East parish ward and be represented by four parish councillors. That part of Cassop-cum-Quarrington parish which lies within the proposed Durham South county division should be named Cassop-cum-Quarrington West parish ward and be represented by 11 parish councillors. The proposed boundary between the new parish wards of Cassop-cum-Quarrington parish is shown on Map A3 in Appendix A.

216 The parish of Seaham is currently divided into four parish wards: Dawdon (returning five councillors), Deneside (returning five councillors), Seaham Harbour (returning six councillors) and Seaham North (returning five councillors). In our draft recommendations report, to reflect the proposed county divisions in the Seaham area, we proposed that Seaham Harbour parish ward be divided into two new parish wards: Seaham Harbour North and Seaham Harbour South, to be represented by four councillors and two councillors respectively. We also proposed that Seaham North parish ward be divided into two new parish wards: Seaham North and Westlea, represented by three councillors and two councillors respectively. At Stage Three, Seaham Town Council stated that it did not have any objections to our proposals and we have not received any other evidence to persuade us to move away from our draft proposals. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations as final.

### **Final Recommendation**

That part of Seaham Harbour parish ward which lies within the proposed Seaham county division should be renamed Seaham Harbour North parish ward and be represented by four councillors. That part of Seaham Harbour parish ward that lies within the proposed Dawdon county division should be renamed Seaham Harbour South parish ward and be represented by two councillors. That part of Seaham North parish ward that lies within the proposed Seaham county division should be named Seaham North parish ward and be represented three councillors. That part of Seaham North parish ward that lies within the proposed Deneside county division should be renamed Westlea parish ward and be represented by two councillors. The proposed boundaries between the new parish wards of Seaham parish are shown on Maps A6 and A7 in Appendix A.

217 The parish of Great Aycliffe is currently divided into six parish wards: Byerley Park, Horndale & Cobblers Hall (returning six councillors), Shafto St Marys (returning six councillors), West (returning six councillors), Woodham North (returning six councillors), Neville & Simpasture (returning five councillors) and Aycliffe Village (returning one councillor). In our draft recommendations report, in order to reflect the proposed county divisions in the area we proposed that Shafto St Marys parish ward be divided into two new parish wards: Shafto St Marys and Woodham South, each to be represented by three councillors. We also proposed that Neville & Simpasture parish ward be divided into two new parish wards: Neville and Simpasture, represented by three councillors and two councillors respectively.

218 At Stage Three, the Aycliffe North Labour Party opposed our proposals for parish warding within the Shafto St Marys's borough ward, but did not submit any alternative proposals. Therefore, having considered the representation received, we have not been persuaded to move away from our draft proposals. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations as final.

### **Final Recommendation**

That part of Shafto St Marys parish ward that lies within the proposed Aycliffe North county division should be renamed Woodham South parish ward and be represented by three councillors. That part of Shafto St Marys parish ward that lies within the proposed Aycliffe East county division should be named Shafto St Marys parish ward and be represented by three councillors. That part of Neville & Simpasture parish ward that lies within the proposed Aycliffe East county division should be named Neville parish ward and be represented by three councillors. That part of Neville & Simpasture parish ward that lies within the proposed Aycliffe West county division should be named Simpasture parish ward and be represented by two parish councillors. The proposed boundaries between the new parish wards of Great Aycliffe parish are shown on Map A8 in Appendix A.

219 The parish of Spennymoor is currently divided into six parish wards: Byers Green (returning one councillor), Low Spennymoor & Tudhoe Grange (returning six councillors), Merrington (returning one councillor), Middlestone (returning four councillors), Spennymoor (returning six

councillors) and Tudhoe (returning four councillors). To reflect the proposed county divisions in the Spennymoor area we are proposing to modify the boundary between the parish wards of Merrington and Middlestone, so that the North Close area is included within the Merrington parish ward. The boundaries of the existing parish wards of Byers Green, Low Spennymoor & Tudhoe Grange, Spennymoor and Tudhoe would remain unchanged.

**Final Recommendation**

Spennymoor Parish Council should comprise 22 parish councillors, as at present. The boundaries of Byers Green, Low Spennymoor & Tudhoe Grange, Spennymoor and Tudhoe parish wards should remain unchanged, and these parish wards should continue to be represented by one, six, six and four councillors respectively. That part of the Middlestone parish ward to be included in the Chilton division should form part of a revised Merrington parish ward, to be represented by one councillor. The remainder of the Middlestone parish ward should form a revised Middlestone parish ward, to be represented by four councillors.



## 6 NEXT STEPS

220 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements for Durham County Council and submitted our final recommendations to the Secretary of State, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992.

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

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

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



## APPENDIX A

### **Final Recommendations for Durham: Detailed Mapping**

The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed division boundaries for County Durham.

**Map A1** illustrates the proposed electoral divisions in Stanley, in Derwentside district.

**Map A2** illustrates the proposed electoral divisions in the northern and central parts of Consett, in Derwentside district.

**Map A3** illustrates the proposed boundary between Coxhoe and Durham South divisions, in Durham City.

**Map A4** illustrates the proposed boundary between Belmont and Gilesgate divisions, in Durham City.

**Map A5** illustrates the proposed boundary between Framwellgate Moor and Newton Hall divisions, in Durham City.

**Map A6** illustrates the proposed electoral divisions in the southern part of Seaham, in Easington district.

**Map A7** illustrates the proposed electoral divisions in the northern part of Seaham, in Easington district.

**Map A8** illustrates the proposed electoral divisions in Newton Aycliffe, in Sedgefield borough.

**Map A9** illustrates the proposed boundary between Chilton and Spennymoor divisions, in Sedgefield borough.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates, in outline form, the Commission's proposed divisions for County Durham, including constituent district wards and parishes.

*Map A1:  
Proposed electoral divisions in Stanley*

*Map A2:  
Proposed electoral divisions in the northern and central parts of Consett*

*Map A3:  
Proposed boundary between Coxhoe and Durham South divisions*

*Map A4:  
Proposed boundary between Belmont and Gilesgate divisions*

*Map A5:  
Proposed boundary between Framwellgate Moor and Newton Hall divisions*

*Map A6:  
Proposed electoral divisions in the southern part of Seaham*

*Map A7:  
Proposed electoral divisions in the northern part of Seaham*

*Map A8:  
Proposed electoral divisions in Newton Aycliffe*

*Map A9:  
Proposed boundary between Chilton and Spennymoor divisions*

## APPENDIX B

### Draft Recommendations for County Durham (February 2000)

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

*Figure B1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary*

<b>Division name (by district council area)</b>	<b>Constituent district wards</b>
<b>DURHAM CITY</b>	
20 Brandon	Brancepath, Langley Moor & Meadowfield ward (part – the parish of Brancepath and the East parish ward of Brandon & Byshottles parish); Brandon ward
22 Deerness Valley	Deerness ward; New Brancepath & Ushaw Moor ward
23 Durham South	Brancepath, Langley Moor & Meadowfield ward (part – South parish ward of Brandon & Byshottles parish); Cassop-cum-Quarrington ward (part); Shincliffe ward
<b>SEDFIELD BOROUGH</b>	
42 Aycliffe East	Neville & Simpasture ward (part); Sedgfield ward (part – the parishes of Bradbury & the Isle and Mordon); Shafto St Marys ward (part)
45 Chilton	Chilton ward; Middlestone ward (part – Merrington parish ward of Spennymoor parish)
47 Greenfield Middridge & Sunnydale	Greenfield Middridge ward; Sunnydale ward
48 Sedgfield	Bishop Middleham & Cornforth ward; Sedgfield ward (part – the parish of Sedgfield)
49 Shildon South West	Byerley ward; Thickley ward
50 Spennymoor & Middlestone	Middlestone ward (part – Byers Green and Middlestone parish wards of Spennymoor parish); Spennymoor ward

Figure B2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for County Durham

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Variance from average %
<b>DURHAM CITY</b>					
20 Brandon	1	6,155	-1	6,289	0
22 Deerness Valley	1	6,901	11	6,945	11
23 Durham South	1	6,558	5	6,693	7
<b>SEDFIELD BOROUGH</b>					
42 Aycliffe East	1	5,390	-13	5,329	-15
45 Chilton	1	4,784	-23	4,716	-25
47 Greenfield Middridge & Sunnydale	1	6,882	11	6,942	11
48 Sedgfield	1	6,920	11	6,897	10
49 Shildon South West	1	5,467	-12	5,377	-14
50 Spennymoor & Middlestone	1	7,440	20	7,858	25

Source: Electorate figures are based on material provided by Durham County Council and include revised figures for the proposed divisions of Chilton and Spennymoor & Middlestone.

Note: The electorate columns denote the number of electors represented by each councillor as each division is represented by a single councillor. The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors represented by each councillor varies from the average for the county. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.