

Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Stockport

February 2003

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What is The Boundary Committee for England?

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

Members of the Committee are:

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

Archie Gall (Director)

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

Summary

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

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

We found that the current arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Stockport.

- **In 11 of the 21 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10% from the average for the borough and two wards vary by more than 20% from the average.**
- **By 2006 this situation is expected to remain constant, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10% from the average in 11 wards and by more than 20% in one ward.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 131-132) are that:

- **Stockport Borough Council should have 63 councillors, the same as at present;**
- **there should be 21 wards, as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified and no wards should retain their existing boundaries.**

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

- **In all of the proposed 21 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10% from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to continue with the number of electors per councillor in all 21 wards expected to vary by no more than 10% from the average for the borough in 2006.**

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

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

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

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

Table 1: Draft recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Large Map reference
1	Bramhall Moor	3	Part of Davenport ward, part of East Bramhall ward, part of Great Moor ward and part of Hazel Grove ward	Maps 1 and 3
2	Bramhall North	3	Part of East Bramhall ward and part of West Bramhall ward	Map 3
3	Bramhall South	3	Part of Cheadle Hulme South ward and part of West Bramhall ward	Map 3
4	Bredbury	3	Part of Bredbury ward, part of Brinnington ward and part of Romiley ward	Maps 1 and 2
5	Cheadle & Gatley	3	Part of Cheadle ward and part of Cheadle Hulme ward	Maps 1 and 3
6	Cheadle Hulme North	3	Part of Cheadle ward and part of Cheadle Hulme North ward	Maps 1 and 3
7	Cheadle Hulme South	3	Part of Cheadle Hulme North ward, part of Cheadle Hulme South ward, part of Heald Green ward and part of West Bramhall ward	Map 3
8	Davenport	3	Part of Cale Green ward, part of Cheadle Hulme North ward and part of Davenport ward	Maps 1 and 3
9	Edgeley	3	Part of Cale Green ward, part of Edgeley ward and part of Heaton Mersey ward	Map 1
10	Hazel Grove	3	Part of Hazel Grove ward	Maps 3 and 4
11	Heald Green	3	Part of Cheadle ward, part of Cheadle Hulme ward, part of Cheadle Hulme South ward and part of Heald Green ward	Map 3
12	Manor	3	Part of Brinnington ward, part of Great Moor ward and part of Manor ward	Map 1
13	North Heaton	3	Part of Heaton Mersey ward, part of Heaton Moor ward and part of South Reddish ward	Map 1
14	North Marple	3	Part of North Marple ward, part of Romiley ward and part of South Marple ward	Maps 2 and 4
15	Offerton	3	Part of Great Moor ward (including Offerton Estate parish), part of Hazel Grove ward	Maps 1,2,3 and 4
16	Reddish North	3	Part of North Reddish ward and part of South Reddish ward	Map 1
17	Reddish South	3	Part of Heaton Moor ward, part of North Reddish ward and part of South Reddish ward	Map 1
18	Romiley	3	Part of Bredbury ward and part of Romiley ward	Maps 1 and 2

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Large Map reference
19	South Heatons	3	Part of Heaton Mersey ward and part of South Reddish ward	Map 1
20	South Marple	3	Part of North Marple ward and part of South Marple ward	Maps 2 and 4
21	Tame Valley & Central	3	Part of Bredbury ward, part of Brinnington ward, part of Cale Green ward, part of Edgeley ward, part of Heaton Mersey ward, part of Manor ward and part of South Reddish ward	Map 1

Notes:

- 1) *Offerton Estate is the only parish in Stockport and forms part of Offerton ward, as indicated above.*
- 2) *The wards on the above table are illustrated on Map 2 and the large maps.*
- 3) *We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors.*

Table 2: Draft recommendations for Stockport

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Bramhall Moor	3	10,294	3,431	-3	10,374	3,458	-3
2	Bramhall North	3	10,734	3,578	1	11,031	3,677	3
3	Bramhall South	3	9,956	3,319	-6	10,079	3,360	-6
4	Bredbury	3	10,931	3,644	3	11,029	3,676	3
5	Cheadle & Gatley	3	10,934	3,645	3	10,988	3,663	2
6	Cheadle Hulme North	3	10,337	3,446	-2	10,451	3,484	-3
7	Cheadle Hulme South	3	10,355	3,452	-2	10,650	3,550	-1
8	Davenport	3	10,526	3,509	-1	10,802	3,601	1
9	Edgeley	3	10,989	3,663	4	11,052	3,684	3
10	Hazel Grove	3	11,059	3,686	4	11,114	3,705	3
11	Heald Green	3	10,643	3,548	0	10,740	3,580	0
12	Manor	3	10,797	3,599	2	10,838	3,613	1
13	North Heatons	3	10,892	3,631	3	11,046	3,682	3
14	North Marple	3	9,921	3,307	-6	10,051	3,350	-6
15	Offerton	3	10,562	3,521	0	10,670	3,557	-1
16	Reddish North	3	10,618	3,539	0	10,858	3,619	1
17	Reddish South	3	10,701	3,567	1	10,723	3,574	0
18	Romiley	3	11,141	3,714	5	11,310	3,770	5
19	South Heatons	3	10,710	3,570	1	10,787	3,596	0
20	South Marple	3	9,880	3,293	-7	9,976	3,325	-7
21	Tame Valley & Central	3	10,618	3,539	0	11,005	3,668	2
	Totals	63	222,598	-	-	225,574	-	-
	Averages	-	-	3,533	-	-	3,581	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Stockport Borough Council.

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

1 Introduction

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

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Stockport. Stockport's last review was carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission, which reported to the Secretary of State in January 1979 (Report no. 317).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 3: Stages of the review

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

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

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

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

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

2 Current electoral arrangements

14 The metropolitan borough of Stockport is one of the ten Metropolitan Districts in Greater Manchester. It was formed in 1974 and comprises the areas formerly administered by the County Borough of Stockport and the urban districts of Bredbury & Romiley, Cheadle & Gatley, Hazel Grove & Bramhall and Marple. The existing ward structure is largely based on the former council areas with smaller wards in the town centre areas and larger wards in the outlying, rural areas.

15 Stockport is a borough of contrast with the town being largely sub-urban to the west, quite rural to the east but in the centre and north it is predominantly composed of older-style terraced property. It is at the heart of an excellent communications network: the M60 Motorway traverses the borough, and it is served by a number of major rail routes. It also contains a number of major roads such as the A6, A34 and A560 and major waterways, including the rivers Mersey, Goyt and Tame.

16 The borough contains one parish, Offerton Estate Parish Council, which was elected for the first time in May 2002.

17 The electorate of the borough is 222,598 (December 2001). The Council presently has 63 members who are elected from 21 wards, five of which are relatively rural in the east with the remainder being predominantly urban. All wards are three-member wards.

18 At present, each councillor represents an average of 3,533 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 3,581 by 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 11 of the 21 wards varies by more than 10% from the borough average, two wards by more than 20% and one ward by more than 30%. The worst imbalance is in Brinnington ward where each of the councillors represents 31% fewer electors than the borough average.

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

Map 1: Existing wards in Stockport

Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Bredbury	3	11,719	3,906	11	11,817	3,939	10
2	Brinnington	3	7,275	2,425	-31	7,307	2,436	-32
3	Cale Green	3	9,082	3,027	-14	9,534	3,178	-11
4	Cheadle	3	11,673	3,891	10	11,764	3,921	10
5	Cheadle Hulme North	3	11,650	3,883	10	11,731	3,910	9
6	Cheadle Hulme South	3	11,115	3,705	5	11,187	3,729	4
7	Davenport	3	9,161	3,054	-14	9,245	3,082	-14
8	East Bramhall	3	12,811	4,270	21	12,841	4,280	20
9	Edgeley	3	9,223	3,074	-13	9,310	3,103	-13
10	Great Moor	3	10,972	3,657	4	11,088	3,696	3
11	Hazel Grove	3	12,322	4,107	16	12,454	4,151	16
12	Heald Green	3	10,217	3,406	-4	10,543	3,514	-2
13	Heaton Mersey	3	11,951	3,984	13	12,071	4,024	12
14	Heaton Moor	3	10,007	3,336	-6	10,128	3,376	-6
15	Manor	3	9,297	3,099	-12	9,390	3,130	-13
16	North Marple	3	9,338	3,113	-12	9,442	3,147	-12
17	North Reddish	3	11,819	3,940	12	11,947	3,982	11
18	Romiley	3	10,928	3,643	3	11,109	3,703	3
19	South Marple	3	9,690	3,230	-9	9,795	3,265	-9
20	South Reddish	3	10,757	3,586	1	10,881	3,627	1
21	West Bramhall	3	11,591	3,864	9	11,989	3,996	12
	Totals	63	222,598	-	-	225,573	-	-
	Averages	-	-	3,533	-	-	3,581	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Stockport Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Brinnington ward were relatively over-represented by 31%, while electors in East Bramhall ward were relatively under-represented by 21%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 Submissions received

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

21 During this initial stage of the review, officers from The Boundary Committee for England visited the area and met officers and members from the Borough Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received four representations during Stage One, including borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council and the Labour Group, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the Borough Council.

Stockport Borough Council

22 Following consultation on two schemes prepared by officers based on council sizes of 63 and 69, the Council resolved (unanimously) that the council size of 63 should be retained and that the Liberal Democrat Group proposals be submitted to us (39 for; 16 against). This scheme was put to the Council's executive scrutiny committee but because of time constraints, was not put to area committees or subject to public consultation.

23 The Council's proposals provide for the creation of 21 revised three-member wards. These were supported by limited evidence and argumentation and, as detailed above, were not subject to local consultation. By 2006, all wards would vary by less than 7% from the borough average.

Stockport Labour Group

24 The Labour Group put forward a borough-wide scheme based on the existing council size of 63, which it argued reflected local communities, while taking into account the geographical limits within the borough. Limited evidence and argumentation was supplied in support of these proposals and, as with the Council's scheme, they were put to the Council's executive scrutiny committee but because of time constraints were not put to area committees or subject to public consultation. Under the Labour Group's proposals, all wards would vary by less than 4% from the borough average by 2006.

Other representations

25 Cheadle Constituency Conservative Association and Stockport Constituency Conservative Association supported the Borough Council's proposals.

4 Analysis and draft recommendations

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

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

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

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

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

Electorate forecasts

31 Since 1975 there has been around a 5% increase in the electorate of Stockport borough. The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 1% from 222,598 to 225,573 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in Cale Green ward, although a significant amount is also expected in Heald Green and West Bramhall wards. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to unitary development plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

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

Council size

33 Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council presently has 63 members. The Borough Council and the Labour Group proposed retaining a council of 63 members. Initially, limited evidence and argumentation was received in support of the retention of 63 members, particularly in relation to the political management of the council and the role of the councillor. However, following a request for further information, a significant amount of evidence was supplied by both the Borough Council and the Labour Group in support of retaining the existing council size of 63. Consideration was given to recently introduced political management arrangements, together with the requirement to secure political balance on committees. The unanimous view was expressed that a reduction in council size would be detrimental to the achievement of effective and convenient local government. In addition, it was stated that the Council did not feel it appropriate to argue at this time for an increase in councillors. All political groups represented on the Council supported these views.

34 Having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we conclude that the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 63 members.

Electoral arrangements

35 Having considered all the representations received at Stage One, we propose basing our draft recommendations on elements of both the borough-wide schemes received at Stage One together with part of the consultation scheme (based on the existing council size of 63) which was forwarded to us for information. We propose adopting the Borough Council's proposals in the more rural, eastern part of the borough, the Labour Group's proposals in the north of the borough (which were identical to those under the consultation scheme), and on the consultation scheme's proposals in the central and southern parts of the borough.

36 Having carefully considered the borough-wide schemes submitted at Stage One, we noted that they both have merit and provide for much improved levels of electoral equality. However, there were elements within both of the schemes that we do not consider provide for the best reflection of the statutory criteria and therefore weaken the schemes as a whole. In addition, we note that because of time constraints, only the consultation scheme was subject to local consultation with the public and area committees. While this generated limited response, it did add weight to these proposals.

37 We were not persuaded that the level of evidence and argumentation provided in relation to any of the borough-wide schemes was comprehensive enough to justify the proposed re-warding. We therefore sought to devise a scheme for Stockport based on improved levels of electoral equality, strength of boundaries and areas of consensus.

38 Having analysed the Borough Council's proposals, there are a number of areas which we are not persuaded would provide for an adequate reflection of the identities and interests of the local community. This was primarily the case in the Bramhall area, where the Council proposed dividing the community between three new wards, using Bramhall Lane/Bramhall Lane South as a boundary, and consequently breaching a number of railway lines. Officers from the Committee having visited the area, we consider that the Bramhall area focuses on Bramhall Lane/Bramhall Lane South and that the areas either side are similar in character. We also conclude that the railway lines in this area form strong boundaries broadly to the north and south. This was the view expressed within the proposals submitted by the Labour Group and under the consultation scheme. We are also not persuaded by the Borough Council's proposals to divide the Marbury Estate between borough wards in the Reddish area. Officers from the Committee having visited the area, we are of the view that there is merit in the whole of this estate being contained within

the same borough ward (as would be the case under the proposals submitted by the Labour Group and in the consultation scheme, which were identical in this area).

39 We are also not persuaded by the Borough Council's proposals in the Cheadle area. Officers from the Committee having visited the area, we concur with the view expressed by the Labour Group and under the consultation scheme that the areas either side of Turvis Road should form part of the same borough ward. Under the Borough Council's proposals, Turvis Road would be used as a boundary, which we do not consider provides for the best reflection of community identity and interests, particularly for the area to the north-west.

40 In relation to the Labour Group's proposals, we note that they are broadly similar to the proposals under the consultation scheme, particularly in the north and east of the borough. However, we are not persuaded that its proposed Tame/Goyt ward provides for an adequate reflection of the statutory criteria. Not only does it breach the M60 Motorway, which we consider to be a strong boundary at this point, but it combines the Brinnington Estate with the Bredbury area, which, officers having visited the area, we consider to be significantly different in character. In our view, the Brinnington Estate has better links with central Stockport to its south than with the more rural areas to the east of the M60.

41 Having formed these conclusions, we looked at the consultation scheme that was made available to us and decided that with regard to the areas of concern outlined under the other schemes, these proposals provide for a better reflection of the statutory criteria and therefore propose basing elements of our draft recommendations on them. However, we are not persuaded by the proposals in the rural area in the east of the borough, particularly in relation to the proposed Marple Rural ward, which covers a significantly large geographical area. Officers from the Committee having visited the area, we consider that the proposals for the east of the borough submitted by the Labour Group and the Borough Council both have merit. However, based on our conclusions elsewhere in the borough, we are unable to facilitate the Labour Group's proposals and therefore propose basing our proposals for the eastern part of the borough on the Borough Council's proposals.

42 For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- a) Brinnington, North Reddish and South Reddish wards;
- b) Edgeley, Heaton Mersey and Heaton Moor wards;
- c) Cale Green, Davenport, Great Moor and Manor wards;
- d) Cheadle, Cheadle Hulme North, Cheadle Hulme South and Heald Green wards;
- e) East Bramhall and West Bramhall wards;
- f) Bredbury and Romiley wards;
- g) Hazel Grove, North Marple and South Marple wards.

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

Brinnington, North Reddish and South Reddish wards

44 The existing wards of Brinnington, North Reddish and South Reddish are situated in the north of the borough. Each ward is represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements, Brinnington, North Reddish and South Reddish wards contain 31% fewer, 12% more and 1% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (32% fewer, 11% more and 1% more by 2006).

45 Stockport Borough Council proposed broadly retaining the existing North Reddish ward subject to the exclusion of the area surrounding Ambleside Road and Woodstock Avenue. A

revised South Reddish ward would comprise the existing ward, less the areas broadly to the south of Belmont Way and bounded by Glenfield Road and the railway line, together with the area surrounding Ambleside Road and Woodstock Avenue from the existing North Reddish ward and the area surrounding Halesden Road from the existing Heaton Moor ward. Finally, the Borough Council proposed a new Mersey Valley ward which would be largely based on the existing Brinnington ward, subject to the use of the M60 Motorway as an eastern boundary, the inclusion of the area broadly to the south of Belmont Way from the existing South Reddish ward, which it argued 'is generally considered to be part of central Stockport', and the inclusion of the areas surrounding Turncroft Lane and Higher Hillgate from the existing Manor ward. The remaining part of the existing South Reddish ward would form part of a new Heaton North ward, as detailed below.

46 Under the Borough Council's proposals, Mersey Valley, North Reddish and South Reddish wards would contain 1%, 2% and 1% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1%, 2% and 1% more by 2006).

47 Stockport Labour Group proposed a revised North Reddish ward which would comprise the existing North Reddish ward, less the area to the south of the railway line, together with the area to the north of Broadstone Road (surrounding Rupert Street) and to the north of the Marbury Estate, both from the existing South Reddish ward. It proposed a revised South Reddish ward which would comprise the existing ward, less the areas to the south of Belmont Way, south-west of Wellington Road North, surrounding Carnforth Road and the areas to the north of Broadstone Road (surrounding Rupert Street) and to the north of the Marbury Estate, together with the area to the south of the railway line from the existing North Reddish ward and the area broadly bounded by Broadstone Road, School Lane and Wellington Road North from the existing Heaton Moor ward. Finally, the Labour Group proposed a new Tame/Goyt ward which it stated 'is in fact made up of a mixture of communities'. The new ward would comprise part of the existing Brinnington ward, the area broadly to the north of Carrington Road, together with part of the existing Bredbury ward, the area east of the M60 Motorway (broadly surrounding Ashton Road), and part of the existing Romiley ward, the area surrounding Shakespeare Road. The remaining part of the existing Brinnington ward would form part of a new South Central ward, as detailed below, while the remaining parts of the existing South Reddish ward would form part of new North Heaton, South Heaton and South Central wards, also detailed below.

48 Under the Labour Group's proposals, North Reddish, South Reddish and Tame/Goyt wards would contain equal to the average, 1% more and 3% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1% more, equal to the average and 2% more by 2006).

49 The proposals under the consultation scheme were identical to those put forward by the Labour Group in relation to the existing North Reddish and South Reddish wards, however under the consultation scheme they would be referred to as Reddish North and Reddish South wards. Under the consultation scheme, a new Tame Valley & Central ward (which could alternatively be named Mersey Valley or Brinnington & Central) would be formed which would be broadly similar to that put forward by the Borough Council. The new ward would comprise the whole of the existing Brinnington ward, less the small area surrounding Bishop Street, together with part of the existing South Reddish ward (the areas to the south of Belmont Way and surrounding Cotton Tree Street), part of the existing Heaton Mersey ward (the area surrounding Acorn Business Centre), part of the existing Edgeley ward (the area broadly bounded by Wood Street and King Street West), part of the existing Cale Green ward (the area bounded by the railway line and Lowfield Road) and part of the existing Manor ward (the area broadly to the west of St Mary's Way). The remaining part of the existing Brinnington ward would form part of a revised Manor ward, as detailed below.

50 Under the consultation scheme, Reddish North, Reddish South and Tame Valley & Central wards would contain equal to the average, 1% more than the average and equal to the average

number of electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1% more, equal to the average and 2% more by 2006).

51 We received two further representations in relation to this area. Cheadle Constituency Conservative Association and Stockport Constituency Conservative Association supported the proposals put forward by the Borough Council.

52 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose basing our draft recommendations for part of this area on the Labour Group's proposals (which were identical to those put forward under the consultation scheme), together with elements of the consultation scheme. In relation to the existing North Reddish and South Reddish wards, we noted that the proposals put forward by the Labour Group and under the consultation scheme were identical and that the proposals submitted by the Borough Council were broadly similar. However, we consider the proposed boundaries put forward by the Labour Group and under the consultation scheme to be more easily identifiable and result in a better reflection of community identity. Officers from the Committee having visited the area, we have concluded that there is merit in the Marbury Estate being contained wholly within a single borough ward and that the railway line forms a strong southern boundary for the revised North Reddish ward. Based on these conclusions, coupled with the level of consensus received, we propose adopting the Labour Group's (and consultation scheme's) revised North and South Reddish wards.

53 We do, however, propose a minor amendment to the western boundary of the proposed Reddish North ward in order for Stitch Lane to be united with the area to the east of Wellington Road North, as proposed by the Borough Council. We note that there is a lack of agreement as to whether the revised wards should be named North Reddish and South Reddish or Reddish North and Reddish South. We have decided to adopt the names of Reddish North and Reddish South for the purposes of our draft recommendations but welcome further views on this issue at Stage Three.

54 While we are content that the proposals put forward by the Labour Group are an adequate reflection of the statutory criteria in relation to the proposed Reddish North and Reddish South wards, we are not persuaded that this is the case in relation to its proposed Tame/Goyt ward. Officers from the Committee having visited the area we identified the M60 Motorway as a strong boundary in this area and we note that this is the view expressed by the Borough Council and under the consultation scheme. In addition, we note that the areas to be combined in this new ward are somewhat different in character, as well as being physically separated by the motorway. Again, officers from the Committee having visited the area, we consider that the Brinnington area has stronger links with central Stockport, as is reflected in the proposals put forward by the Borough Council and under the consultation scheme.

55 Having formed these conclusions and given our proposals in the Reddish area, we propose basing our draft recommendations in the Brinnington area on the consultation scheme's proposed Tame Valley & Central ward.

56 Under our draft recommendations, Reddish North, Reddish South and Tame Valley & Central wards would contain equal to the average, 1% more and equal to the average number of electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1% more, equal to the average and 2% more by 2006).

Edgeley, Heaton Mersey and Heaton Moor wards

57 The existing wards of Edgeley, Heaton Mersey and Heaton Moor are situated in the north-west of the borough. Each ward is represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements, Edgeley, Heaton Mersey and Heaton Moor wards contain 13% fewer, 13% more

and 6% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (13% fewer, 12% more and 6% fewer by 2006).

58 Stockport Borough Council proposed a new Heaton North ward which would be largely based on the existing Heaton Moor ward, less the area surrounding Halesden Road, as detailed above, together with the area surrounding Stanley Road from the existing Heaton Mersey ward and the area broadly bounded by Glenfield Road and the railway line from the existing South Reddish ward, as detailed above. The Borough Council proposed a new Heaton South ward which would be identical to the existing Heaton Mersey ward subject to the exclusion of the area surrounding Stanley Road, as detailed above. Finally, it proposed a revised Edgeley ward which would be broadly similar to the existing ward, subject to the inclusion of the area broadly to the north of Cheadle Old Road and Hardcastle Road from the existing Cale Green ward.

59 Under the Borough Council's proposals, Edgeley, Heaton North and Heaton South wards would contain 3% more, 1% fewer and 1% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (2% more, 1% fewer and 1% fewer by 2006).

60 Stockport Labour Group proposed broadly retaining the existing Edgeley ward, together with the areas surrounding Cheadle Old Road and Lomas Street from the existing Cale Green ward. It proposed a new South Heatons ward which would be largely based on the existing Heaton Mersey ward, less the area surrounding Stanley Road, together with the area to the south-west of Wellington Road North from the existing South Reddish ward, as detailed above. Finally, the Labour Group proposed a new North Heatons ward which would be largely based on the existing Heaton Moor ward, less the area broadly bounded by Broadstone Road, School Lane and Wellington Road North, as detailed above, together with the area surrounding Carnforth Road from the existing South Reddish ward, as detailed above, and the area surrounding Stanley Road from the existing Heaton Mersey ward.

61 Under the Labour Group's proposals, Edgeley, North Heatons and South Heatons wards would contain equal to the average, 3% more and 1% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (equal to the average, 3% more and 1% more by 2006).

62 The proposals for this area under the consultation scheme were identical in relation to the proposals in the Heaton Moor and Heaton Mersey ward areas, resulting in the creation of two new wards, North Heatons (which could alternatively be named Heaton Moor) and South Heatons (which could alternatively be named Heaton Mersey). Under the consultation scheme, however, there would be a marginally different southern boundary for the proposed South Heatons ward resulting in the use of the M60 Motorway as a boundary. Under the consultation scheme, a revised Edgeley ward would be formed, largely based on the existing ward, less the area broadly bounded by Wood Street and King Street West, as detailed above, together with the area surrounding Yew Street (to the south of the M60 Motorway) from the existing Heaton Mersey ward and the area surrounding Cheadle Old Road and Hardcastle Road from the existing Cale Green ward.

63 Under the consultation scheme, Edgeley, North Heatons and South Heatons wards would contain 4%, 3% and 1% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (3%, 3% and 1% more by 2006).

64 We received two further representations in relation to this area. Cheadle Constituency Conservative Association and Stockport Constituency Conservative Association supported the proposals put forward by the Borough Council.

65 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose basing our draft recommendations for part of this area on the Labour Group's proposals (which were identical to those put forward under the consultation scheme), together with elements of the consultation scheme. We note that the proposals for this area are broadly similar under each of the borough-

wide schemes, particularly in relation to the proposals put forward by the Labour Group and under the consultation scheme. However, while we consider that the proposals put forward by the Borough Council have merit, based on our conclusions in the Reddish area, we are unable to facilitate the Borough Council's proposals. Furthermore, based on our decision to adopt the proposed Tame Valley & Central ward put forward under the consultation scheme, we are unable to adopt the Labour Group's proposed Edgeley ward which would not be conducive with this proposal. Therefore we propose adopting the proposals for this area put forward under the consultation scheme, which were identical in relation to the Heaton area to the proposals put forward by the Labour Group. We do, however, propose a minor amendment to the boundary between the proposed South Heaton and Reddish South wards in order to unite Stitch Lane with the area to the east of Wellington Road North, as detailed above.

66 Under our draft recommendations, Edgeley, North Heaton and South Heaton wards would contain 4%, 3% and 1% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (3% more, 3% more and equal to the average by 2006).

Cale Green, Davenport, Great Moor and Manor wards

67 The existing wards of Cale Green, Davenport, Great Moor and Manor are situated in the centre of the borough. Each ward is represented by three councillors. The existing Great Moor ward contains the whole of Offerton Estate Parish Council. Under the current arrangements, Cale Green, Davenport, Great Moor and Manor wards contain 14% fewer, 14% fewer, 4% more and 12% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (11% fewer, 14% fewer, 3% more and 13% fewer by 2006).

68 Stockport Borough Council proposed a revised Cale Green ward which would be based on the existing ward, less the area broadly to the north of Cheadle Old Road and Hardcastle Road, as detailed above, together with the area broadly to the west of Bramhall Lane (surrounding Beech Road) from the existing Davenport ward and the area broadly to the north of Micker Brook (surrounding Twining Brook Road) from the existing Cheadle Hulme North ward. It proposed a revised Manor ward which would comprise the existing ward, less the areas surrounding Turncroft Lane and Higher Hillgate, as detailed above, together with the areas broadly to the north of Mile End Lane, Hillcrest Road and Curzon Gardens from the existing Great Moor ward.

69 The Borough Council proposed a new Ladybrook ward which would be largely based on the existing Davenport ward, less the area broadly to the west of Bramhall Lane (surrounding Beech Road), as detailed above, and the areas surrounding Woods Moor and Ripley Avenue. The proposed Ladybrook ward would include part of the existing West Bramhall ward, to the south of the railway line, the area broadly north of Bramhall Park Road, together with part of the existing Cheadle Hulme South ward, the area surrounding Ramillies Avenue. The Borough Council stated that 'this is effectively a new ward'. The remaining parts of the existing Davenport ward would form parts of proposed Ladybrook Valley and Hazel Grove wards, both detailed below.

70 Finally, the Borough Council proposed a new Offerton ward, which it stated is a name, which correctly describes the area. The new ward would be largely based on the existing Great Moor ward, less the areas broadly to the north of Mile End Lane, Hillcrest Road and Curzon Gardens, as detailed above, and the small area broadly to the south of Offerton Estate Parish Council. The new ward would comprise part of the existing Hazel Grove ward, the settlement broadly to the west of Offerton Road A627 (surrounding Shearwater Road). The new ward would contain the whole of Offerton Estate parish. The remaining part of the existing Great Moor ward would form part of a revised Hazel Grove ward, as detailed below.

71 Under the Borough Council's proposals, Cale Green, Ladybrook, Manor and Offerton wards would contain 6% fewer, 1% fewer, 1% more and 3% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (2% fewer, 1% more, equal to the average and 3% more by 2006).

72 Stockport Labour Group proposed a new Shaw Heath & Heaviley ward which would be largely based on the existing Cale Green ward, less the areas surrounding Cheadle Old Road and Lomas Street, as detailed above, and the area to the west of the railway line (surrounding Granville Road), together with the area surrounding Beech Road from the existing Davenport ward and the area surrounding Windermere Road from the existing Manor ward. The remaining part of the existing Cale Green ward would form part of a new Cheadle East ward, as detailed below. The remaining part of the existing Manor ward would form part of a new South Central ward, together with the area to the south of Carrington Road from the existing Brinnington ward, the area to the south of Belmont Way from the existing South Reddish ward, and the small areas surrounding Curzon Green and Milford Green from the existing Great Moor ward.

73 The Labour Group proposed a new Mile End ward which would be largely based on the existing Davenport ward, less the area surrounding Beech Road, as detailed above, and the area surrounding Woods Moor, together with the area bounded by Nangreave Road and Dialstone Lane from the existing Great Moor ward. The remaining part of the existing Davenport ward would form part of a new Norbury ward, as detailed below. Finally the Labour Group proposed a new Offerton ward which would be broadly based on the existing Great Moor ward, less the area bounded by Nangreave Road and Dialstone Lane and the small areas surrounding Curzon Green and Milford Green, together with the area to the west of Torkington Brook (surrounding Shearwater Road) from the existing Hazel Grove ward. The new ward would also contain the whole of Offerton Estate parish.

74 Under the Labour Group's proposals, Mile End, Offerton, Shaw Heath & Heaviley and South Central wards would contain 3% more, 2% fewer, 5% fewer and 2% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (2% more, 2% fewer, 2% fewer and 2% more by 2006).

75 Under the consultation scheme a revised Davenport ward would be created, based largely on the existing Cale Green ward, less the areas surrounding Cheadle Old Road and Hardcastle Road and bounded by the railway line and Lowfield Road, as detailed above. The revised ward would contain part of the existing Davenport ward, the area to the north and west of Bramhall Lane and Countess Street. The remaining part of the existing Davenport ward (the area to the south and east of Bramhall Lane and Countess Street), would be combined with part of the existing Great Moor ward (the area bounded by Mile End Lane and Dialstone Lane), part of the existing Hazel Grove ward (the area surrounding Newby Road) and part of the existing East Bramhall ward (the area surrounding Jacksons Lane and roads to the north) to form a new Bramhall Moor ward (all alternatively named Stepping Hill ward).

76 The remaining part of the existing Great Moor ward, less the areas surrounding Dovedale Road and Beauvale Avenue, would be combined with the Shearwater Road area from the existing Hazel Grove ward to form a new Offerton ward. This new ward would also contain the whole of Offerton Estate parish. Finally, under the consultation scheme, the existing Manor ward would be broadly retained, less the area west of St Mary's Way, as detailed above, together with part of the existing Great Moor ward, the areas surrounding Dovedale Road and Beauvale Avenue and the small area surrounding Bishop Street from the existing Brinnington ward, as detailed above. It was stated the revised Manor ward could alternatively be named Heaviley, Littlemoor or Offerton North.

77 Under the consultation scheme, Bramhall Moor, Davenport, Manor and Offerton wards would contain 3% fewer, 1% fewer, 2% more and equal to the average number of electors per

councillor than the borough average respectively (3% fewer, 1% more, 1% more and 1% fewer by 2006).

78 We received two further representations in relation to this area. Cheadle Constituency Conservative Association and Stockport Constituency Conservative Association supported the proposals put forward by the Borough Council.

79 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose basing our draft recommendations for this area on the proposals submitted under the consultation scheme. We note that while all three schemes were fundamentally different in this area, they did all agree on the creation of a new Offerton ward containing the area surrounding Shearwater Road from the existing Hazel Grove ward and the whole of Offerton Estate Parish Council. However, the proposals under the consultation scheme would facilitate our proposals to the north, as detailed above, and our proposals to the south, as detailed below. In addition, officers from the Committee having visited the area we have identified that the proposals under the consultation scheme utilised strong boundaries such as Nangreave Road and Lowfield Road. In relation to the proposed Bramhall Moor ward, we were initially concerned that it united areas which appeared to be separated by the Woods Moor area. However, officers from the Committee having visited the area, we have identified the areas surrounding Lynchurst Avenue and Woodland Road as being well linked by Bramhall Moor Lane and somewhat similar in character. Therefore, on balance, we are content that the identities and interests of the local communities would not be adversely affected if these two areas were to form part of the same borough ward. We would, however, welcome further views on this issue at Stage Three.

80 Under our draft recommendations, Bramhall Moor, Davenport, Manor and Offerton wards would contain 3% fewer, 1% fewer, 2% more and equal to the average number of electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (3% fewer, 1% more, 1% more and 1% fewer by 2006).

Cheadle, Cheadle Hulme North, Cheadle Hulme South and Heald Green wards

81 The existing wards of Cheadle, Cheadle Hulme North, Cheadle Hulme South and Heald Green are situated in the south-west of the borough. Each ward is represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements, Cheadle, Cheadle Hulme North, Cheadle Hulme South and Heald Green wards contain 10% more, 10% more, 5% more and 4% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (10% more, 9% more, 4% more and 2% fewer by 2006).

82 Stockport Borough Council proposed a new Cheadle & Gatley ward which would be broadly based on the existing Cheadle ward, less the areas around Park Lodge Close, Cringle Drive and The Tarns. It proposed broadly retaining the existing Heald Green ward, subject to an amendment to the eastern boundary resulting in the use of Kingsway (A34) as a boundary and the inclusion of the area surrounding The Tarns from the existing Cheadle ward, as detailed above. The Borough Council proposed a revised Cheadle Hulme North ward which would comprise the existing ward, less the area broadly to the north of Micker Brook (surrounding Twining Brook Road), as detailed above and a small area to the west of Kingsway (A34), together with the areas surrounding Park Lodge Close and Cringle Drive from the existing Cheadle ward, as detailed above.

83 Finally the Borough Council proposed a revised Cheadle Hulme South ward which would be largely based on the existing ward, subject to an amendment to the western boundary in order for Kingsway (A34) to be used as a boundary, the exclusion of the area surrounding Ramillies Avenue which would form part of the new Ladybrook ward, as detailed above, and the inclusion of part of the existing West Bramhall ward, the area broadly to the west of Moss Lane.

84 Under the Borough Council's proposals, Cheadle & Gatley, Cheadle Hulme North, Cheadle Hulme South and Heald Green wards would contain 3% more, 2% more, 1% fewer and 2% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (2% more, 2% more, equal to the average and 2% fewer by 2006).

85 Stockport Labour Group proposed a new Cheadle West ward which would comprise the existing Cheadle ward, less the areas surrounding Brookfield Road and The Tarns, together with the areas surrounding the northern part of Bruntwood Lane and Old Road from the existing Cheadle Hulme North ward. Part of the remaining part of the existing Cheadle ward, the area surrounding Brookfield Road, would form part of a new Cheadle East ward, together with the area to the west of the railway line (surrounding Granville Road) from the existing Cale Green ward, as detailed above, and the majority of the existing Cheadle Hulme North ward, the area broadly to the north and south of Micker Brook (surrounding Grange Avenue to the north of Cheadle Road). The remaining part of the existing Cheadle Hulme North ward would form part of a new Cheadle Hulme ward, together with part of the existing Cheadle Hulme South ward, the area to the north-west of Gillbent Road (including the Glandon Drive area), and part of the existing Heald Green ward, the area around Regency Gardens. The remaining parts of the existing Cheadle Hulme South ward would form part of new North Bramhall, South Bramhall and Heald Green wards, as detailed below.

86 Finally, the Labour Group proposed broadly retaining the existing Heald Green ward, subject to an amendment to the eastern boundary in order for the A34 to be used as a boundary (resulting in the transfer of Regency Gardens, as detailed above and the inclusion of the area surrounding Duke Avenue from the existing Cheadle Hulme South ward), together with the inclusion of the area surrounding The Tarns from the existing Cheadle ward.

87 Under the Labour Group's proposals, Cheadle Hulme, Cheadle East, Cheadle West and Heald Green wards would contain 4%, 2%, 2% and 2% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (2%, 2%, 3% and 2% fewer by 2006).

88 Under the consultation scheme a new Cheadle & Gatley ward would be created. This ward would be largely based on the existing Cheadle ward, less the areas broadly to the east of Manchester Road (surrounding Platt Street and Park Lodge Close), and the area surrounding the northern part of Styal Road. The new ward would include part of the existing Cheadle Hulme North ward, the area surrounding the northern part of Bruntwood Lane. Under the consultation scheme a revised Cheadle Hulme North ward would be created, largely based on the existing ward, less the area surrounding the northern part of Bruntwood Lane, as detailed above, and the areas surrounding Conway Road and Woodlands Avenue, together with the areas broadly to the east of Manchester Road, surrounding Platt Street and Park Lodge Close from the existing Cheadle ward, also detailed above.

89 The consultation scheme also provided for a revised Cheadle Hulme South ward which would again be largely based on the existing ward, less the area broadly to the east of Ravenoak Road, Yew Tree Park Road and Lyncombe Close and the area to the west of the A34 (surrounding Duke Avenue), together with the areas surrounding Conway Road and Woodlands Avenue from the existing Cheadle Hulme North ward, the area surrounding Hylton Drive from the existing West Bramhall ward, and a small area to the east of the A34 from the existing Heald Green ward. Finally, under the consultation scheme, the existing Heald Green ward would be broadly retained, subject to amendment to the eastern boundary resulting in the use of the A34 as a boundary (resulting in the inclusion of the Duke Avenue area) and the inclusion of the area surrounding the northern part of Styal Road from the existing Cheadle ward, as detailed above. The remaining part of the existing Cheadle Hulme South ward would form part of a new Bramhall South ward, as detailed below.

90 Under the consultation scheme, Cheadle & Gatley, Cheadle Hulme North, Cheadle Hulme South and Heald Green wards would contain 3% more, 2% fewer, 2% fewer and equal to the average number of electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (2% more, 3% fewer, 1% fewer and equal to the average by 2006).

91 We received two further representations in relation to this area. Cheadle Constituency Conservative Association and Stockport Constituency Conservative Association supported the proposals put forward by the Borough Council.

92 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose basing our draft recommendations for this area on the proposals submitted under the consultation scheme. We note that there is limited consensus between the three schemes in this area, with the exception of the use of the A34 as an eastern boundary for a revised Heald Green ward, which we concur with. Officers from the Committee having visited the area, we have identified some areas where it was considered that the proposals submitted under the consultation scheme provided for a better reflection of community identity as well as facilitating our proposals in the surrounding wards. Firstly, we are not persuaded by elements of the Borough Council's proposals, particularly in relation to the northern boundary of its revised Cheadle Hulme South ward. Officers from the Committee identified Micker Brook as a strong identifiable boundary and are of the view that the area surrounding Station Road would be better served in a ward with the area to its south rather than to its north. This view was reflected under both the Labour Group's and the consultation scheme's proposals, while the proposals put forward by the Borough Council breach Micker Brook and in our view, therefore, do not adequately reflect the identities and interests of the local community.

93 While we broadly concur with the view that Turves Road forms a identifiable boundary, with officers from the Committee having visited the area, we have identified that the roads to the north-west are all accessed from Turves Road and therefore would be better served in the same borough ward. Again, this is reflected in the proposals outlined by the Labour Group and under the consultation scheme but not by the Borough Council. Finally, we have not been persuaded that either of the proposed northern boundaries for the revised Heald Green ward put forward by the Borough Council or the Labour Group are easily identifiable. We concur with the view expressed under the consultation scheme that the boundary should be extended northwards to incorporate more of the Styal Road area.

94 Therefore, on balance, and bearing in mind our conclusions elsewhere in the borough, we propose adopting the proposals under the consultation scheme as part of our draft recommendations. We do, however, propose a minor amendment to the boundary between the proposed Bramhall South and Cheadle Hulme South wards in order for the stream to the rear of properties 2-28 Yew Tree Park Road to be used as a boundary.

95 Under our draft recommendations, Cheadle & Gatley, Cheadle Hulme North, Cheadle Hulme South and Heald Green wards would contain 3% more, 2% fewer, 2% fewer and equal to the average number of electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (2% more, 3% fewer, 1% fewer and equal to the average by 2006).

East Bramhall and West Bramhall wards

96 The existing wards of East Bramhall and West Bramhall are situated in the south of the borough. Both wards are represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements, East Bramhall and West Bramhall wards contain 21% and 9% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (20% and 12% more by 2006).

97 Stockport Borough Council proposed radical change in this area. It proposed a new Bramhall ward which would be centred on Bramhall Village and would comprise the majority of the existing West Bramhall ward, the area south of the railway line and north of the railway line,

south of Bramhall Park Road, less the area broadly to the west of Moss Lane, as detailed above. The new ward would include part of the existing East Bramhall ward, the area broadly to the south of Lady Brook. The remaining part of the existing East Bramhall ward, the area broadly to the north of Lady Brook, would be combined with part of the existing Davenport ward, the area surrounding Woods Moor, and part of the existing Hazel Grove ward, the area surrounding Newby Road (Bramhall Moor), to form a new Ladybrook Valley ward. The remaining part of the existing West Bramhall ward (the area to the west of Moss Lane) would form part of a revised Cheadle Hulme South ward, as detailed above.

98 Under the Borough Council's proposals, Bramhall and Ladybrook Valley wards would contain 1% fewer and 2% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (2% fewer and 1% more by 2006).

99 Stockport Labour Group proposed a new South Bramhall ward which would comprise the existing West Bramhall ward, less the area to the north of the railway line (including the Elmsway area), together with the area to the south-east of Gillbent Road from the existing Cheadle Hulme South ward, as detailed above. The Labour Group proposed a new North Bramhall ward which would comprise the remaining part of the existing West Bramhall ward, the area to the north of the railway line (including the Elmsway area), part of the existing Cheadle Hulme South ward, the area surrounding Glandon Drive, and part of the existing East Bramhall ward, the area broadly to the west of Alvington Grove and Abbotsleigh Drive. The remaining part of the existing East Bramhall ward would form part of a new Norbury ward, together with parts of the existing Davenport and Hazel Grove wards, as detailed below.

100 Under the Labour Group's proposals, North Bramhall and South Bramhall wards would contain 4% and 1% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (2% and 1% fewer by 2006).

101 Under the consultation scheme, part of the existing East Bramhall ward, the area surrounding and to the north of Jackons Lane, would form part of a new Bramhall Moor ward, as detailed above. Part of the remaining part of the existing East Bramhall ward, the area broadly to the north of Northcote Road and west of Bramhall Moor Lane, would be combined with part of the existing West Bramhall ward, the area to the north of the railway line (less the Hylton Drive area), to form a new Bramhall North ward. Part of the remaining part of the existing East Bramhall ward, the area broadly to the south of Northcote Road, would be combined with the remainder of the existing West Bramhall ward, together with the area to the east of Ravenoak Road, Yew Tree Park Road and Lyncombe Close from the existing Cheadle Hulme South ward, as detailed above, to form a new Bramhall South ward. The remaining part of the existing East Bramhall ward would form part of a revised Hazel Grove ward, as detailed below.

102 Under the consultation scheme, Bramhall North and Bramhall South wards would contain 3% and 2% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (both 2% fewer by 2006).

103 We received two further representations in relation to this area. Cheadle Constituency Conservative Association and Stockport Constituency Conservative Association supported the proposals put forward by the Borough Council.

104 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose basing our draft recommendations for this area on the proposals submitted under the consultation scheme, incorporating elements of the Labour Group's proposals. We note that the proposals submitted by the Borough Council are significantly different to those put forward by the Labour Group or under the consultation scheme, resulting in the Bramhall area being divided between three new borough wards, and the breaching of a number of railway lines which in our view form strong boundaries. Officers from the Committee having visited the area, we have identified that the railway lines which are breached under the Borough Council's proposals (to the north of

Midland Road and north of Boston Close) are strong boundaries, with limited crossing points. In addition, we are not persuaded that the division of the Bramhall area between three new borough wards would be in the best interests of the local community. While Bramhall Lane/Bramhall Lane South is a major road, in our view, this serves as more of a focus than a divide of communities, with the areas either side being similar in character.

105 Based on these conclusions we are of the view that the proposals submitted by the Labour Group and under the consultation scheme both have merit. However, based on our proposals to the north and west (primarily the proposed Bramhall Moor ward), we are unable to wholly facilitate the Labour Group's proposals. We therefore propose adopting the proposals submitted under the consultation scheme for this area, however, we propose an amendment based on the Labour Group's proposals. We concur with the view expressed by the Labour Group that the railway line to the north of Adelaide Road forms an identifiable boundary and the area surrounding Ladythorn Road would be better served with the areas to its north. We therefore propose modifying the boundary between the proposed Bramhall North and Bramhall South wards in order to utilise the railway line as a boundary.

106 Under our draft recommendations, Bramhall North and Bramhall South wards would contain 1% more and 6% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (3% more and 6% fewer by 2006).

Bredbury and Romiley wards

107 The existing wards of Bredbury and Romiley are situated in the north of the borough. Both wards are represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements, Bredbury and Romiley wards contain 11% and 3% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (10% and 3% more by 2006).

108 Stockport Borough Council proposed broadly retaining the existing Bredbury ward, subject to an amendment to the western boundary in order for the M60 Motorway to be used as a boundary and the exclusion of the area surrounding Bank Road. The Borough Council also proposed broadly retaining the existing Romiley ward, less the area to the east of Cowlshaw Road (the settlement of Compstall), together with the area surrounding Bank Road from the existing Bredbury ward, as detailed above. The remaining part of Romiley ward would form part of a revised North Marple ward, as detailed below.

109 Under the Borough Council's proposals, Bredbury and Romiley wards would contain 3% and 5% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (3% and 5% more by 2006).

110 Stockport Labour Group proposed a new Tame/Goyt ward which would comprise part of the existing Bredbury ward, as detailed above. The remaining part of the existing Bredbury ward (the Woodley area) would be combined with the Bredbury Green area of the existing Romiley ward to form a new Bredbury Green ward. Part of the remaining part of the existing Romiley ward, the area surrounding Shakespeare Road, would form part of a new Tame/Goyt ward, as detailed above. The remaining part of the existing Romiley ward would be combined with the settlement of Marple Bridge from the existing North Marple ward and the settlement of Mellor from the existing South Marple ward to form a new Marple Bridge & Etherow ward. It was argued that the settlements to be combined in this new ward 'are linked through communication routes'.

111 Under the Labour Group's proposals, Bredbury Green and Marple Bridge & Etherow wards would contain 2% and 3% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (2% and 4% more by 2006).

112 Under the consultation scheme, a revised Bredbury ward would be created, largely based on the existing ward, less the Woodley area, together with the Bredbury Green area from the existing Romiley ward. The remainder of the existing Bredbury ward, the Woodley area, would be combined with the remainder of the existing Romiley ward (less the settlement of Compstall) to form a revised Romiley ward. The settlement of Compstall would form part of a new Marple Rural ward, as detailed below.

113 Under the consultation scheme, Bredbury and Romiley wards would contain 3% and 5% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (3% and 5% more by 2006).

114 We received two further representations in relation to this area. Cheadle Constituency Conservative Association and Stockport Constituency Conservative Association supported the proposals put forward by the Borough Council.

115 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose basing our draft recommendations for this area on the Borough Council's proposals. We note that all three schemes agree that the River Goyt should be used as a boundary in this area and we concur with this view. However, as detailed above, we have not been persuaded that the Labour Group's proposed Tame/Goyt ward provides for an adequate reflection of the statutory criteria and consequently, we are unable to facilitate its proposals in this area. We are of the view that the proposals for this area submitted by the Borough Council and under the consultation scheme both have merit. Officers from the Committee having visited the area, we have identified that there are good communication links between the settlements of Bredbury and Romiley (Stockport Road/ Barrack Hill) and Bredbury and Woodley (Stockport Road/Hyde Road). However, as detailed below, we are not persuaded that the proposals under the consultation scheme for the more rural, eastern part of the borough provide for the best reflection of the statutory criteria. Consequently, we therefore propose basing our proposals for the revised Bredbury and Romiley wards on the Borough Council's proposals.

116 Under our draft recommendations, Bredbury and Romiley wards would contain 3% and 5% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (3% and 5% more by 2006).

Hazel Grove, North Marple and South Marple wards

117 The existing wards of Hazel Grove, North Marple and South Marple are situated in the east of the borough. Each ward is represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements, Hazel Grove, North Marple and South Marple wards contain 16% more, 12% fewer and 9% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (16% more, 12% fewer and 9% fewer by 2006).

118 Stockport Borough Council proposed a revised Hazel Grove ward which would be broadly based on the existing ward, less the settlement broadly to the west of Offerton Road (A627), and the area surrounding Newby Road (Bramhall Moor), both detailed above, and the area to the east of Offerton Road and the proposed A6(M) together with the small area to the south of Offerton Estate Parish Council from the existing Great Moor ward and the area surrounding Ripley Road from the existing Davenport ward. It proposed a revised South Marple ward which would comprise the existing ward, less the area broadly to the east of the River Goyt, (the settlement of Mellor) together with the area to the east of Offerton Road and the proposed A6(M) from the existing Hazel Grove ward and the area broadly bounded by Stockport Road and Cross Lane from the existing North Marple ward. Finally, the Borough Council proposed a revised North Marple ward which would comprise the existing ward, less the area broadly bounded by Stockport Road and Cross Lane, together with the area broadly to the east of the River Goyt (the settlement of Mellor) from the existing South Marple ward, and the area broadly to the east of Cowlshaw Road (the settlement of Compstall) from the existing Romiley ward, as detailed above.

119 Under the Borough Council's proposals, Hazel Grove, North Marple and South Marple wards would contain 1%, 7% and 6% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1%, 7% and 6% fewer by 2006).

120 Stockport Labour Group proposed a new Norbury ward which would comprise part of the existing East Bramhall ward, the area to the east of Alvington Grove and Abbotsleigh Drive, together with the Woods Moor area of the existing Davenport ward, as detailed above, and part of the existing Hazel Grove ward, the areas surrounding Mill Lane, Newby Road and Green Lane. Part of the existing Hazel Grove ward, the area surrounding Shearwater Road, would form part of a new Offerton ward, as detailed above, while the remaining part of the existing Hazel Grove ward would be combined with the High Lane area from the existing South Marple ward to form a revised Hazel Grove ward.

121 As detailed above, part of the remaining part of the existing South Marple ward, the area surrounding the settlement of Mellor, would form part of a new Marple Bridge & Etherow ward. Under the Labour Group's proposals, the remaining part of the existing South Marple ward, the area surrounding the settlement of Strines and the southern part of the settlement of Marple, would be combined with part of the existing North Marple ward, the northern part of the settlement of Marple, to form a new Marple ward. The remaining part of the existing North Marple ward, the area surrounding the settlement of Marple Bridge, would form part of a new Marple Bridge & Etherow ward, as detailed above.

122 Under the Labour Group's proposals, Hazel Grove, Marple and Norbury wards would contain 1% fewer, 4% more and 1% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1% fewer, 3% more and 2% fewer by 2006).

123 Under the consultation scheme a revised Hazel Grove ward would be formed which would be based on the existing ward, less the areas surrounding Shearwater Road and the Bramhall Moor area (surrounding Newby Road), as detailed above, also less the areas to the east of Offerton Road and the proposed A6(M). The revised ward would contain part of the existing East Bramhall ward, the area surrounding Norbury Moor, broadly to the east of Chester Road. Part of the remaining part of the existing Hazel Grove ward, the area to the east of the proposed A6(M) would be combined with part of the existing South Marple ward, the settlements of High Lane, Strines and Mellor, part of the existing North Marple ward, the settlement of Marple Bridge, and part of the existing Romiley ward, the settlement of Compstall, to form a new Marple Rural ward (or alternatively named Marple Goyt or Goyt ward). The remaining part of the existing Hazel Grove ward, the area to the east of Offerton Road, would be combined with the remaining part of the existing South Marple ward, the southern part of the settlement of Marple, and the remaining part of the existing North Marple ward, the northern part of the settlement of Marple, to form a new Marple ward.

124 Under the consultation scheme, Hazel Grove, Marple and Marple Rural wards would contain 4% more, 5% fewer and 8% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (3% more, 6% fewer and 8% fewer by 2006).

125 We received two further representations in relation to this area. Cheadle Constituency Conservative Association and Stockport Constituency Conservative Association supported the proposals put forward by the Borough Council.

126 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we propose basing our draft recommendations for this area on elements of the proposals under the consultation scheme and those put forward by the Borough Council. As briefly mentioned above, we note that there was consensus between each of the borough-wide schemes that the areas surrounding Shearwater Road from the existing Hazel Grove ward should form part of a new Offerton ward, and we concur with this view. However, there is limited consensus regarding the

revised warding for the remainder of this proposed ward and therefore based on our conclusions regarding the Bramhall area to the west and our proposals to the north, we are unable to facilitate the proposals submitted by the Borough Council or the Labour Group. We therefore propose adopting the revised Hazel Grove ward put forward under the consultation scheme.

127 Having carefully considered the proposals put forward for the more rural, eastern part of the borough and with officers from the Committee having visited the area, we propose adopting the Borough Council's proposals subject to a minor amendment. We are concerned that the proposed Marple Rural ward put forward under the consultation scheme covers a significantly large geographical area, stretching from Compstall in the north to Hazel Grove in the south. We are not persuaded that this proposed ward provides for the best reflection of community identity, with, in our view, limited links between the settlements of Compstall and High Lane. In addition, we note that concerns were expressed about this proposed ward during consultation on these proposals with area committees.

128 In relation to the Labour Group's proposals, we are of the view that they have merit, linking settlements which in our view have good communication links and resulting in the settlement of Marple being retained wholly within a single borough ward. However, based on our conclusions in the Bredbury and Hazel Grove areas, we are unable to facilitate the Labour Group's proposals in this area. Therefore, on balance we consider that the proposals submitted by the Borough Council provide for the best reflection of the statutory criteria, while facilitating our proposals to the west. We note that the settlements to be combined under the Borough Council's proposals have good transport and communications links and are similar in character. We did, however, look closely at the division of the settlement of Marple which would occur under the Borough Council's proposals. Officers from the Committee having visited the area, we have concluded that there would be merit in the whole of Marple being contained within a single borough ward, but that in our view, the proposed division would not have an adverse effect on the local community. We do, however, propose that in order to make the boundary between the proposed North Marple and South Marple more identifiable, it should be amended to follow the centre of Cross Lane. This amendment would have a negligible effect on electoral equality.

129 Under our draft recommendations, Hazel Grove, North Marple and South Marple wards would contain 4% more, 6% fewer and 7% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (3% more, 6% fewer and 7% fewer by 2006).

Electoral cycle

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

Conclusions

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

- a council of 63 members should be retained;
- there should be 21 wards;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified and no wards should retain their existing boundaries.

132 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on elements of both of the Borough Council's and the Labour Group's proposals, together with part of the consultation scheme prepared by officers. However, we propose to depart from them in the following areas:

- we propose an amendment to the boundary between the proposed Bramhall North and Bramhall South wards in order to provide for a better reflection of community identity and a more identifiable boundary;
- we propose a minor amendment to the boundary between the proposed Cheadle Hulme South and Bramhall South wards in order to provide for a more clearly identifiable boundary;
- we propose a minor amendment to the boundary between the proposed South Heatons and Reddish South wards in order to provide for a better reflection of community identity;
- we propose a minor amendment between the proposed North Marple and South Marple wards in order to provide for a more clearly identifiable boundary.

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

Table 5: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	63	63	63	63
Number of wards	21	21	21	21
Average number of electors per councillor	3,533	3,533	3,581	3,581
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	11	0	11	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% cent from the average	2	0	1	0

134 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for Stockport Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from 11 to none. By 2006 no wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10%.

Draft recommendation

Stockport Borough Council should comprise 63 councillors serving 21 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A and the large maps.

Parish council electoral arrangements

135 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different borough wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. However, our draft recommendations would not require any consequential warding of Offerton Estate parish and we therefore do not propose any change to its electoral arrangements.

Map 2: Draft recommendations for Stockport

5 What happens next?

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

137 Express your views by writing directly to us:

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

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

Appendix A

Draft recommendations for Stockport: Detailed mapping

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

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

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

Map A1: Draft recommendations for Stockport: Key map

Appendix B

Code of practice on written consultation

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

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

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

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