

LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT  
COMMISSION  
FOR ENGLAND

DRAFT  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
ON THE FUTURE  
ELECTORAL  
ARRANGEMENTS FOR  
SPELTHORNE  
IN SURREY

*March 1998*

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for Spelthorne in Surrey.

Members of the Commission are:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)

Helena Shovelton (Deputy Chairman)

Peter Brokenshire

Professor Michael Clarke

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David Thomas OBE

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## WHY YOUR LOCAL AUTHORITY IS UNDER REVIEW

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 to their electoral arrangements, such as the number of councillors which residents in each area should have to represent them.

As a result of changes in the electorate, we are statutorily required to review periodically the electoral arrangements of every principal local authority in England.

In broad terms, the objective of this 'periodic electoral review' of Spelthorne is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor on the Council is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries and the number of councillors, and propose the creation of new wards.

This report sets out our draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the Spelthorne area, and invites your comments. We have not yet decided on our final recommendations and wish to use this period to seek further evidence. We will be prepared to modify or change our draft recommendations in the light of views expressed if, in our judgement, the statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would be better served. Details of the draft recommendations and how to comment are set out in Chapters 4 and 5.

## SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Spelthorne on 2 September 1997.

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

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

- in three of the 15 wards, the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough;
- electoral equality is not expected to improve over the five-year period to 2002.

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figure 1 and paragraph 59) are that:

- Spelthorne Borough Council should be served by 39 councillors, one fewer than at present;
- there should be 13 wards, two fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of all existing wards should be modified;
- elections should continue to take place every four years.

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

- In all 13 wards, the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 2 per cent from the average for the borough.
- In 2002 the number of electors per councillor in all wards is expected to vary by no more than 8 per cent from the average for the borough.

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

- We will consult on our draft recommendations for eleven weeks from 17 March 1998.
- After considering local views, we will make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.
- It will then be for the Secretary of State to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations.
- The Secretary of State will determine when any changes come into effect.

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 1 June 1998:

Director of Reviews  
Spelthorne Review  
Local Government Commission for England  
Dolphyn Court  
10/11 Great Turnstile  
London WC1V 7JU

Figure 1:  
The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1 Ashford Common	3	Ashford Common ward (part); Ashford East ward (part)
2 Ashford East	3	Ashford East ward (part); Ashford Town ward (part)
3 Ashford North & Stanwell South	3	Ashford North ward (part); Stanwell South ward (part)
4 Ashford Town	3	Ashford North ward (part); Ashford Town ward (part); Ashford West ward (part)
5 Halliford & Sunbury West	3	Halliford & Sunbury West ward (part); Sunbury Common ward (part)
6 Laleham & Shepperton Green	3	Ashford Common ward (part); Ashford Town ward (part); Laleham ward (part); Shepperton Green ward
7 Riverside & Laleham	3	Laleham ward (part); Staines Town ward (part)
8 Shepperton Town	3	Halliford & Sunbury West ward (part); Shepperton Town ward
9 Staines	3	Ashford West ward (part); Staines Town ward (part); Staines East ward (part)
10 Staines South	3	Laleham ward (part); Staines Town ward (part); Staines East ward (part)
11 Stanwell North	3	Stanwell North ward; Stanwell South ward (part)
12 Sunbury Common	3	Ashford East ward (part); Sunbury Common ward (part)
13 Sunbury East	3	Halliford & Sunbury West ward (part); Sunbury East ward

Notes: 1 Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of this report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.  
2 Spelthorne Borough is entirely unparished.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for Spelthorne.

2 We are reviewing Spelthorne as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews of all principal local authority areas in England. This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Spelthorne. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in August 1975 (Report No. 46). The electoral arrangements of Surrey County Council were last reviewed in August 1980 (Report No. 394). We intend to review the County Council's electoral arrangements in due course.

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

- the statutory criteria in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (see Appendix B), i.e. 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 (see Appendix C).

4 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (published in March 1996 and supplemented in September 1996). This sets out our approach to the reviews.

5 The review is in four stages (Figure 2).

6 Stage One began on 2 September 1997, when we wrote to Spelthorne Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Surrey County Council, Surrey Police Authority, the Metropolitan Police, the local authority associations, the Member of Parliament and the Member of the European Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and other publicity, and invited Spelthorne Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 25 November 1997.

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

8 Stage Three began on 17 March 1998 and will end on 1 June 1998. This stage involves publishing the draft recommendations in this report and public consultation on them.

Figure 2:  
Stages of the Review

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

9 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and submit final recommendations to the Secretary of State. Interested parties will have a further six weeks to make representations to the Secretary of State. It will then be for him to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If the Secretary of State accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, he will make an order. The Secretary of State will determine when any changes come into effect.

## 2. CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

10 Spelthorne Borough is bounded to the south by the River Thames and to the north and east by the London boroughs of Hillingdon, Hounslow and Richmond-upon-Thames. The borough, with a population of some 90,000 covering 5,138 hectares, has a relatively high population density of just over 17 people per hectare. Sixty five per cent of the borough is designated Green Belt, with 18 per cent covered by reservoirs. The M3 and M25 motorways cross the borough, connecting Spelthorne with London and south-west England. Heathrow Airport abuts the northern boundary of the borough.

11 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'.

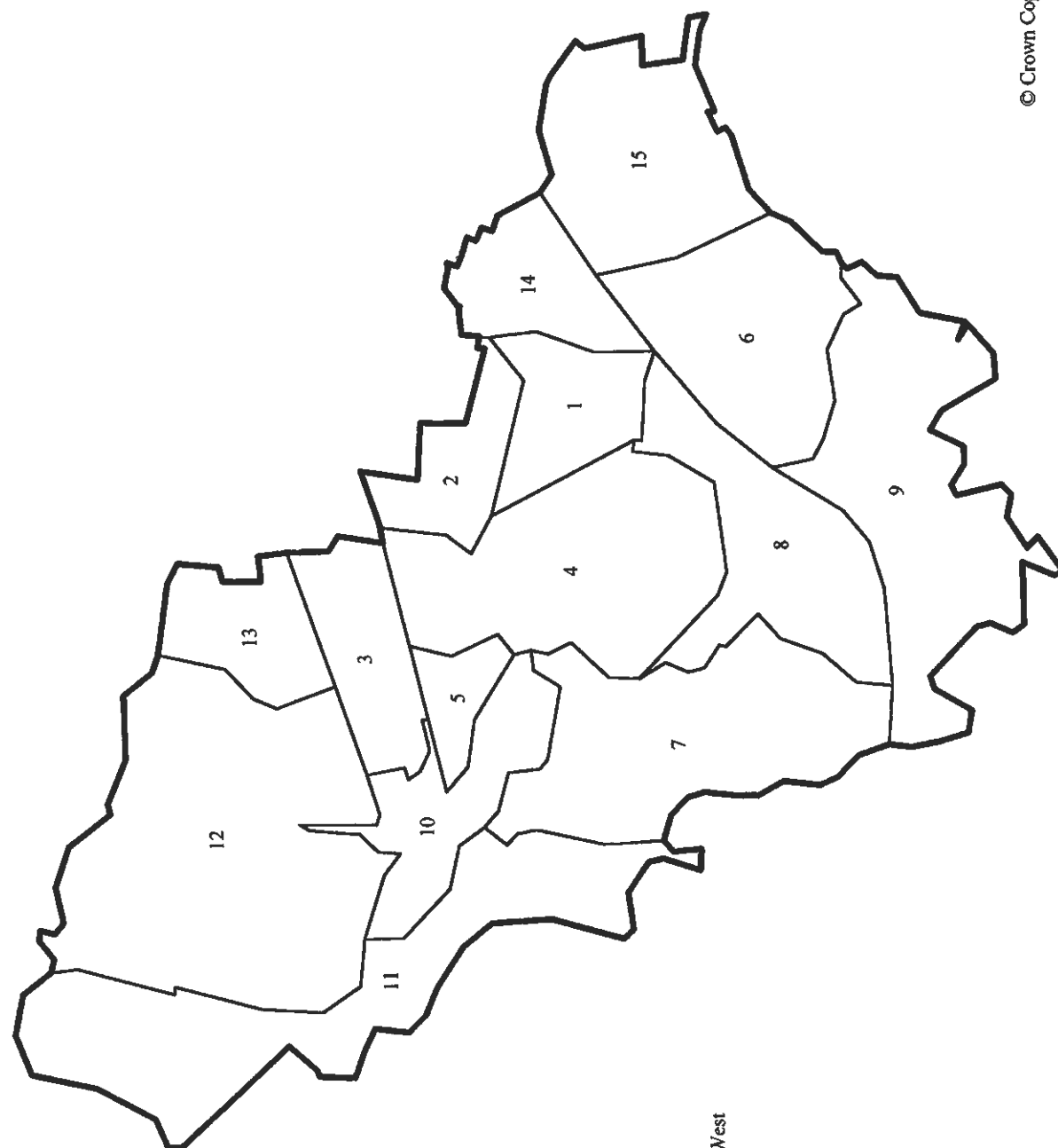
12 The electorate of the borough (February 1997) is 70,354. The Council presently has 40 councillors who are elected from 15 wards (Map 1 and Figure 3). Eleven wards are each represented by three councillors, three wards elect two councillors each, while the remaining ward, Ashford West, is a single-member ward. The whole council is elected together every four years.

13 Since the last electoral review two decades ago, there has been a very slight reduction in the size of the electorate (less than 1 per cent), excluding the Colnbrook area which was transferred to Berkshire in 1995. The Borough Council forecasts a further 2 per cent decrease in electorate by 2002, distributed throughout the borough.

14 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,759 electors, which the Council forecasts would decrease to 1,725 by the year 2002 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 three of the 15 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average. The worst imbalances are in Ashford East ward, where the number of electors per councillor is 15 per cent below the borough average, and Shepperton Green ward, where the number of electors per councillor is 15 per cent above the borough average.

Map 1:  
Existing Wards in Spelthorne



- Key to Wards
- 1 Ashford Common
  - 2 Ashford East
  - 3 Ashford North
  - 4 Ashford Town
  - 5 Ashford West
  - 6 Halliford and Sunbury West
  - 7 Laleham
  - 8 Shepperton Green
  - 9 Shepperton Town
  - 10 Staines East
  - 11 Staines Town
  - 12 Stanwell North
  - 13 Stanwell South
  - 14 Sunbury Common
  - 15 Sunbury East

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Figure 3:  
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1997)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Ashford Common	3	4,823	1,608	-9	4,700	1,567	-9
2 Ashford East	3	4,508	1,503	-15	4,300	1,433	-17
3 Ashford North	2	3,354	1,677	-5	3,350	1,675	-3
4 Ashford Town	3	5,636	1,879	7	5,450	1,817	5
5 Ashford West	1	1,931	1,931	10	1,850	1,850	7
6 Halliford & Sunbury West	3	5,012	1,671	-5	5,050	1,683	-2
7 Laleham	3	5,888	1,963	12	5,500	1,833	6
8 Shepperton Green	2	4,029	2,015	15	4,050	2,025	17
9 Shepperton Town	3	5,303	1,768	1	5,000	1,667	-3
10 Staines East	3	5,583	1,861	6	5,850	1,950	13
11 Staines Town	3	5,363	1,788	2	4,900	1,633	-5
12 Stanwell North	3	4,994	1,665	-5	5,100	1,700	-1
13 Stanwell South	2	3,382	1,691	-4	3,650	1,825	6
14 Sunbury Common	3	5,564	1,855	5	5,600	1,867	8
15 Sunbury East	3	4,984	1,661	-6	4,650	1,550	-10
<b>Totals</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>70,354</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>69,000</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>—</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>1,759</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>1,725</b>	<b>—</b>

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1997, electors in Shepperton Green ward were relatively under-represented by 15 per cent, while electors in Ashford East ward were relatively over-represented by 15 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

### 3. REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

15 At the start of the review, we invited members of the public and other interested parties to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Spelthorne Borough Council.

16 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met with officers from Spelthorne Borough Council. We are most grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance.

#### Spelthorne Borough Council

17 The Council consulted on three options, two based on the retention of a 40-member council, the other based on a 39-member council. The Borough Council consulted with 79 organisations and individuals including borough and county councillors.

18 **Option 1** based on a 40-member council representing 16 wards, provided a mixture of single- and multi-member wards. This scheme would result in the number of electors per councillor in all wards varying by less than 10 per cent from the borough average, both initially and in 2002.

19 **Option 2** based on a 40-member council representing 20 wards, also provided for a mixture of single- and multi-member wards. This scheme would ensure that the number of electors per councillor in all wards varied from the borough average by less than 10 per cent in 1997, but the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Stanwell East and Stanwell West wards would be 12 per cent above the borough average by 2002.

20 **Option 3** based on a council size of 39 members representing 13 three-member wards, would result in the best levels of electoral equality of the options put forward, the number of electors per councillor in all wards varying from the borough average by 2 per cent or less in 1997 and by 8 per cent or less by 2002.

21 As a result of the Council's consultation exercise, 13 responses were received. Each of the three options was supported by two consultees, six

respondents expressed support for retaining the current arrangements, while one respondent did not express a preference for a particular scheme. In the light of these responses the Council evaluated all the options and proposed that the current arrangements be retained.

22 The Council also put forward an alternative option. This was based mainly on **Option 2** (see above) but with a boundary modification between the proposed wards of Ashford Common and Sunbury Common, with the former being represented by three councillors and the latter being represented by two councillors – the reverse of the level of representation proposed in **Option 2**.

#### Spelthorne Borough Council Labour Group

23 The Labour Group expressed support for **Option 3** which provided for a 39-member council representing 13 three-member wards. It also expressed concern at the short time-scale given for the review.

#### Spelthorne Constituency Labour Party

24 The Spelthorne Constituency Labour Party also expressed support for **Option 3** arguing that it followed natural boundaries, achieved the "optimum electoral equality" and produced a standardised size of ward and councillor:elector ratio. It also contended that three-member wards would facilitate the introduction of annual elections.

25 The Labour Party expressed concern at the forecast reduction in electorate, stating that "in the constituency, with its highly developed transport network, imminent large-scale retail development, proximity to the expanding employment opportunities of Heathrow and easy access to London, we foresee an increase rather than a decrease in the population". It therefore based its arguments on "the known 1997 figures rather than those tentatively predicted" for 2002.



## Other Representations

<sup>26</sup> We received a further three representations during Stage One. The Hospital Alert Spelthorne Group expressed support for **Option 3**, as did two individual respondents.

## 4. ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

<sup>27</sup> As indicated previously, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Spelthorne is to achieve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria set out in the Local Government Act 1992 and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the ratio of electors to councillors being "as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough".

<sup>28</sup> However, our function is not merely arithmetical. First, 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. Second, we must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries, and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken. Third, we must consider the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the interests and identities of local communities.

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

<sup>30</sup> In our March 1996 *Guidance*, we expressed the view that "proposals for changes in electoral arrangements should be based on variations in each ward of no more than plus or minus 10 per cent from the average councillor:elector ratio for the authority, having regard to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates. Imbalances in excess of plus or minus 20 per cent may be acceptable, but only in highly exceptional circumstances ... and will have to be justified in full". However, as emphasised in our September 1996 supplement to the *Guidance*, while we accept that absolute equality of representation is likely to be unattainable, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept

to the minimum, such equality should be the starting point in any electoral review.

### Electorate Projections

<sup>31</sup> Spelthorne Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2002, projecting an overall decrease in the electorate of some 2 per cent from 70,354 to 69,000 over the five-year period from 1997 to 2002. Changes in the electorate are spread throughout the borough with the electorate increasing in some wards but decreasing in others, the net result being a decrease in total electorate. The Council has estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period. Advice from the Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

<sup>32</sup> During Stage One the Spelthorne Constituency Labour Party expressed concern over the projected decrease in population and electorate in the borough. However, the Borough Council's figures are based on advice from the County Council on the likely location and phasing of future housing development. We have also noted that since the last review the electorate has fallen, even when taking into account the loss of electorate when the Colnbrook area was transferred to Berkshire.

<sup>33</sup> We are aware that forecasting electorates is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the Council's forecast electorates, are content that its figures represent the best estimates that can be made at this time. We would, however, like to invite the Borough Council to consider their electorate forecasts further with the County Council and with respondents who have expressed concern.

### Council Size

<sup>34</sup> We indicated in our March 1996 *Guidance* that we would normally expect the number of councillors serving a borough council to be in the range of 30 to 60.

35 Spelthorne Borough Council presently has 40 members. During Stage One, the Council proposed retaining the current number of members, while the Spelthorne Borough Council Labour Group, the Spelthorne Constituency Labour Party, and the three further submissions all proposed a council size of 39 members.

36 Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we have concluded that the statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would best be met by a council size of 39 members.

## Electoral Arrangements

37 We are disappointed that, in the light of the Commission's stated objectives and the statutory framework within which the review takes place, the Borough Council proposed no change to the present electoral arrangements. The Council drew our attention to the relative stability of electoral arrangements since the last review in 1975 and the fact that, of 13 responses to its consultation, the largest number of responses (six) favoured no change.

38 While we recognise that electoral imbalances in the borough are less severe than in other districts in Surrey or elsewhere in the country, we have a statutory duty to review the electoral arrangements, to rectify any present imbalances which do exist and to ensure that the warding arrangements will continue to provide equality of representation for electors in Spelthorne, having regard to local circumstances. For this reason and in the light of the evidence currently available, we cannot recommend Spelthorne Borough Council's proposals for no change. We have sought to recommend alternative electoral arrangements which achieve an improved level of electoral equality while meeting our statutory criteria. We have therefore carefully considered the options which the Council put forward for consultation, and the other representations we received during Stage One of the review.

39 In terms of electoral equality, all three of the Council's initial options would improve on the current situation to a greater or lesser degree. The three options would result in the number of electors per councillor in all wards varying by less

than 10 per cent from the average initially, and both **Option 1** and **Option 3** would ensure the continuation of such levels of electoral equality over the ensuing five-year period. Under **Option 2**, two wards would have an electoral variance of over 10 per cent by 2002. The Council's proposed second preference, based upon its initial **Option 2**, would improve electoral equality initially, but by 2002 two wards would have an electoral variance of over 10 per cent.

40 While we have stated that the broad objective of the review is to ensure that the number of electors per councillor is as nearly as possible the same in each ward, we must also have regard to the statutory criteria, namely to respect local communities and to provide convenient and effective local government. While Spelthorne can be considered as a single semi-urban area today, it is clear that the borough consists of a number of different communities many of which have, over time, become joined. During Stage One of the review we received conflicting arguments as to the exact parameters of each community area and the extent to which the Council's initial options reflect these communities. Under the current arrangements, each of the five urban areas within the borough has almost its appropriate allocation of councillors with the exception of the Staines area which is slightly under-represented as a whole, having nine councillors. **Option 3** improves slightly on the distribution of councillors, allocating the correct number of councillors to each area given the relative size of the electorate.

41 We have also considered the distribution of councillors in each scheme. **Option 1**, **Option 2** and the Council's alternative preference would provide for a mixture of single- and multi-member wards, while **Option 3** proposed 13 three-member wards. While we would not wish to be prescriptive we recognise that the equalizing of electorate size between wards that would result under **Option 3** would provide a consistent pattern throughout the borough.

42 During Stage One we received five submissions in addition to that of the Borough Council, all of which supported **Option 3**. The Spelthorne Labour Group stated that **Option 3** best met the Commission's criteria, while the Spelthorne Constituency Labour Party contended that the scheme followed natural boundaries and provided for high levels of electoral equality, adding that the

allocation of three councillors per ward enabled constituents to be fully represented in committees dealing with the range of Council business. This option was also preferred by Hospital Alert Spelthorne Group and the two local residents who made submissions and who contended that it reflected natural communities, historical areas and geographical boundaries.

43 We also considered whether improvements might be made to **Option 3**, which would provide for more identifiable boundaries between a number of wards. We concluded, however, that the resulting effect on electoral equality was not justified. These arguments are discussed in more detail below.

44 Given the respective levels of electoral equality, the lack of detailed community evidence and the representations received, we put forward the Council's **Option 3** for consultation. The following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) the wards of Ashford Common, Ashford East, Ashford Town, Ashford West and Sunbury Common;
- (b) the wards of Ashford North, Stanwell North and Stanwell South;
- (c) the wards of Sunbury East, Halliford & Sunbury West and Shepperton Town;
- (d) the wards of Staines East, Staines Town, Laleham and Shepperton Green.

Details of our draft recommendations are set out in Figures 1 and 5, and illustrated in Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of this report.

### The wards of Ashford Common, Ashford East, Ashford Town, Ashford West and Sunbury Common

45 These five wards cover that part of Ashford to the south of the London/Staines railway line and that part of Sunbury to the north of the M3/Hanworth Road. The wards of Ashford Common and Ashford East are both relatively over-represented (by 9 per cent and 15 per cent respectively), while the wards of Ashford Town, Ashford West and Sunbury Common are relatively under-represented (by 7 per cent, 10 per cent and 5 per cent respectively).

46 **Option 3** would provide for four wards covering the majority of the area (generally north of the A308), and part of the current Ashford North ward. The number of electors per councillor in the modified ward of Ashford East would be 1 per cent below the borough average, while the number in the proposed wards of Ashford Common, Ashford Town and Sunbury Common would be almost equal to the average. This option was supported by five of the six respondents who made submissions directly to the Commission, and by two respondents to the Borough Council's own consultation exercise, although other respondents objected to the revised Ashford Town ward which would cross the railway line. However, by retaining the current boundary and increasing the electorate in the proposed Ashford North and Stanwell South ward, electoral equality in the two wards would deteriorate.

47 We have concluded that, while all the options have merit, **Option 3** provides for the best balance between the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

### The wards of Ashford North, Stanwell North and Stanwell South

48 These three wards, in the north-east corner of the borough, are all currently over-represented, Ashford North by 5 per cent, Stanwell North by 5 per cent and Stanwell South by 4 per cent (although this ward is forecast to be under-represented by 6 per cent by 2002 due to growth in the area).

49 Under **Option 3** this area would be covered by two three-member wards as opposed to the present two two-member wards and one three-member ward. The number of electors per councillor in the proposed ward of Ashford North & Stanwell South would be almost equal to the average, while in Stanwell North this figure would be 1 per cent above the average.

50 Some respondents opposed joining parts of Stanwell and Ashford in a single ward and moving the ward boundary away from the A30. The Stanwell area currently warrants between four and five councillors, and in order to achieve electoral equality in the area we have concluded that such warding is necessary. We have also considered the possibility of aligning the boundary between the proposed Ashford Town and Ashford North &

Stanwell South wards with the London/Staines railway line. This, again, would result in a deterioration of electoral equality, particularly by 2002. We have therefore concluded that the impact on community identity is justified given the improvements to electoral equality that would result.

### Sunbury East, Halliford & Sunbury West and Shepperton Town

51 The number of electors per councillor in these three wards, lying to the south of the M3 motorway, is 6 per cent below the average in Sunbury East ward, 5 per cent below the average in Halliford & Sunbury West ward and 1 per cent above the average in Shepperton Town ward.

52 Under **Option 3**, this area would continue to be covered by three three-member wards, but would additionally include an area to the north of the M3 currently in Sunbury Common ward. The number of electors per councillor in the three modified wards would be 2 per cent below the average in Sunbury East ward, and would almost equal the average in Halliford & Sunbury West and Shepperton Town wards.

53 While the M3 is a clear and identifiable boundary, in order to achieve improved electoral equality, we are proposing that the area to the south of the A308 and east of Windmill Road be included in the proposed Halliford & Sunbury West ward. In our opinion, Windmill Road provides easy access to the rest of the proposed ward and we are therefore putting these three wards, as proposed in **Option 3**, forward for consultation.

### The wards of Staines East, Staines Town, Laleham and Shepperton Green

54 These four wards are situated in the south and west of the borough. The number of electors per councillor is 6 per cent above the average in the current Staines East ward, 2 per cent above the average in Staines Town ward, 12 per cent above the average in Laleham ward and 15 per cent above the average in Shepperton Green ward.

55 Under **Option 3**, four new wards would be created: Laleham & Shepperton Green, Riverside

& Laleham, Staines and Staines South. Laleham & Shepperton Green ward would cover the area west of Ashford Road and south of the A308. Although the ward would be geographically large compared to other wards in the borough, much of the area would be covered by the Queen Mary Reservoir. The number of electors per councillor in the proposed ward would vary by 1 per cent above the borough average initially, and would be almost equal to it by 2002.

56 The remainder of the area would be covered by three wards, with the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Riverside & Laleham ward being 2 per cent above the borough average initially (3 per cent below the average in 2002); equalling the average in the proposed Staines ward (1 per cent below the average in 2002) and 1 per cent below the average in Staines South ward, both now and in 2002.

57 In the light of the good levels of electoral equality which would be achieved while taking into account the statutory criteria, we propose to consult on the new wards of Laleham & Shepperton Green, Riverside & Laleham, Staines and Staines South.

### Electoral Cycle

58 Spelthorne Borough Council proposed no change to the electoral cycle of the borough, while the Spelthorne Constituency Labour Party proposed a change to elections by thirds. We did not receive any other representations regarding the Council's electoral cycle. Given the general lack of support for a change to the electoral cycle we are recommending the continuation of whole council elections. We would welcome more views on this issue during Stage Three.

### Conclusions

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

- (a) there should be a decrease in council size from 40 to 39 members;
- (b) there should be 13 wards, two fewer than at present;

Figure 4:  
Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	1997 electorate		2002 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	40	39	40	39
Number of wards	15	13	15	13
Average number of electors per councillor	1,759	1,804	1,725	1,769
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	3	0	3	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	0	0	0	0

(c) the boundaries of all existing wards should be modified;

(d) elections should continue to be held on a whole-council basis.

60 We have examined alternative configurations of wards and communities in order to assess whether improved electoral equality could be obtained. However, we conclude that in many areas, any further improvements to electoral equality may be at the expense of the statutory criteria, namely having regard to the need to reflect community identities and interests and secure effective and convenient local government. We believe that our proposals strike a satisfactory balance of the criteria guiding our work.

61 Figure 4 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, as based on 1997 electorate figures and with forecast electorates for the year 2002.

62 As shown in Figure 4, our draft recommendations for Spelthorne Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from three to zero. This degree of electoral equality is forecast to continue over the five-year period to 2002. Our draft recommendations are set out in more detail in Figures 1 and 5, and illustrated in Map 2 and in the large map at the back of this report.

#### Draft Recommendation

Spelthorne Borough Council should comprise 39 councillors serving 13 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 5, and illustrated in Map 2 and in the large map at the back of this report. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections.

Map 2:  
The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Spelthorne

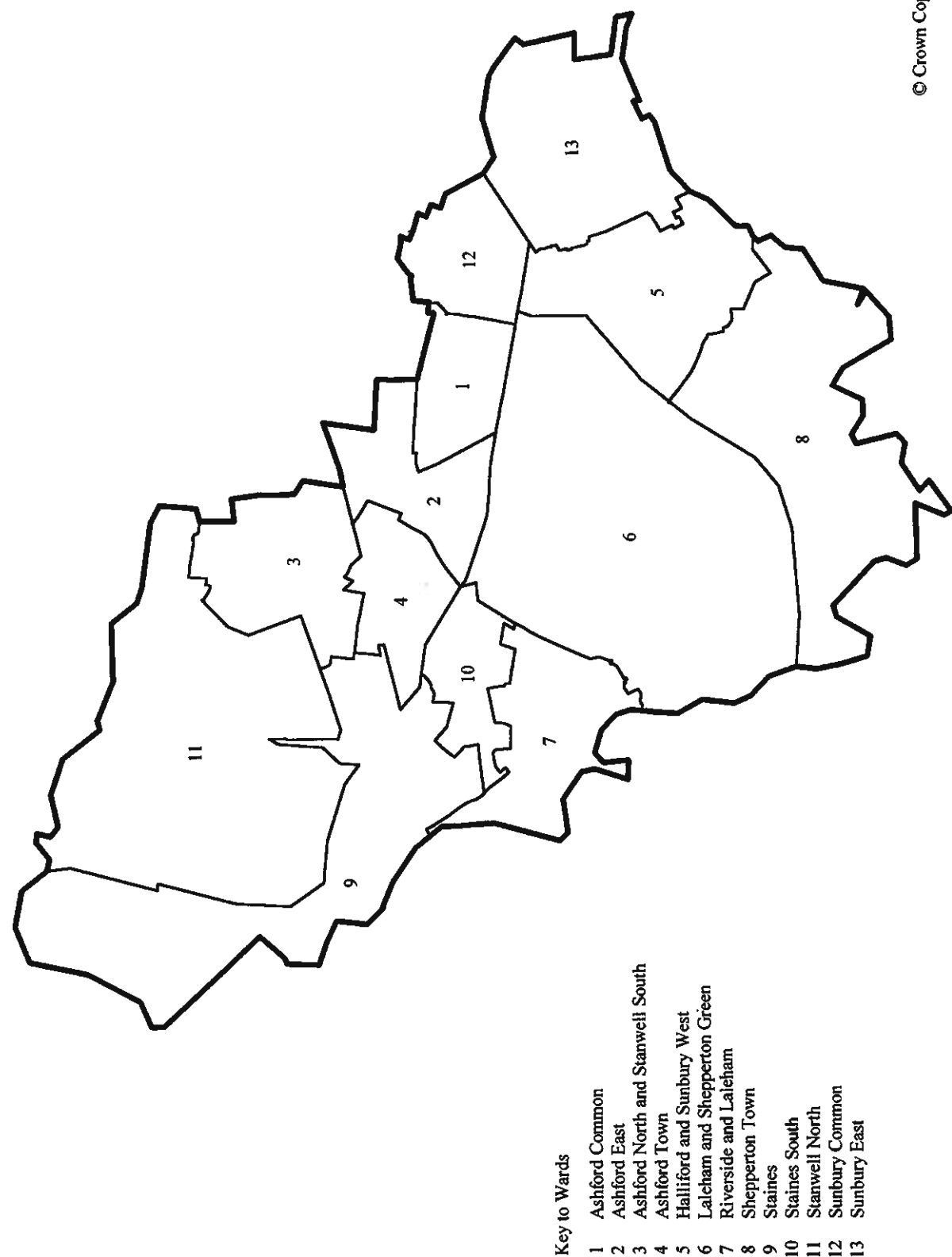


Figure 5:  
The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Spelthorne

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1997)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2002)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Ashford Common	3	5,403	1,801	0	5,210	1,737	-2
2 Ashford East	3	5,371	1,790	-1	5,190	1,730	-2
3 Ashford North & Stanwell South	3	5,411	1,804	0	5,610	1,870	6
4 Ashford Town	3	5,397	1,799	0	5,220	1,740	-2
5 Halliford & Sunbury West	3	5,421	1,807	0	5,480	1,827	3
6 Laleham & Shepperton Green	3	5,471	1,824	1	5,320	1,773	0
7 Riverside & Laleham	3	5,510	1,837	2	5,130	1,710	-3
8 Shepperton Town	3	5,409	1,803	0	5,190	1,730	-2
9 Staines	3	5,412	1,804	0	5,230	1,743	-1
10 Staines South	3	5,366	1,789	-1	5,280	1,760	-1
11 Stanwell North	3	5,453	1,818	1	5,710	1,903	8
12 Sunbury Common	3	5,403	1,801	0	5,430	1,810	2
13 Sunbury East	3	5,327	1,776	-2	5,000	1,667	-6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>70,354</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>69,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,804</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,769</b>	<b>-</b>

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

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

## 5. NEXT STEPS

<sup>63</sup> The Commission is putting forward draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Spelthorne. Now it is up to the people of the area. We will take fully into account all representations received by 1 June 1998. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment and a list of respondents will be available on request after the end of the consultation period.

<sup>64</sup> Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

Director of Reviews  
Spelthorne Review  
Local Government Commission for England  
Dolphyn Court  
10/11 Great Turnstile  
London WC1V 7JU

<sup>65</sup> In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered, before reporting finally to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to the Secretary of State, who cannot make an order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after he receives them.

## APPENDIX A

### **Draft Recommendations for Spelthorne: Detailed Mapping**

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the Commission's proposed warding arrangements for Spelthorne.

## APPENDIX B

### Scope of the Commission's Review: The Statutory Provisions The Local Government Acts 1972 and 1992

<sup>1</sup> Section 13(2) of the Local Government Act 1992 places a duty on the Commission to undertake periodic electoral reviews of each principal local authority area in England, and to make recommendations to the Secretary of State. Section 13(3) provides that, so far as reasonably practicable, the first such review of any area should be undertaken not less than 10 years, and not more than 15 years, after this Commission's predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), submitted an initial electoral review report on the county within which that area, or the larger part of the area, was located. This timetable applies to districts within shire and metropolitan counties, although not to South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear<sup>1</sup>. Nor does the timetable apply to London boroughs; the 1992 Act is silent on the timing of periodic electoral reviews in Greater London. Nevertheless, these areas will be included in the Commission's review programme. The Commission has no power to review the electoral arrangements of the City of London.

<sup>2</sup> Under section 13(5) of the 1992 Act, the Commission is required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State for any changes to the electoral arrangements within the areas of English principal authorities as appear desirable to it, having regard to the need to:

- (a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
- (b) secure effective and convenient local government.

<sup>3</sup> In reporting to the Secretary of State, the Commission may make recommendations for such changes to electoral arrangements as are specified in section 14(4) of the 1992 Act. In relation to principal authorities, these are:

- the total number of councillors to be elected to the council;
- the number and boundaries of electoral areas (wards or divisions);
- the number of councillors to be elected for each electoral area, and the years in which they are to be elected; and
- the name of any electoral area.

<sup>4</sup> Unlike the LGBC, the Commission may also make recommendations for changes in respect of electoral arrangements within parish and town council areas. Accordingly, in relation to parish or town councils within a principal authority's area, the Commission may make recommendations relating to:

- the number of councillors;
- the need for parish wards;
- the number and boundaries of any such wards;
- the number of councillors to be elected for any such ward or, in the case of a common parish, for each parish; and
- the name of any such ward.

<sup>5</sup> In conducting the review, section 27 of the 1992 Act requires the Commission to comply, so far as is practicable, with the rules given in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 for the conduct of electoral reviews. These are set out in Appendix C.

<sup>1</sup> The Local Government Boundary Commission did not submit reports on the counties of South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear

## APPENDIX C

### Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972: Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements

1 By virtue of section 27 of the Local Government Act 1992, in undertaking a review of electoral arrangements the Commission is required to comply so far as is reasonably practicable with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. For ease of reference, those provisions of Schedule 11 which are relevant to this review are set out below.

2 In relation to shire districts:

Having regard to any changes in the number or distribution of the local government electors of the district likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration (by the Secretary of State or the Commission):

- (a) the ratio of the number of local government electors to the number of councillors to be elected shall be, as nearly as may be, the same in every ward in the district;
- (b) in a district every ward of a parish council shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district;
- (c) in a district every parish which is not divided into parish wards shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district.

3 The Schedule also provides that, subject to (a) - (c) above, regard should be had to:

- (d) the desirability of fixing ward boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (e) any local ties which would be broken by the fixing of any particular ward boundary.

4 The Schedule provides that, in considering whether a parish should be divided into wards, regard shall be had to the questions whether:

- (f) the number or distribution of electors for the parish is such as to make a single election of parish councillors impracticable or inconvenient; and
- (g) it is desirable that any area or areas of the parish should be separately represented on the parish council.

5 Where it is decided to divide any such parish into parish wards, in considering the size and boundaries of the wards and in fixing the number of parish councillors to be elected for each ward, regard shall be had to:

- (h) any change in the number or distribution of electors of the parish which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration;
- (i) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (j) any local ties which will be broken by the fixing of any particular boundaries.

6 Where it is decided not to divide the parish into parish wards, in fixing the number of councillors to be elected for each parish, regard shall be had to the number and distribution of electors of the parish and any change which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the fixing of the number of parish councillors.