

Dear Sir / Madam

Review of electoral arrangements: Stockton-On-Tees limited further consultation

The Local Government Commission for England (LGCE) began a review of Stockton-on-Tees's electoral arrangements on 16 October 2001. As a consequence of the transfer of functions Order 2001, it now falls to us, the Boundary Committee for England, to complete the work of the LGCE. The BCFE published its draft recommendations on 14 May 2002, after which it undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

This letter summarises the issues arising in Ingleby Barwick during the PER and makes further draft recommendations for change. We will be consulting until 25 November 2002 on the contents of this letter.

Existing arrangements

The existing ward of Ingleby Barwick is represented by one councillor and comprises the parishes of Castlelevington, Hilton, Ingleby Barwick, Kirklevington and Maltby. It is currently substantially under-represented due to significant development within the parish boundaries of Ingleby Barwick and contains 356% more electors than the borough average. Under the revised projected electorate figures, this level of electoral inequality is forecast to worsen considerably by 2006; the variance is projected to be 498% more than the borough average.

Stage one

Stage One began on 16 October 2001, when the LGCE wrote to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. The Borough Council put forward two options in the Ingleby Barwick area. Option 1 was based on an increase of two in council size from 55 to 57, while Option 2 was based on an increase of one in council size from 55 to 56. Option 2 provided a better level of electoral equality than Option 1. The proposed warding arrangements of Ingleby Barwick East ward were identical under Option 1 and Option 2 of the Borough Council's submission. Ingleby Barwick East ward, containing an area of Ingleby

Barwick parish broadly to the east of Barwick way, would be represented by three councillors and, on the basis of the 2001 electorate, would respectively contain 35% and 37% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (11% and 12% fewer by 2006). Under Option 1 Ingleby Barwick West ward would be represented by three councillors and would contain an area of Ingleby Barwick parish broadly to the west of Barwick Way. Ingleby Barwick West ward would contain 28% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (15% fewer by 2006). Under Option 2 Ingleby Barwick West ward would be represented by three councillors and would contain the area described above and the parishes of Hilton and Maltby. It would contain 21% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (9% fewer by 2006).

We noted that the Borough Council's proposals had received a degree of local support and, as we mentioned above, that Option 2 provided for a better level of electoral equality than Option 1. We also noted that on the current and 2006 projected electorate (based on the figures available to us at this time), the parish of Ingleby Barwick was entitled to five borough councillors and not six as the Council proposed. We therefore based our draft recommendations on the Borough Council's Option 2 proposals. However, we proposed that the boundary between the two wards should be amended and that Ingleby Barwick East ward be represented by two councillors, instead of the proposed three councillors, to provide the correct allocation of councillors and better reflect the statutory criteria. Under the draft recommendations, the proposed wards of Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West would have 31% and 7% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (6% and 5% more by 2006).

Stage three

Stage three began on 14 May 2002 with the publication of the BCFE's report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Stockton-on-Tees* and ended on 8 July 2002. During this period, comments were sought from the public and any other interested parties on the preliminary conclusions. A copy of the report is available on the Committee's website at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Electorate forecasts

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council submitted revised projected electorate forecasts for the parish of Ingleby Barwick. It stated that by the time of publication of the 2006 electoral register, there would be a further increase of 954 electors, giving the parish a total electorate of 14,459 as opposed to the 13,505 stated in the Borough Council's original electorate projections at the start of Stage One. It argued that, under the revised electorate projections, the proposed Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards would merit six councillors by 2006 and not five, as proposed in the draft recommendations report. Under the Borough Council's revised projected electorate figures, Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards, as proposed in the draft recommendations report, would contain 57% more and 18% fewer electors per councillor by 2006.

The Conservative and Liberal Democrat groups, Ingleby Barwick Parish Council and a local resident each supported the Borough Council's revised electorate projections while the Labour Group supported the draft recommendations for Ingleby Barwick.

In light of the Borough Council's revised projected electorate figures for Ingleby Barwick, and the local support they received, we requested further evidence and argumentation on the revised figures because of the potential effects on the PER process. We received evidence from the Borough Council, the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat groups, Ingleby Barwick Parish Council, Councillor Beaumont (Ingleby Barwick ward) and a local resident.

We carefully considered the representations and further evidence and argumentation received in relation to Ingleby Barwick. We know that forecasting electorates is difficult. However, in the light of the Borough Council's revised electorate projections, the degree of local support for the Borough Council's Stage Three submission and the additional evidence received, the Committee was persuaded that they were the best estimates that could be reasonably made at that time.

Council size

In accepting the revised forecasts, under a council size of 55 Ingleby Barwick would be entitled to 5.6 councillors by 2006 (rounded up to six) rather than the five allocated in the draft recommendations report. Therefore, endorsing our draft recommendations for a council size of 55 would mean endorsing a misallocation of councillors which would not best reflect the statutory criteria. We considered the appropriate distribution of councillors between each of the distinct areas of the borough under a council size of 55 members. However, under a council size of 55 members no other distinct area was over-represented and each area had the correct allocation of councillors under the draft recommendations.

We then considered an increase of one in council size from 55 to 56 members. Under a council size of 56, the area covered by the proposed Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards would be entitled to 5.7 councillors by 2006 (rounded up to six). We also considered the effect that an increase of one in council size would have on councillor allocation in each of the distinct areas in the borough and whether or not the number of councillors in each area would best meet the statutory criteria. We found that the small increase in the 2006 projected electorate figures and in council size had little effect on councillor allocation and that each distinct area would still have the best councillor allocation. We therefore propose moving away from our draft recommendations to adopt a council size of 56 which, given the new evidence available to us, would provide the best balance of the statutory criteria.

We would welcome comments on this revised council size from all interested parties during this period of further consultation.

Further draft recommendations

We propose moving away from our draft recommendations to adopt a council size of 56 as this would provide the best allocation of councillors between distinct areas in Stockton-on-Tees. We have decided to further modify the proposed Ingleby Barwick wards to broadly reflect the Borough Council's Stage One proposal in this area which, given the new evidence, we now consider to better reflect the statutory criteria. We therefore propose that Ingleby Barwick East ward be represented by three councillors instead of the two councillors put forward in the draft recommendations report. We propose that Ingleby Barwick East ward contain Ingleby Barwick East parish ward and the parishes of Hilton and Maltby, that Ingleby Barwick West ward contain Ingleby Barwick West parish ward and that Barwick Way be used as the boundary between the two wards.

Under our further draft recommendations, as shown in Table 1, Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards would each be represented by three councillors and, on the basis of the 2001 electorate figures, would have 53% fewer and 5% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (2% fewer and 8% fewer by 2006). Our proposals are illustrated on the enclosed map. Under the further draft proposals, only one ward, Northern Parishes, would have an electoral variance of over 10% by 2006. This imbalance is unchanged

from our draft recommendations report. In 15 of the 26 proposed wards adopting a council size of 56 would actually improve electoral equality by 1% to 2%. In the remaining wards under a council size of 56, electoral equality would worsen by 1% to 2% (See Table 2).

We are therefore consulting only on a new council size of 56 members and the proposed changes to the electoral arrangements in Ingleby Barwick East and Ingleby Barwick West wards. We are not seeking comments on the draft recommendations for the rest of the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees. The remainder of the submissions received in response to the BCFE's draft recommendations report, which do not comment on Ingleby Barwick, will be dealt with at the close of this additional stage in the PER process when formulating our final recommendations.

There will now be a consultation period of six weeks, during which respondents are invited to comment on the new draft recommendations contained in this letter. 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 new draft recommendations.

We will take fully into account all submissions received by 25 November 2002. Any submissions received after this date may not be taken into account. Your views will be noted and taken into account by the Boundary Committee in formulating its final recommendations. 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.

Express your views by writing directly to us:

Team Leader
Stockton-on-Tees review
Boundary Committee
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Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW

In the light of the representations received, we will review these further draft recommendations to consider whether they should be adopted as part of our final recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations early next year 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.

Yours sincerely



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Table 1: Further draft recommendations for Stockton-on-Tees

	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.	Billingham Central	2	5,415	2,708	9	5,215	2,608	3
2.	Billingham East	2	5,084	2,542	3	4,898	2,449	-3
3.	Billingham North	3	7,252	2,417	-2	7,491	2,497	-1
4.	Billingham South	2	5,037	2,519	2	4,878	2,439	-4
5.	Billingham West	2	5,054	2,527	2	4,866	2,433	-4
6.	Egglescliffe & Preston	3	7,967	2,656	7	8,150	2,717	7
7.	Ingleby Barwick East	3	3,492	1,164	-53	7,466	2,489	-2
8.	Ingleby Barwick West	3	7,064	2,355	-5	6,993	2,331	-8
9.	Northern Parishes	1	1,734	1,734	-30	2,226	2,226	-12
10.	Norton North	2	5,094	2,547	3	5,084	2,542	0
11.	Norton South	2	5,311	2,656	7	5,193	2,597	3
12.	Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree	2	5,100	2,550	3	5,073	2,537	0
13.	Stockton Fairfield	2	5,073	2,537	3	4,885	2,443	-3
14.	Stockton Glebe	2	5,137	2,569	4	5,218	2,609	3
15.	Stockton Grangefield	2	4,934	2,467	0	4,937	2,469	-2
16.	Stockton Hardwick	2	5,196	2,598	5	5,214	2,607	3
17.	Stockton Hartburn	2	5,699	2,850	15	5,489	2,745	8
18.	Stockton Newton	2	5,234	2,617	6	5,011	2,506	-1
19.	Stockton Parkfield & Oxbridge	2	5,055	2,528	2	5,353	2,677	6

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 %
20. Stockton Roseworth	2	5,460	2,730	10	5,259	2,630	4
21. Stockton Town Centre	2	4,906	2,453	-1	5,397	2,699	7
22. Thornaby North	3	7,497	2,499	-1	7,208	2,403	-5
23. Thornaby South	2	5,134	2,567	4	4,947	2,474	-2
24. Thornaby West	2	5,027	2,514	2	4,918	2,459	-3
25. Western Parishes	1	2,494	2,494	1	2,460	2,460	-3
26. Yarm	3	8,123	2,708	9	7,892	2,631	4
Totals	56	138,573	-	-	141,721	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,475	-	-	2,531	-

Table 2: Comparison of electoral variances under draft and further draft recommendations

Ward name	Number of councillors	Draft Recommendations Variance from average % (2006)	Number of councillors	Further Draft Recommendations Variance from average % (2006)
1. Billingham Central	2	2	2	3
2. Billingham East	2	-4	2	-3
3. Billingham North	3	-2	3	-1
4. Billingham South	2	-5	2	-4
5. Billingham West	2	-5	2	-4
6. Egglecliffe & Preston	3	6	3	7
7. Ingleby Barwick East	2	6	3	-2
8. Ingleby Barwick West	3	5	3	-8
9. Northern Parishes	1	-13	1	-12
10. Norton North	2	-1	2	0
11. Norton South	2	1	2	3
12. Stockton Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree	2	-1	2	-3
13. Stockton Fairfield	2	-5	2	0
14. Stockton Glebe	2	2	2	3
15. Stockton Grangefield	2	-4	2	-2
16. Stockton Hardwick	2	2	2	3
17. Stockton Hartburn	2	7	2	8
18. Stockton Newton	2	-2	2	-1
19. Stockton Parkfield & Oxbridge	2	5	2	6

Ward name	Number of councillors	Draft Recommendations Variance from average % (2006)	Number of councillors	Further Draft Recommendations Variance from average % (2006)
20. Stockton Roseworth	2	3	2	4
21. Stockton Town Centre	2	5	2	7
22. Thornaby North	3	-6	3	-5
23. Thornaby South	2	-3	2	-2
24. Thornaby West	2	-4	2	-3
25. Western Parishes	1	-4	1	-3
26. Yarm	3	3	3	4
Council size	55	-	56	-

Detail Map: Proposed warding of Ingleby Barwick Parish