

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Wealden in East Sussex

Report to the Secretary of State for
Transport, Local Government and the Regions

August 2001

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WHAT IS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND?

The Local Government Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament. Our task is to review and make recommendations to the Government on whether there should be changes to local authorities' electoral arrangements.

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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, ward names and the frequency of elections. We can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils.

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Wealden in East Sussex.

SUMMARY

We began a review of Wealden's electoral arrangements on 25 July 2000. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 20 February 2001, after which we undertook a nine-week period of consultation.

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

We found that the existing arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Wealden:

- **in 20 of the 34 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and 12 wards vary by more than 20 per cent;**
- **by 2005 this situation is expected to deteriorate, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the district average in 21 wards and by more than 20 per cent in 12 wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 106–107) are that:

- **Wealden District Council should have 55 councillors, three fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 35 wards, instead of 34 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 32 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one, and two wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **whole council elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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

- **In all of the proposed 35 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 9 per cent from the district average, both initially and by 2005.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Crowborough, Hailsham, Heathfield & Waldron, Polegate and Uckfield;**

- **new warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Hartfield, Maresfield, Mayfield & Five Ashes, Rotherfield and Warbleton;**
- **an increase in the number of councillors serving Maresfield and Warbleton parish councils;**
- **a reduction in the number of councillors serving Crowborough and Uckfield town councils.**

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, who will not make an Order implementing them before 18 September 2001:

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

Table 1: Final Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Alfriston	1	the parishes of Alciston, Alfriston, Berwick, Chalvington with Ripe and Selmeston	Map 2
2	Buxted & Maresfield	2	the parishes of Buxted and Hadlow Down and part of Maresfield parish (the proposed Maresfield parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A4
3	Chiddingly & East Hoathly	1	the parishes of Chiddingly, East Hoathly and Laughton	Map 2
4	Cross in Hand/ Five Ashes	1	part of Heathfield & Waldron parish (the proposed Cross in Hand parish ward) and part of Mayfield & Five Ashes parish (the proposed Five Ashes parish ward)	Map 2, Map A5 and Large Map
5	Crowborough East	2	part of Crowborough town (the proposed East parish ward)	Map 2 and Large Map
6	Crowborough Jarvis Brook	1	part of Crowborough town (the proposed Jarvis Brook parish ward)	Map 2 and Large Map
7	Crowborough North	2	part of Crowborough town (the proposed North parish ward)	Map 2 and Large Map
8	Crowborough St Johns	1	part of Crowborough town (the proposed St Johns parish ward)	Map 2 and Large Map
9	Crowborough West	2	part of Crowborough town (the proposed West parish ward)	Map 2 and Large Map
10	Danehill/ Fletching/ Nutley	2	the parishes of Danehill, Fletching, Isfield, Little Horsted and part of Maresfield parish (the proposed Nutley parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A3
11	East Dean	1	the parishes of Cuckmere Valley, East Dean & Friston and Long Man	Map 2
12	Forest Row	2	the parish of Forest Row and part of Hartfield parish (the proposed Holtye parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A2
13	Framfield	1	the parish of Framfield and part of Heathfield & Waldron parish (the proposed Waldron parish ward)	Map 2 and Large Map
14	Frant/ Withyham	2	the parishes of Frant, Withyham and part of Rotherfield parish (the proposed Eridge & Mark Cross parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A8
15	Hailsham Central & North	2	part of Hailsham town (the proposed Central & North parish ward)	Map 2 and Large Map
16	Hailsham East	1	part of Hailsham town (the proposed East parish ward)	Map 2 and Large Map

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
17	Hailsham South & West	3	part of Hailsham town (the proposed South & West parish ward)	Map 2 and Large Map
18	Hartfield	1	part of Hartfield parish (the proposed Hartfield parish ward) and part of Maresfield parish (the proposed Fairwarp parish ward)	Map 2 and Maps A2-A4
19	Heathfield East	1	part of Heathfield parish (the proposed East parish ward) and part of Warbleton parish (the proposed Warbleton parish ward)	Map 2, Map A9 and Large Map
20	Heathfield North & Central	3	part of Heathfield parish (the proposed Heathfield parish ward)	Map 2 and Large Map
21	Hellingly	2	the parishes of Arlington, Hellingly and part of Hailsham town (Upper Horsebridge parish ward)	Map 2 and Large Map
22	Herstmonceux	1	the parish of Hertsmonceux and part of Warbleton parish (the proposed Bodle Street Green parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A9
23	Horam	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parish of Horam	Map 2
24	Mayfield	1	part of Mayfield & Five Ashes parish (the proposed Mayfield parish ward)	Map 2, Maps A5-A6 and Large Map
25	Ninfield & Hooe with Wartling	1	the parishes of Hooe, Ninfield and Wartling	Map 2
26	Pevensey & Westham	3	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Pevensey and Westham	Map 2
27	Polegate North	2	part of Polegate town (the proposed North parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A7
28	Polegate South	1	part of Polegate town (the proposed South parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A7
29	Rotherfield	1	part of Rotherfield parish (the proposed Rotherfield parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A8
30	Uckfield Central	1	part of Uckfield town (the proposed Central parish ward)	Map 2 and Large Map
31	Uckfield New Town	1	part of Uckfield town (the proposed New Town parish ward)	Map 2 and Large Map
32	Uckfield North	2	part of Uckfield town (the proposed North parish ward)	Map 2 and Large Map
33	Uckfield Ridgewood	1	part of Uckfield town (the proposed Ridgewood parish ward)	Map 2 and Large Map

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
34	Wadhurst	2	the parish of Wadhurst and part of Mayfield & Five Ashes parish (the proposed Rusher's Cross parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A6
35	Willingdon	3	the parish of Willingdon & Jevington and part of Polegate town (the proposed Watermill parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A7

Notes: 1 The whole district is parished

2 Map 2 and Appendix A, including the large map in the back of the report, illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.

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: Final Recommendations for Wealden

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Alfriston	1	2,032	2,032	0	2,055	2,055	-2
2 Buxted & Maresfield	2	4,072	2,036	0	4,144	2,072	-1
3 Chiddingly & East Hoathly	1	2,183	2,183	7	2,273	2,273	9
4 Cross in Hand/Five Ashes	1	2,008	2,008	-2	2,047	2,047	-2
5 Crowborough East	2	3,879	1,940	-5	4,029	2,015	-4
6 Crowborough Jarvis Brook	1	2,019	2,019	-1	2,095	2,095	0
7 Crowborough North	2	3,993	1,997	-2	4,143	2,072	-1
8 Crowborough St Johns	1	1,970	1,970	-4	2,048	2,048	-2
9 Crowborough West	2	3,952	1,976	-3	4,100	2,050	-2
10 Danehill/Fletching/Nutley	2	4,030	2,015	-1	4,136	2,068	-1
11 East Dean	1	1,952	1,952	-4	2,007	2,007	-4
12 Forest Row	2	3,935	1,968	-4	3,978	1,989	-5
13 Framfield	1	2,132	2,132	4	2,163	2,163	4
14 Frant/Withyham	2	3,906	1,953	-4	3,981	1,991	-5
15 Hailsham Central & North	2	4,373	2,187	7	4,453	2,227	7
16 Hailsham East	1	2,093	2,093	3	2,143	2,143	3
17 Hailsham South & West	3	6,362	2,121	4	6,424	2,141	2
18 Hartfield	1	2,080	2,080	2	2,114	2,114	1
19 Heathfield East	1	1,898	1,898	-7	1,934	1,934	-7
20 Heathfield North & Central	3	5,902	1,967	-4	6,033	2,011	-4
21 Hellingly	2	4,041	2,021	-1	4,245	2,123	2
22 Herstmonceux	1	2,049	2,049	0	2,067	2,067	-1
23 Horam	1	2,066	2,066	1	2,127	2,127	2
24 Mayfield	1	2,040	2,040	0	2,084	2,084	0

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
25 Ninfield & Hooe with Wartling	1	1,868	1,868	-9	1,900	1,900	-9
26 Pevensey & Westham	3	6,593	2,198	8	6,855	2,285	9
27 Polegate North	2	4,040	2,020	-1	4,121	2,061	-1
28 Polegate South	1	2,014	2,014	-1	2,074	2,074	-1
29 Rotherfield	1	1,954	1,954	-4	1,983	1,983	-5
30 Uckfield Central	1	2,182	2,182	7	2,220	2,220	6
31 Uckfield New Town	1	1,952	1,952	-4	1,972	1,972	-6
32 Uckfield North	2	4,444	2,222	9	4,518	2,259	8
33 Uckfield Ridgewood	1	2,166	2,166	6	2,185	2,185	5
34 Wadhurst	2	4,005	2,003	-2	4,096	2,048	-2
35 Willingdon	3	6,115	2,038	0	6,159	2,053	-2
Totals	55	112,300	-	-	114,905	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,042	-	-	2,089	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Wealden District 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 district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Wealden in East Sussex. We have now reviewed the five two-tier districts in East Sussex and the unitary authority of Brighton & Hove as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to finish in 2004.

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Wealden. Wealden's last review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in April 1979 (Report no. 327). The electoral arrangements of East Sussex County Council were last reviewed in August 1981 (Report no. 417). We intend reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992, 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* contained in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Full details of the legislation under which we work are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (fourth edition published in December 2000). This *Guidance* sets out our approach to the reviews.

5 Our task is to make recommendations to the Secretary of State 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 and town councils in the district.

6 In our *Guidance*, we state that we wish wherever possible to build on schemes which have been prepared locally on the basis of careful and effective consultation. Local interests are normally in a better position to judge what council size and ward configuration are most likely to secure effective and convenient local government in their areas, while also reflecting the identities and interests of local communities.

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

8 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council

size will need to be fully justified. In particular, we do not accept that an increase in 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.

9 In July 1998, the Government published a White Paper called *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, i.e. in year one, half of the district council would be elected, in year two, half the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities. The proposals were taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, provides that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities' electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Orders under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in the two-tier district areas, and our current *Guidance*.

10 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 25 July 2000, when we wrote to Wealden District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified East Sussex County Council, Sussex Police Authority, the local authority associations, East Sussex Association of Parish Councils, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituencies in the district, the Members of the European Parliament for the South East region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 16 October 2000. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

11 Stage Three began on 20 February 2001 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Wealden in East Sussex*, and ended on 23 April 2001. During this period we sought comments from the public and any other interested parties on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

12 Wealden borders Surrey and Kent in the north, West Sussex in the west and the English Channel in the south. It is also bordered by the East Sussex districts of Lewes, Eastbourne and Rother to the west, south and east, respectively. Wealden has a population of some 139,950, making it the largest district in East Sussex, and covers an area of 83,659 hectares. The district includes the towns of Crowborough, Hailsham and Uckfield, with the High Weald and Ashdown Forest in the north of the district, and Pevensey levels, Sussex Downs and Cuckmere Valley to the south. The district contains 42 parishes and is entirely parished.

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

14 The electorate of the district is 112,300 (February 2000). The Council presently has 58 members who are elected from 34 wards. Four of the wards are each represented by three councillors, 16 are each represented by two councillors and 14 are single-member wards. The whole council is elected every four years.

15 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Wealden district, with around 17 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Uckfield and Hailsham South & West wards, which have 79 per cent and 57 per cent more electors than 20 years ago.

16 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,936 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,981 by the year 2005 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 20 of the 34 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, 12 wards by more than 20 per cent and six wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Uckfield ward where each of the three councillors represents 85 per cent more electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Wealden

Table 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Alfriston	1	1,507	1,507	-22	1,537	1,537	-22
2 Arlington	1	1,828	1,828	-6	1,856	1,856	-6
3 Buxted	2	3,131	1,566	-19	3,181	1,591	-20
4 Chiddingly & East Hoathly	1	1,755	1,755	-9	1,841	1,841	-7
5 Crowborough East	2	5,279	2,640	36	5,430	2,715	37
6 Crowborough North	2	4,562	2,281	18	4,740	2,370	20
7 Crowborough St Johns	1	1,809	1,809	-7	1,844	1,844	-7
8 Crowborough West	2	4,163	2,082	8	4,400	2,200	11
9 Danehill	1	1,501	1,501	-22	1,528	1,528	-23
10 East Dean	1	1,493	1,493	-23	1,521	1,521	-23
11 Fletching	1	1,428	1,428	-26	1,466	1,466	-26
12 Forest Row	2	3,709	1,855	-4	3,750	1,875	-5
13 Framfield	1	1,475	1,475	-24	1,494	1,494	-25
14 Frant	1	1,090	1,090	-44	1,105	1,105	-44
15 Hailsham Central & North	2	3,537	1,769	-9	3,574	1,787	-10
16 Hailsham East	2	3,880	1,940	0	3,981	1,991	0
17 Hailsham South & West	2	5,304	2,652	37	5,358	2,679	35
18 Hartfield	1	1,692	1,692	-13	1,713	1,713	-14
19 Heathfield	3	5,437	1,812	-6	5,555	1,852	-7
20 Hellingly	2	3,732	1,866	-4	3,932	1,966	-1
21 Herstmonceux	2	3,242	1,621	-16	3,283	1,642	-17
22 Horam	1	2,066	2,066	7	2,127	2,127	7
23 Maresfield	2	2,656	1,328	-31	2,734	1,367	-31
24 Mayfield	2	2,770	1,385	-28	2,825	1,413	-29
25 Ninfield	1	1,575	1,575	-19	1,605	1,605	-19
26 Pevensey & Westham	3	6,593	2,198	14	6,855	2,285	15
27 Polegate North	2	3,618	1,809	-7	3,687	1,844	-7
28 Polegate South	2	3,249	1,625	-16	3,344	1,672	-16

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
29 Rotherfield	1	2,587	2,587	34	2,626	2,626	33
30 Uckfield	3	10,744	3,581	85	10,895	3,632	83
31 Wadhurst	2	3,799	1,900	-2	3,890	1,945	-2
32 Waldron	2	3,604	1,802	-7	3,672	1,836	-7
33 Willingdon	3	5,302	1,767	-9	5,323	1,774	-10
34 Withyham	1	2,183	2,183	13	2,233	2,233	13
Totals	58	112,300	-	-	114,905	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,936	-	-	1,981	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Wealden District 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 district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2000, electors in Maresfield ward were relatively over-represented by 31 per cent, while electors in Uckfield ward were significantly under-represented by 85 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

17 During Stage One we received five representations, including a district-wide scheme from Wealden District Council, and representations from four parish and town councils. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Wealden in East Sussex*.

18 Our draft recommendations were based on the District Council's proposals, which provided a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the existing arrangements. However, to improve electoral equality further and having regard to local community identities and interests, we decided to move away from the District Council's proposals in one area, reflecting Buxted Parish Council's submission, and also proposed minor modifications to its proposed boundaries, in Crowborough, Hailsham and Uckfield, in order that they were tied to ground detail. We proposed that:

- Wealden District Council should be served by 55 councillors, compared with the current 58, representing 35 wards, one more than at present;
- the boundaries of 32 of the existing wards should be modified, while two wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- there should be revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Crowborough, Hailsham, Heathfield & Waldron, Polegate and Uckfield, new warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Hartfield, Maresfield, Mayfield & Five Ashes, Rotherfield and Warbleton, an increase in the number of councillors serving Maresfield and Warbleton parish councils and a reduction in the number of councillors serving Crowborough and Uckfield town councils.

Draft Recommendation

Wealden District Council should comprise 55 councillors, serving 35 wards. The whole council should continue to be elected every four years.

19 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in all of the proposed 35 wards varying by no more than 9 per cent from the district average, both initially and by 2005.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

20 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, we received 29 representations. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Wealden District Council.

Wealden District Council

21 The District Council supported our draft recommendations, subject to three minor amendments. Firstly, they requested that Hilders Farm Close be transferred to the proposed Crowborough North ward in anticipation of further residential development taking place in the rear gardens of the Crowborough Hill properties backing onto the Close. Secondly, they proposed that the proposed Pevensey/Ninfield ward be named Ninfield ward, and that the proposed parish ward in Hartfield parish be named Holtye parish ward instead of Hammerwood parish ward.

The Liberal Democrat Group of Wealden District Councillors

22 The Liberal Democrat Group of Wealden District Councillors ('The Liberal Democrats') supported the draft recommendations for Wealden, subject to an amendment to the proposed two-member Buxted & Maresfield ward. They proposed two single-member wards of Maresfield and Buxted/Hadlow Down.

Parish and Town Councils

23 Buxted Parish Council, Framfield Parish Council, Hadlow Down Parish Council, Hailsham Town Council and Willingdon & Jevington Parish Council all supported our draft recommendations for their respective parishes. Ninfield Parish Council and Pevensey Parish Council proposed alternative ward names for Pevensey/Ninfield district ward.

24 Arlington Parish Council objected to the proposals for the proposed Hellingly ward. Frant Parish Council objected to the draft recommendations for the proposed Frant/Withyham ward, arguing that the ward would be "too large and diverse". It expressed support for the District Council's alternative Stage One scheme.

25 Chalvington with Ripe Parish Council objected to our proposed Alfriston ward. It proposed an alternative ward which would combine the parish with Chiddingly, East Hoathly and Laughton parishes. Chiddingly Parish Council objected to the proposed Chiddingly & East Hoathly ward, and proposed retaining the existing warding arrangements.

26 Hartfield Parish Council objected to the proposed warding of the parish. However, it stated that if the parish was to be warded, that the name should be changed from Hammerwood parish ward to Holtye parish ward. It also objected to the proposed increase in parish councillors from 13 to 14. Heathfield & Waldron Parish Council objected to our draft recommendations for the area covered by the parish, and proposed an alternative scheme for the parish and surrounding area based upon three two-member wards. Maresfield Parish Council objected to the draft recommendations to ward the parish, and stated its preference for the existing Maresfield ward to be retained. Alternatively, it would

accept the District Council's alternative Stage One option of placing Maresfield in a ward with part of Buxted parish.

27 Polegate Town Council objected to the draft recommendations for the town, as it considered that they did "not show any regard to local circumstances". It proposed instead splitting Polegate into three wards of approximately equal numbers. Rotherfield Parish Council objected to the proposals to ward the parish. It proposed that the whole parish be represented by a single councillor. It also proposed that the council size be reduced from 58 to 45 members, in order to achieve "parity of representation across the District" and also reduce costs.

Other Representations

28 A further 11 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from local organisations, councillors and residents.

29 Hailsham East Community Partnership (HECP) objected to our proposed Hailsham East ward as it considered that the proposals would isolate the Town Farm Estate, and "adversely affect the socio-economic mix of the ward." It proposed retaining the existing warding arrangements.

30 Councillors Murphy and Coltman (County Councillor for Hailsham and District Councillor for Hailsham East ward respectively) also objected to our proposals for Hailsham East for the same socio-economic reasons. Both councillors provided different alternative schemes for the town, based on different boundaries. Councillors Mrs Blaxland, Mrs Clark, Mrs Kirkpatrick and Mr Simmons objected to our proposals for Heathfield & Waldron parish and the surrounding area. They proposed a broadly similar scheme to the parish council, which they considered better reflected community identity within the area. Councillor Wilkinson objected to our proposed for Frant/Withyham ward. He proposed that the Commission adopt the alternative Stage One District Council scheme for the area. Councillor Mrs Williamson objected to our draft recommendations for Polegate, believing they would confuse the electorate.

31 Finally, five local residents objected to our proposals for Hailsham East, reiterating the arguments of HECP and the two councillors detailed above. Three residents supported Councillor Coltman's alternative arrangements, and another local resident suggested several other alternative warding arrangements for the town.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

33 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 also must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

34 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.

35 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the 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

36 The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 2 per cent from 112,300 to 114,905 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expected most of the growth to be in Pevensey & Westham ward, although a significant amount was also expected in Crowborough West and Hellingly wards. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the District Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries was obtained. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that forecasting electorates is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the District Council’s figures, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at this time.

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

Council Size

38 As already explained, we start by assuming that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although we are willing to carefully look at arguments why this might not be the case.

39 In our draft recommendations report we adopted the Council's proposal for a council size of 55. Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 55 members.

40 During Stage Three, we received representations regarding council size from Buxted and Rotherfield parish councils. Buxted Parish Council supported our proposed reduction in council size to 55. Rotherfield Parish Council proposed that the council size should be further reduced to 45 to "achieve parity of representation across the District" as well as reducing costs. However, in the absence of any other objections to our proposed council size, and the lack of support for a significant reduction to 45, we propose confirming our draft recommendation for a council size of 55 as final.

Electoral Arrangements

41 At Stage One, we carefully considered the District Council's 55-member scheme, together with other submissions which we received. In view of the cross-party support which the Council's proposals achieved, and the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, we concluded that we should base our draft recommendations on the District Council's scheme, with the exception of one area where we moved away from the District Council's proposals to reflect Buxted Parish Council's submission. In addition, we proposed minor modifications to its proposed boundaries in order to ensure that they were tied to ground detail in three areas.

42 We have reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. A number of submissions were received commenting on the proposals for the town of Hailsham. However, the most significant issue for the district as a whole was the amount of parish warding required to facilitate our proposals. While we recognise that there have been a number of objections raised regarding this issue, rural sparsity and the configuration of the rural parishes within the Wealden area means that parish warding is necessary in order to secure the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria for the district as a whole. However, the integrity of the parishes is not affected by the process of parish warding. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Crowborough (four wards);
- (b) Hailsham (three wards);
- (c) Polegate North, Polegate South and Willingdon wards;
- (d) Uckfield ward;
- (e) Frant, Rotherfield and Withyham wards;
- (f) Framfield, Heathfield, Mayfield, Wadhurst and Waldron wards;
- (g) Buxted, Danehill, Fletching, Forest Row, Hartfield and Maresfield wards;
- (h) Alfriston, Arlington, Chiddingly & East Hoathly, East Dean and Hellingly wards;
- (i) Herstmonceux, Horam, Ninfield and Pevensy & Westham wards.

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

Urban wards

Crowborough (four wards)

44 The town of Crowborough is situated in the north of the district and is bounded by the parishes of Withyham, Rotherfield, Buxted and Maresfield. The town is represented by four district wards: Crowborough St Johns ward is represented by a single member, while Crowborough East, Crowborough North and Crowborough West wards are each represented by two members. The number of electors per councillor is 36 per cent above the district average in Crowborough East ward (37 per cent above by 2005), 18 per cent above in Crowborough North ward (20 per cent above by 2005), 7 per cent below in Crowborough St Johns ward (unchanged by 2005) and 8 per cent above in Crowborough West ward (11 per cent above by 2005).

45 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we based our draft recommendations largely on the District Council's scheme for Crowborough, noting Crowborough Town Council's support for the proposals during the local consultation exercise and the improved levels of electoral equality which would be achieved. This scheme proposed that Crowborough be represented by eight members, one more than at present, serving five wards, an increase of one. The District Council proposed that the two-member Crowborough West ward be modified in the north, so that the area north of Saxonbury Close and east of Croft Road be transferred to Crowborough North ward. It proposed that the single-member Crowborough St Johns ward be extended to include that part of Crowborough North ward west of London Road and Norbury Close. A revised two-member Crowborough North ward would be further modified to the south so that the boundary followed Montargis Way, the rear of properties on Beeches Farm Road, then along Hilders Farm Close and the rear of properties on Loxfield Gardens. To the east of the town, the District Council proposed a new single-member Crowborough Jarvis Brook ward, comprising parts of Crowborough East and Crowborough North wards. The ward boundary would run to the west of Shawfield, Rochester Way, Osborne Hill and Windsor Court, then follow the railway line south from Crowborough Station. The revised Crowborough East ward would continue to be represented by two members.

46 We noted that the existing boundary between Crowborough St Johns and Crowborough West wards, which the District Council proposed retaining, followed features that no longer exist. We also noted that under the District Council's proposals, the properties on Hilders Farm Close would have no direct vehicular access to the remainder of Crowborough North ward and the properties on Osborne Road would have no direct vehicular access to the remainder of Crowborough East ward. We therefore proposed minor modifications to the District Council's proposals for Crowborough as part of our draft recommendations, which would not impact significantly on electoral variances. We proposed amending the boundary between the proposed Crowborough St Johns and Crowborough West ward in four areas, to follow ground detail. We also proposed amending the proposed boundary between Crowborough East and Crowborough North wards to include all of Hilders Farm Close in Crowborough East ward. Additionally, we proposed modifying the boundary between Crowborough East and Crowborough Jarvis Brook wards to include all of Osborne Road in Crowborough Jarvis Brook ward.

47 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent below the district average in Crowborough East ward (4 per cent below by 2005), 1 per cent below in Crowborough Jarvis Brook ward (equal to the average by 2005), 2 per cent below in Crowborough

North ward (1 per cent below by 2005), 4 per cent below in Crowborough St Johns ward (2 per cent below by 2005) and 3 per cent below in Crowborough West ward (2 per cent below by 2005).

48 At Stage Three, the District Council requested that the whole of Hilders Farm Close be transferred from the proposed Crowborough East ward to the proposed Crowborough North ward. This was in anticipation of further residential development taking place in the rear gardens of the Crowborough Hill properties backing on to the Close. It argued that this would ensure that all the properties in the Crowborough Hill area remained in a single ward. The Liberal Democrats supported our draft recommendations.

49 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations for Crowborough East, Crowborough Jarvis Brook, Crowborough North, Crowborough St Johns and Crowborough West wards as final. We consider that our proposals would achieve good electoral equality and that they have received broad local support. We have examined the alternative boundary proposed by the District Council, but as stated in our draft recommendations report, we note that the boundary would result in the properties on Hilders Farm Close having no direct vehicular access to the remainder of Crowborough North ward. Additionally, following further consultation with the District Council, we learned that this development may not be completed by the end of the five-year period with which the review is concerned, and consequently had not been accounted for in the Council's forecast electorate figures. As a consequence, we do not consider that there is sufficient evidence to move away from our draft recommendations, and propose confirming our draft recommendations as final.

50 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Crowborough East, Crowborough Jarvis Brook, Crowborough North, Crowborough St Johns and Crowborough West wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our final recommendations for Crowborough are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

Hailsham (three wards)

51 Hailsham town is situated in the south of the district, and is bordered by Hellingly to the north, Herstmonceux to the east, Pevensey and Polegate to the south and Arlington to the west. The majority of the town area is represented by three two-member district wards: Hailsham Central & North, Hailsham East and Hailsham South & West, although the rural Hellingly ward also contains part of the town. The number of electors per councillor is 9 per cent below the district average in Hailsham Central & North ward (10 per cent below by 2005), equal to the average in Hailsham East ward (unchanged by 2005) and 37 per cent above in Hailsham South & West ward (35 per cent above by 2005).

52 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we broadly based our proposals on the scheme put forward by the District Council, which in turn had been adapted from proposals made by Hailsham Town Council. It proposed that Hailsham continue to be served by six members, representing three wards. The District Council proposed that Hailsham South & West ward be represented by three members, an increase of one, and that the boundary be extended east to run south along The Cuckoo Trail and Station Road, then east along Bell Banks Road and the rear of properties on Mill Road, south along the rear of properties on Howard Close and Butts Field, returning west along the south side of Station Road Industrial Estate to the existing boundary. It proposed that Hailsham East ward be represented by a single member, a reduction of one, and that the boundaries be further modified to the north, so that the area north of Bell Banks Road and west of St Mary's Avenue would be transferred to a revised two-member Hailsham Central & North ward.

53 We noted that the scheme retained most of the existing boundaries, while utilising identifiable boundaries in other areas. We considered that the District Council’s proposals provided a good balance between the need to provide for improved electoral equality and the statutory criteria. However, we noted that a number of the boundaries which the District Council proposed retaining followed features which no longer exist, and amended them to follow ground detail, with minimal impact on electoral variances. We proposed amending part of the boundary between Hailsham Central & North and Hellingly wards so that the boundary continue along Hawks Road to the parish boundary. We also proposed modifying part of the boundary between Hailsham Central & North and Hailsham South & West wards to unite the whole of Derwent Close in Hailsham South & West ward.

54 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent above the district average in Hailsham Central & North ward (unchanged by 2005), 3 per cent above in Hailsham East ward (unchanged by 2005) and 4 per cent above in Hailsham South & West ward (2 per cent above by 2005).

55 At Stage Three, the District Council, the Liberal Democrats and Hailsham Town Council all supported our proposals in this area. HECP objected to our draft recommendations for Hailsham, as it considered they would isolate the Town Farm Estate, which “has some of the worst deprivation indices in the whole of the south east.” It proposed retaining the existing warding arrangements, in order to preserve the wards upon which Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and Sure Start funding was allocated. Councillor Murphy (County Councillor for Hailsham) reiterated this argument, and also suggested that the Commission should consider the forthcoming review of the County Council’s electoral arrangements when proposing new wards. Councillor Murphy proposed two alternative schemes for Hailsham, one which would retain Hailsham East’s existing boundaries and amend the boundaries of the other two Hailsham wards, and one which would incorporate part of Hailsham Central & North ward into Hailsham East ward. Alternatively, he also proposed an increase in the number of councillors for Hailsham, and the separation of the proposed Hailsham South & West ward. Councillor Coltman, (Hailsham East ward), also objected to the proposals, reiterating the argumentation outlined above. He supported the alternative arrangements proposed by the District Council at Stage One, which would include a larger area than just the Town Farm council estate in the proposed Hailsham East ward. Five local residents also reiterated these arguments. In addition, three of these supported the alternative arrangements proposed by the District Council at Stage One, one resident proposed three alternative options, and one resident proposed retaining the existing warding arrangements.

56 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three, we propose confirming our draft recommendations for the Hailsham area as final. We acknowledge that there are concerns that our proposals will isolate the Town Farm Estate and may adversely affect the funding which the existing Hailsham East ward receives. However, we cannot take into account socio-economic factors when considering proposals. Furthermore, we do not consider that sufficient evidence has been provided to show that there are distinct communities within Hailsham, other than the Town Farm Estate itself. There has been little consensus on an alternative scheme for the area, with seven alternative options being put forward. Consequently, we have not been persuaded that there are alternative arrangements for the town which would better reflect the statutory criteria than our draft recommendations. In addition, the Commission cannot have regard to forthcoming county reviews when reviewing district arrangements, as the new district arrangements form the building blocks for the county review. We also note that support was expressed by the District Council, the Liberal Democrats and the Town Council, who noted that “there was unanimous cross-party support at both Town and District level”.

57 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Hailsham Central & North, Hailsham East and Hailsham South & West wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our final recommendations for Hailsham are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

Polegate North, Polegate South and Willingdon wards

58 Polegate North and Polegate South wards, which together form Polegate town, are situated south of Hailsham town. Willingdon ward, which contains the parish of Willingdon & Jevington, borders Polegate to the north and Eastbourne borough to the south. Together, the two areas are represented by seven district councillors: Polegate North and Polegate South wards are each represented by two members, while Willingdon ward is represented by three members. The number of electors per councillor is 7 per cent below the district average in Polegate North ward (unchanged by 2005), 16 per cent below in Polegate South ward (unchanged by 2005) and 9 per cent below in Willingdon ward (10 per cent below by 2005).

59 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we based our draft recommendations for this area on the District Council's proposals as we considered that they provided for good electoral equality, while providing identifiable boundaries and reflecting the interests of local communities. The District Council proposed that the two areas be represented by six district councillors, one fewer than at present. It proposed that the two-member Polegate North ward be extended south so that the boundary would follow the Lewes–Eastbourne railway line east to Eastbourne Road (the A22), and then run north along High Street, and east along the rear of properties on Black Path and Heron Ridge, returning to the existing boundary at the railway line. The proposed Polegate South ward, to be represented by a single member, would also be modified to the south, so that the area bounded by Wannock Road, Grosvenor Close and Eastbourne Road would be transferred to the three-member Willingdon ward.

60 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent below the district average in Polegate North ward (unchanged by 2005), 1 per cent below in Polegate South ward (unchanged by 2005) and equal to the average in Willingdon ward (2 per cent below by 2005).

61 At Stage Three, the District Council and the Liberal Democrats supported our draft recommendations for this area. Willingdon & Jevington Parish Council also supported our revised three-member Willingdon ward. Polegate Town Council continued to object to the proposals, as it did not consider that they had regard for community identity within the area. However, it supported the reduction of councillors representing the area from four to three, but proposed splitting Polegate into three wards of approximately equal electorate size, although no specific boundaries were proposed. Councillor Mrs Williamson (Polegate South ward) objected to our proposals for the Polegate area as she believed the revised warding arrangements would confuse the electorate. She also expressed concern that the proposed transfer of part of the existing Polegate South ward to Willingdon ward would facilitate the desired outcome of a possible forthcoming parish boundary review.

62 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three, we propose confirming our draft recommendations for this area as final. We note that Polegate Town Council reiterated its Stage One objection to the proposed scheme but did not provide additional evidence which would be sufficient to persuade us to move away from our draft recommendations. In relation to the issue raised by Councillor Mrs Williamson regarding a forthcoming parish review, we cannot recommend changes

to external parish boundaries as part of this review, nor can we speculate on the outcome of possible future parish reviews as part of this review.

63 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Polegate North, Polegate South and Willingdon wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our final recommendations for the Polegate and Willingdon & Jevington areas are illustrated on Map 2 and Map A7 in Appendix A.

Uckfield ward

64 The three-member Uckfield ward is situated in the west of the district and is coterminous with Uckfield town. It is bounded by the parishes of Buxted, Framfield, Little Horsted, Fletching and Maresfield. The number of electors per councillor is 85 per cent above the district average (83 per cent above by 2005).

65 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we based our proposals largely on the scheme proposed by the District Council, which in turn took into account the views of the Town Council in formulating the new wards. The District Council proposed that Uckfield be represented by five members, two more than at present, and four wards, three more than at present. The District Council argued that the Uckfield–Crowborough railway line “forms a strong geographical boundary” and therefore proposed that it should form a boundary, so that that part of the town north of the railway line would be represented by three members, and that part of the town to the south of the railway line would be represented by two members. It proposed the northern part of the town form two wards: a two-member Uckfield North ward and a single-member Uckfield Central ward, and the southern part of the town form two single-member wards: Uckfield New Town and Uckfield Ridgewood.

66 We considered that the District Council’s proposals provided for a good balance between the need to secure electoral equality, while having regard to the statutory criteria. In particular, we considered that the Uckfield–Crowborough railway line constituted a strong boundary. However, we noted that under the District Council’s proposals, the boundary between Uckfield Central and Uckfield North wards would run between numbers 4 and 6 The Drive, thus separating numbers 2 and 4 from the remainder of the street. We also noted that Thimble, Moonraker and 31-32 Linden Chase would be separated from the remainder of Linden Chase. We therefore adopted the District Council’s proposals in our draft recommendations, subject to two boundary amendments, which had a negligible impact on electoral variances. We proposed amending the boundary between the proposed Uckfield Central and Uckfield North wards to unite all of The Drive in Uckfield North ward and to unite all of Linden Chase in Uckfield Central ward.

67 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent above the district average in Uckfield Central ward (6 per cent above by 2005), 4 per cent below in Uckfield New Town ward (6 per cent below by 2005), 9 per cent above in Uckfield North ward (8 per cent above by 2005) and 6 per cent above in Uckfield Ridgewood ward (5 per cent above by 2005).

68 At Stage Three, the District Council and the Liberal Democrats supported our draft recommendations for Uckfield. Having considered the representations received and in light of local support, we remain content that our draft recommendations for Uckfield provide the best balance between the need to secure electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Therefore, in the absence of any objections, we propose confirming our draft recommendations for Uckfield as final.

69 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Uckfield Central, Uckfield New Town, Uckfield North and Uckfield Ridgewood wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our proposals for the boundaries of the four Uckfield wards are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

Rural wards

Frant, Rotherfield and Withyham wards

70 The three single-member wards of Frant, Rotherfield and Withyham are each coterminous with their respective parishes and are situated in the north of the district bordering Tunbridge Wells borough to the north, Wadhurst to the east, Crowborough to the south and Hartfield to the west. The number of electors per councillor is 44 per cent below the district average in Frant ward (unchanged by 2005), 34 per cent above in Rotherfield ward (33 per cent above by 2005) and 13 per cent above in Withyham ward (unchanged by 2005).

71 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that Rotherfield parish be warded, so that Rotherfield village form a new single-member ward. The remainder of Rotherfield parish, Eridge and Mark Cross polling districts, would be combined with Frant and Withyham wards to form a new Frant/Withyham ward, to be represented by two members. The District Council argued that the proposed Frant/Withyham ward would have “the added benefit of linking the two polling districts covering Eridge, one of which had been in Rotherfield Ward and the other in Frant Ward”. We considered that the District Council’s proposals for a two-member Frant/Withyham ward and single-member Rotherfield ward provided a good balance between the need to secure electoral equality and the statutory criteria, and therefore adopted the District Council’s proposals for Frant/Withyham and Rotherfield wards as part of our draft recommendations.

72 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent below the district average in Frant/Withyham ward (5 per cent below by 2005) and 4 per cent below in Rotherfield ward (5 per cent below by 2005).

73 At Stage Three, the District Council and the Liberal Democrats supported our draft recommendations for this area. Frant Parish Council objected to our proposed Frant/Withyham ward as it considered that the ward would be spread over too large a geographical area. It supported the alternative proposal made by the District Council at Stage One. This view was also expressed by Councillor Wilkinson (Frant ward). Rotherfield Parish Council objected to our proposed Rotherfield ward as it considered that the consequential warding of the parish would confuse the electorate. Instead, it proposed that the existing warding arrangements be retained.

74 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three, we propose confirming our draft recommendations for this area as final. We note the objections raised by Frant Parish Council and Councillor Wilkinson. However, adopting the alternative proposal for this area would involve splitting Withyham parish, which we do not believe would provide as convenient and effective local government as our draft recommendations. Additionally, we note that Withyham Parish Council objected to the two single-member wards option during the District Council’s consultation exercise and we do not consider that such a proposal would best reflect communities in this area. We also recognise that there is some opposition to Rotherfield parish being divided between two district wards. However, we note that the alternative proposal put forward by Rotherfield Parish Council would result in an unacceptable level of electoral inequality. If Rotherfield parish was represented by a single district

councillor in a ward on its own (as in the existing arrangements), it would be under-represented by 27 per cent in 2000 (26 per cent by 2005). As a consequence, a two-member Frant/Withyham ward, less the proposed Eridge & Mark Cross polling districts of Rotherfield parish, would be over-represented by 20 per cent, both initially and by 2005.

75 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Frant/Withyham and Rotherfield wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our proposals for these wards are illustrated on Map 2 and Map A8 in Appendix A.

Framfield, Heathfield, Mayfield, Wadhurst and Waldron wards

76 Mayfield and Wadhurst wards are situated in the east of the district, on the boundary with Rother district, while Framfield, Waldron and Heathfield wards run across the centre of the district, south of Buxted, Hadlow Down and Mayfield & Five Ashes parishes. The single-member Framfield and the two-member Wadhurst wards are each coterminous with the parishes of the same names, while the two-member Mayfield ward contains Mayfield & Five Ashes parish, and the three-member Heathfield and two-member Waldron wards together comprise Heathfield & Waldron parish. The number of electors per councillor is 24 per cent below the district average in Framfield ward (25 per cent below by 2005), 6 per cent below in Heathfield ward (7 per cent below by 2005), 28 per cent below in Mayfield ward (29 per cent below by 2005), 2 per cent below in Wadhurst ward (unchanged by 2005) and 7 per cent below in Waldron ward (unchanged by 2005).

77 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that this area be represented by six wards, one more than at present, and eight members, two fewer than at present. It proposed that Wadhurst ward should be extended to include part of Mayfield & Five Ashes parish, and be represented by two members, as at present. The District Council proposed that Mayfield & Five Ashes parish be further warded, so that Mayfield village would form a modified single-member Mayfield ward, and Five Ashes polling district would form a new single-member ward with Cross in Hand polling district of Heathfield & Waldron parish, to be named Cross in Hand/Five Ashes ward. The District Council noted that the town of Heathfield is currently split between Heathfield ward and Waldron ward. Therefore “to give some identity to the town of Heathfield” it proposed that Heathfield village and “the linked settlement” of Broad Oak form a new Heathfield North & Central ward, to be represented by three members. The District Council further proposed that the “more sparsely populated rural area” in the west of Heathfield & Waldron parish, including Waldron village, should be transferred to an extended single-member Framfield ward, arguing that this would combine Waldron with “the similar areas of Framfield and Blackboys”.

78 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we noted that both Mayfield & Five Ashes and Wadhurst parish councils supported the proposed Wadhurst ward during the District Council’s consultation period. Having visited the area of Heathfield and Mayfield, we considered that the proposed new Heathfield North & Central ward would better reflect local community identity in the Heathfield area than the existing wards, which divide the settlement between two district wards. We examined the proposed Cross in Hand/Five Ashes ward and the modified Framfield ward, and considered that the communities of Cross in Hand and Five Ashes, and the communities of Wadhurst, Blackboys and Framfield, share a community of interest and as such, adopted the District Council’s proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations.

79 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent below the district average in Cross in Hand/Five Ashes ward (unchanged by 2005), 4 per cent above in

Framfield ward (unchanged by 2005), 4 per cent below in Heathfield North & Central ward (unchanged by 2005), equal to the average in Mayfield ward (unchanged by 2005) and 2 per cent below the average in Wadhurst ward (unchanged by 2005).

80 At Stage Three, the District Council and the Liberal Democrats supported our draft recommendations for this area. Framfield Parish Council supported our proposed Framfield ward, as “the Council considers Framfield and Blackboys to be a rural ward and is very keen to remain rural which will still be the case with the addition of Waldron.” Heathfield & Waldron Parish Council objected to our draft recommendations for the area surrounding the parish as it believed that the proposals did not retain community identity. It proposed an alternative scheme for the area comprising three two-member wards. Its proposed Heathfield West ward would include the rural areas of Blackboys, the majority of Cross in Hand parish, and Five Ashes, Framfield and Waldron parishes. Its proposed Heathfield Central ward would comprise the centre of Heathfield town and part of our proposed Cross in Hand/Five Ashes ward (Mill Road). Its proposed Heathfield East ward would comprise two parts of Heathfield West polling district (Mutton Hall Hill and Sandy Cross), Heathfield North polling district, Heathfield East polling district and Warbleton parish.

81 Councillor Mrs Blaxland, Councillor Mrs Clark, Councillor Mrs Kirkpatrick and Councillor Mr Simmons reiterated these comments, and proposed a broadly similar alternative scheme for this area. Their proposed Heathfield East ward would comprise two parts of Heathfield West polling district (Mutton Hall Hill and Sandy Cross), Heathfield North polling district, Heathfield East polling district and Warbleton parish. Their proposed Heathfield Centre ward would differ from the parish council’s proposal in that it would only include the area they described as Heathfield Centre. Their proposed Heathfield West ward would include Blackboys, all of Cross in Hand parish and the parishes of Five Ashes, Framfield and Waldron.

82 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three, we note that support for our draft recommendations was expressed by the District Council, the Liberal Democrats and Framfield Parish Council and we therefore propose confirming our draft recommendations as final. We note the objection of Heathfield & Waldron Parish Council and the four local councillors to our draft recommendations for this area, but do not consider that either of the alternative proposals put forward would be an improvement on our draft recommendations. We have not been persuaded that incorporating the north-eastern part of the town centre into a large rural ward (the parish council and local councillors’ proposed Heathfield East ward) is a better reflection of community identity than our draft recommendations, as we consider the nature of the two distinct areas to be too diverse to be combined in a ward together.

83 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Cross in Hand/Five Ashes, Framfield, Heathfield North & Central, Mayfield and Wadhurst wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our proposals for these five wards are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report and on Map 2 and Maps A5 and A6 in Appendix A.

Buxted, Danehill, Fletching, Forest Row, Hartfield and Maresfield wards

84 The three single-member wards of Danehill, Fletching and Hartfield, and the two-member Buxted, Forest Row and Maresfield wards are situated in the north-west of the district, and border Withyham and Crowborough to the east, the districts of Lewes and Mid Sussex to the west and Tandridge and Sevenoaks to the north. Danehill, Forest Row, Hartfield and Maresfield wards are each coterminous with their respective parishes, while Buxted ward comprises Buxted and Hadlow Down parishes and

Fletching ward comprises the parishes of Fletching, Isfield and Little Horsted. The number of electors per councillor is 19 per cent below the district average in Buxted ward (20 per cent below by 2005), 22 per cent below in Danehill ward (23 per cent below by 2005), 26 per cent below in Fletching ward (unchanged by 2005), 4 per cent below in Forest Row ward (5 per cent below by 2005), 13 per cent below in Hartfield ward (14 per cent below by 2005) and 31 per cent below in Maresfield ward (unchanged by 2005).

85 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we based our draft recommendations for Buxted on the scheme supported by Buxted Parish Council, which the District Council had not proposed as part of its scheme. The District Council had proposed that Buxted ward be split into two, so that that part of Buxted parish east of the Uckfield–Oxted railway line together with Hadlow Down parish form a new single-member Buxted East ward, and the western part of Buxted parish, together with Maresfield polling district of Maresfield parish, form a new single-member Buxted West ward. Buxted Parish Council supported the alternative option, which combined the two proposed Buxted wards to form a new two-member Buxted ward. We adopted this proposal as part of our draft recommendations as it had gained support from both Buxted and Hadlow Downs parish councils during the District Council’s consultation period, would not have a knock-on effect on any other wards, would reduce the number of parishes to be warded, and would provide for improved electoral equality. Maresfield Parish Council had objected to this scheme during the District Council’s consultation period and proposed instead that the parish form a single-member ward. However, under a council of 55, such a ward would be under-represented by 30 per cent. Furthermore, we considered that the proposed warding of Maresfield parish was integral to the district-wide scheme as a whole, and were Maresfield parish not warded, this would have had much wider implications for this part of the district. We proposed naming the ward Buxted & Maresfield to reflect the constituent communities.

86 For the remainder of this area, we adopted the District Council’s scheme. The District Council proposed that Nutley polling district, in the north-west of Maresfield parish, and Danehill ward be combined with Fletching ward in a new Danehill/Fletching/Nutley ward, to be represented by two members. The District Council proposed that the remainder of Maresfield parish, Fairwarp polling district, be transferred to an extended single-member Hartfield ward. It proposed that Hartfield ward be further modified to the north, transferring Hammerwood polling district to Forest Row ward, which would continue to be represented by two members. We considered that the District Council’s scheme for the remainder of the area provided a good balance between the need to secure electoral equality and the statutory criteria in its proposed Danehill/Fletching/Nutley and Hartfield wards. Having visited the area, we considered that, in the area on the Kent border around Holtye Road, the road acts as a community focus, and it would therefore be in the interests of community identity to unite the Hammerwood community, currently divided between Forest Row and Hartfield parishes, in one district ward. We therefore adopted the District Council’s revised Forest Row ward as part of our draft recommendations.

87 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be equal to the district average in Buxted & Maresfield ward (1 per cent below by 2005), 1 per cent below in Danehill/Fletching/Nutley ward (unchanged by 2005), 4 per cent below in Forest Row ward (5 per cent below by 2005) and 2 per cent above in Hartfield ward (1 per cent above by 2005).

88 At Stage Three, the District Council supported our proposals for these wards, including our proposed Buxted & Maresfield ward. Buxted and Hadlow Downs parish councils also supported our draft recommendations for the proposed Buxted & Maresfield ward. The Liberal Democrats objected to our proposed Buxted & Maresfield ward, proposing the adoption of the District Council’s original

Stage One scheme, which would have resulted in single member Buxted East and Buxted West wards. Maresfield Parish Council reiterated their objection to the proposed division of Maresfield parish between three district wards, as it believed that “Warding will create factions”. It reiterated its preference for Maresfield to be in a single-member ward. It also argued that Fairwarp is separated from Hartfield, and that the Ashdown Forest does not link the two settlements, but separates them. Hartfield Parish Council objected to the division of the parish between two district wards, but stated that if the warding was necessary, the name of the parish ward should be changed (as discussed in more detail below).

89 Having considered the representations received at Stage Three, we propose confirming our draft recommendations for this area as final. We note the concerns of Maresfield Parish Council, however, we consider that the configuration of parishes in this area is such that an element of parish warding is necessary, and is an integral part of the scheme as a whole. We also note that our proposed Buxted & Maresfield ward has achieved a degree of local support, and as no viable alternatives have been proposed at Stage Three, we are not minded to depart from our draft recommendations.

90 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Buxted & Maresfield, Danehill/Fletching/Nutley, Forest Row and Hartfield wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our proposals for the north-west of the district are illustrated on Map 2 and Maps A2-A4 in Appendix A.

Alfriston, Arlington, Chiddingly & East Hoathly, East Dean and Hellingly wards

91 The four single-member wards of Alfriston, Arlington, Chiddingly & East Hoathly and East Dean and the two-member Hellingly ward are situated in the south-west of the district, and are bounded by the English Channel to the south, Lewes district to the west and Hailsham and Polegate to the east. Alfriston ward comprises Alciston, Alfriston, Berwick and Selmeston parishes and Lullington and Litlington parish wards of Cuckmere Valley parish. Alfriston ward also contains Folkington and Wilmington parish wards of Long Man parish, resulting in the creation of a detached ward. Arlington ward consists of Arlington, Chalvington with Ripe and Laughton parishes and Milton Street parish ward of Long Man parish. Chiddingly & East Hoathly ward comprises the parishes of the same name. East Dean ward contains East Dean & Friston parish and West Dean parish ward of Cuckmere Valley parish. Hellingly ward contains the parish of the same name and Upper Horsebridge parish ward of Hailsham town. The number of electors per councillor is 22 per cent below the district average in Alfriston ward (unchanged by 2005), 6 per cent below in Arlington ward (unchanged by 2005), 9 per cent below in Chiddingly & East Hoathly ward (7 per cent below by 2005), 23 per cent below in East Dean ward (unchanged by 2005) and 4 per cent below in Hellingly ward (1 per cent below by 2005).

92 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that the whole of Cuckmere Valley and Long Man parishes should be united in a single-member East Dean ward, together with East Dean & Friston parish. It proposed that Alfriston ward should be further modified to include Chalvington with Ripe parish, and that it should continue to be represented by a single member. The single-member Chiddingly & East Hoathly ward would be extended to include Laughton parish, and Arlington parish would be transferred from Arlington ward to a revised Hellingly ward, to be represented by two councillors. We carefully considered the District Council’s proposals for the south-west of the district, and noted that it proposed using whole parishes as building blocks in this area, which we considered provided a good reflection of the statutory criteria, and provided for a good level of electoral equality. We therefore adopted the District Council’s proposals for Alfriston, Chiddingly & East Hoathly, East Dean and Hellingly wards as part of our draft recommendations.

93 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be equal to the district average in Alfriston ward (2 per cent below by 2005), 7 per cent above in Chiddingly & East Hoathly ward (9 per cent above by 2005), 4 per cent below in East Dean ward (unchanged by 2005) and 1 per cent below in Hellingly ward (2 per cent above by 2005).

94 At Stage Three, the District Council and the Liberal Democrats supported our draft recommendations for the south-west of the district. Arlington Parish Council objected to our proposed Hellingly ward, arguing that the needs of Arlington and Hellingly parishes are different. It also stated that “Equalisation of numbers of electors should *never* have been made the main criterion for alteration of the existing arrangements.” Chiddingly Parish Council objected to the proposal to add the parish of Laughton to the existing Chiddingly & East Hoathly ward to form a revised single-member ward. It was concerned that the workload of the councillor would increase significantly as the geographical area would also increase. It also argued that “Chiddingly has no connections with Laughton Parish”. It proposed retaining the existing warding arrangements. Finally, Chalvington with Ripe Parish Council objected to our proposed Alfriston ward. The parish council’s preferred option would be to be placed in a ward with Laughton, East Hoathly and Chiddingly as “We are all Low Weald parishes with similar concerns”.

95 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three and in light of support from the District Council and the Liberal Democrats and a lack of viable alternatives for the south-west of the district, we are confirming our draft recommendations for these wards as final. We note Arlington Parish Council’s objection to being placed in the proposed Hellingly ward, but consider that Arlington and Hellingly are linked by road. We also note the objections of Chiddingly and Chalvington with Ripe parish councils to their respective proposed ward arrangements. However, we also note that the preferred arrangements suggested by each of the parish councils contradict each other. Chiddingly Parish Council states that “Chiddingly has no connections with Laughton Parish – neither civil, geographical, nor ecclesiastical” while Chalvington with Ripe Parish Council proposes that its parish be joined with East Hoathly, Chiddingly and Laughton. Additionally, both proposals would result in unacceptable levels of electoral inequality. Under Chiddingly Parish Council’s proposals, electors in Chiddingly & East Hoathly ward would be over-represented by 14 per cent initially (12 per cent by 2005) whilst electors in Alfriston ward would be under-represented by 20 per cent initially (19 per cent by 2005). Under Chalvington with Ripe Parish Council’s proposals, electors in Chiddingly & East Hoathly ward would be under-represented by 51 per cent initially (52 per cent by 2005) and electors in Alfriston ward would be over-represented by 44 per cent initially (45 per cent by 2005). We do not consider that there is adequate justification for such high levels of electoral inequality to be maintained.

96 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Alfriston, Chiddingly & East Hoathly, East Dean and Hellingly wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our proposals for the south-west of the district are illustrated on Map 2 in Appendix A.

Herstmonceux, Horam, Ninfield and Pevensey & Westham wards

97 The single-member Horam and Ninfield wards, the two-member Herstmonceux ward and the three-member Pevensey & Westham ward are situated in the south-east of the district and are bordered by Polegate and Hailsham to the west, Heathfield & Waldron to the north, Rother district to the east and the English Channel and Eastbourne borough to the south. Herstmonceux ward contains Herstmonceux, Warbleton and Wartling parishes, Horam ward is coterminous with the parish of Horam, Ninfield ward comprises the parishes of Hooe and Ninfield, and Pevensey & Westham ward contains the parishes of the same names. The number of electors per councillor is 16 per cent below the district average in

Herstmonceux ward (17 per cent below by 2005), 7 per cent above in Horam ward (unchanged by 2005), 19 per cent below in Ninfield ward (unchanged by 2005) and 14 per cent above in Pevensey & Westham ward (15 per cent above by 2005).

98 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that Horam ward remain unchanged. It proposed that Warbleton parish form a new single-member Heathfield East ward, together with the rural southern part of the existing Heathfield ward, as detailed above. However, it proposed that Warbleton parish should be warded so that the Bodle Street Green settlement, in the far south of the parish, would form part of a modified Herstmonceux ward, to be represented by a single member, one fewer than at present. The District Council proposed that the single-member Ninfield ward be extended to include Wartling parish, and be renamed Pevensey/Ninfield. Finally in this area, it proposed that Pevensey & Westham ward remain unchanged. We carefully considered the District Council's proposals for the south-east of the district and considered that the more rural southern part of Heathfield & Waldron parish and Warbleton parish have many similarities. Having visited the area, we also noted that while the Bodle Street Green settlement is some distance from the centre of Warbleton parish, it is relatively close to Herstmonceux and, as such, we considered that residents of Bodle Street Green would look towards Herstmonceux. In the light of our proposals for other district wards, and considering that the proposed Heathfield East and Herstmonceux wards contain areas that share a community of interest, we adopted the District Council's proposals for Heathfield East and Herstmonceux wards as part of our draft recommendations. We also proposed retaining the existing Horam and Pevensey & Westham wards, and adopting the District Council's proposed Pevensey/Ninfield ward as all three wards would achieve good levels of electoral equality.

99 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent below the district average in Heathfield East ward (unchanged by 2005), equal to the average in Herstmonceux ward (1 per cent below by 2005), 1 per cent above in Horam ward (2 per cent above by 2005), 8 per cent above in Pevensey & Westham ward (9 per cent above by 2005) and 9 per cent below in Pevensey/Ninfield ward (unchanged by 2005).

100 At Stage Three, the District Council supported our draft recommendations for this area, but requested that the proposed Pevensey/Ninfield ward be renamed Ninfield ward in order to more accurately reflect the constituent parts of the proposed ward. This point was reiterated by Ninfield Parish Council, who requested that the ward be renamed Ninfield & Hooe with Wartling, and Pevensey Parish Council, who also supported our draft recommendations. The Liberal Democrats also supported our draft recommendations for the area. As detailed above, objections were raised regarding the proposed Heathfield East ward.

101 Having considered the representations received at Stage Three, and in light of support for the majority of the proposals in the south-east of the district, we propose confirming our draft recommendations as final. However, we propose renaming Pevensey/Ninfield ward, as we consider this request reasonable. In order to correctly reflect the constituent parishes, we propose renaming this ward Ninfield & Hooe with Wartling. We noted the objections to the proposed Heathfield East ward, but as detailed above, we have not been persuaded that the alternative options put forward at Stage Three would better reflect the statutory criteria than our draft recommendations.

102 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Heathfield East, Herstmonceux, Horam, Pevensey & Westham and Ninfield & Hooe with Wartling wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our proposals for the five wards in the south-east of the

district are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report, and on Map 2 and Map A9 in Appendix A.

Electoral Cycle

103 At Stage One, we received no proposals in relation to the electoral cycle of the district. Accordingly, we made no recommendation for change to the present system of whole council elections every four years.

104 At Stage Three, Buxted Parish Council stated its support for the retention of whole council elections every four years. No other comments were received specifically regarding electoral cycles, and we confirm our draft recommendation for whole-council elections as final.

Conclusions

105 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our draft recommendations, we have decided substantially to endorse our draft recommendations, subject to the following amendments:

- we propose renaming the proposed Pevensey/Ninfield ward Ninfield & Hooe with Wartling ward;
- in the proposed Forest Row ward we propose renaming Hammerwood parish ward as Holtye parish ward.

106 We conclude that, in Wealden:

- there should be a reduction in council size from 58 to 55;
- there should be 35 wards, one more than at present;
- the boundaries of 32 of the existing wards should be modified;
- the Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

107 Table 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2000 and 2005 electorate figures.

Table 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	58	55	58	55
Number of wards	34	35	34	35
Average number of electors per councillor	1,936	2,042	1,981	2,089
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	20	0	21	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	12	0	12	0

108 As Table 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent to none. By 2005, this improved level of electoral equality is set to continue. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Wealden District Council should comprise 55 councillors serving 35 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A including the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

109 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule states that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards, it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, in our draft recommendations report we proposed consequential warding arrangements for the parishes and towns of Crowborough, Hailsham, Hartfield, Heathfield & Waldron, Maresfield, Mayfield & Five Ashes, Polegate, Rotherfield, Uckfield and Warbleton to reflect the proposed district wards.

110 Crowborough Town Council is currently served by 18 councillors representing four wards: Crowborough East, Crowborough North, Crowborough St Johns and Crowborough West, represented by six, five, two and five councillors respectively. At Stage One, the District Council proposed that Crowborough be served by five district wards, named Crowborough East, Crowborough Jarvis Brook,

Crowborough North, Crowborough St Johns and Crowborough West, and five coterminous town wards. During the District Council's local consultation Crowborough Town Council proposed that the town be represented by 16 councillors, two fewer than at present, serving Crowborough East, Crowborough Jarvis Brook, Crowborough North, Crowborough St Johns and Crowborough West town wards. It proposed that these wards be represented by four, two, four, two and four councillors respectively.

111 In light of our draft recommendations for district warding in this area, reflecting the District Council's proposals for the five Crowborough wards, we consequently adopted the District Council's proposed town ward boundaries to correspond with the district wards within the town. In addition, we noted that the Town Council's proposals would provide for a ratio of two councillors to one district councillor. We considered this would provide for convenient and effective local government and therefore adopted the Town Council's proposed council size, distribution of councillors and town ward names.

112 At Stage Three, the District Council proposed modifying the district ward boundary between Crowborough North and Crowborough East wards to incorporate Hilders Farm Close into Crowborough North. This would have had a consequential effect on the town ward boundary. However, as detailed above, we have not been persuaded to adopt the District Council's proposed amendment, and in the light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the Crowborough area, we propose confirming our draft recommendations for Crowborough Town Council as final.

Final Recommendation

Crowborough Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, two fewer than at present, representing five wards: East (returning four councillors), Jarvis Brook (two), North (four), St Johns (two) and West (four). The town ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

113 Hailsham Town Council is currently served by 24 councillors representing the four wards of Hailsham Central & North, Hailsham East, Hailsham South & West and Hailsham Upper Horsebridge, which are represented by seven, seven, seven and three councillors respectively. At Stage One, the District Council proposed that Hailsham town be served by four district wards: Hailsham Central & North, Hailsham East, Hailsham South & West and Hellingly wards. It proposed four town wards, three of which would be coterminous with the three Hailsham district wards, while the fourth would form part of the proposed Hellingly ward. Neither town ward names nor the number and distribution of councillors were proposed.

114 In light of our draft recommendations for district warding in this area, reflecting the District Council's proposals for Hailsham Central & North, Hailsham East, Hailsham South & West and Hellingly wards, we adopted the District Council's proposed town ward boundaries to correspond with the district wards within the town as part of our draft recommendations. In addition we proposed that Hailsham Central & North, Hailsham East, Hailsham South & West district wards should comprise Central & North, East and South & West town wards respectively, represented by seven, three and 10 councillors respectively. That part of Hailsham town which forms part of the proposed Hellingly ward, Upper Horsebridge town ward, should be represented by four councillors. In total, Hailsham town would be represented by 24 councillors, as at present.

115 At Stage Three Hailsham Town Council supported the proposed warding arrangements for the town. As detailed earlier, we received several alternative district ward proposals from a County Councillor, a District Councillor and several local residents, all of which would have had consequential effects upon the town warding proposed for Hailsham. However, in the light of confirming our district wards in this area, we propose confirming our draft recommendations for Hailsham Town Council as final.

Final Recommendation

Hailsham Town Council should comprise 24 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Central & North (returning seven councillors), East (three), South & West (10) and Upper Horsebridge (four). The town ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

116 Hartfield Parish Council is currently served by 13 councillors and is not warded. In order to facilitate its proposals for district warding in this area, the District Council proposed that Hartfield parish be warded into two: one parish ward covering the main Hartfield settlement and the other parish ward covering the Hammerwood area. Neither parish ward names nor the number and distribution of parish councillors were proposed.

117 In light of our draft recommendations for district warding in this area, reflecting the District Council's proposals for Forest Row and Hartfield wards, we adopted the District Council's proposed parish ward boundaries to correspond with the district wards within the parish as part of our draft recommendations. In addition we proposed that the parish ward covering Hartfield should be named Hartfield parish ward and be represented by 12 councillors, and the parish ward covering Hammerwood should be named Hammerwood parish ward and be represented by two councillors, a total of 14, one more than at present.

118 At Stage Three, the District Council proposed that Hammerwood parish ward be renamed Holtye parish ward. Hartfield Parish Council objected to our proposed warding of the parish, but if warding was necessary, it also proposed that Hammerwood parish ward be renamed Holtye parish ward, to avoid confusion with the neighbouring hamlet of Hammerwood. In addition, it objected to the increase in the number of councillors for Hartfield from 13 to 14.

119 We considered Hartfield Parish Council's objection to the proposed parish warding, but consider that warding Hartfield parish is integral to our proposals for the north-western area of the district. In the light of confirming our district warding for the proposed Hartfield and Forest Row district wards, we also propose confirming our proposed parish warding of Hartfield parish as final. However, we consider that the request to rename Hammerwood parish ward has merit, and as such, we propose that the parish wards of Hartfield parish should be named Hartfield parish ward and Holtye parish ward. In light of the parish council's objection to an increase in the number of parish councillors, we propose that the number of parish councillors representing Hartfield parish should remain at 13.

Final Recommendation

Hartfield Parish Council should comprise 13 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Hartfield and Holtye, represented by 12 and one councillors respectively. The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

120 Heathfield & Waldron Parish Council is currently served by 21 councillors representing two parish wards: Heathfield, represented by 12 councillors, and Waldron, represented by nine councillors. At Stage One, the District Council proposed that Heathfield & Waldron parish be warded into four: one parish ward covering the main Heathfield settlement, one parish ward covering the Cross in Hand settlement, one parish ward covering the Waldron area and the fourth parish ward covering the rural eastern part of the parish. Neither parish ward names nor the number and distribution of parish councillors were proposed.

121 In light of our draft recommendations for district warding in this area, reflecting the District Council's proposals for Cross in Hand/Five Ashes, Framfield, Heathfield East and Heathfield North & Central district wards, we adopted the District Council's proposed parish wards to correspond with the district wards covering the parish as part of our draft recommendations. In addition, we proposed that the parish ward covering Heathfield be named Heathfield parish ward and be represented by 14 councillors, the parish ward covering Cross in Hand be named Cross in Hand parish ward and be represented by three councillors, the parish ward covering Waldron be named Waldron parish ward and be represented by two councillors and the parish ward covering the rural eastern part of the parish be named East parish ward and be represented by two councillors, a total of 21, as at present.

122 At Stage Three, Heathfield & Waldron Parish Council and four local councillors objected to our proposed district wards for Heathfield & Waldron, and proposed two alternative schemes. These would have had consequential effects on the proposed parish warding. Additionally, the Parish Council proposed a redistribution of parish councillors so that its proposed Heathfield West parish ward would be represented by four councillors, its proposed Heathfield Central parish ward would be represented by nine councillors and its proposed Heathfield East parish ward would be represented by eight councillors (each parish ward would be coterminous with the district ward of the same name). However, as stated earlier, we are confirming our proposed district wards in this area as final and therefore propose confirming our draft recommendations for Heathfield & Waldron Parish Council as final.

Final Recommendation

Heathfield & Waldron Parish Council should comprise 21 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Cross in Hand (returning three councillors), East (two), Heathfield (14) and Waldron (two). The parish ward boundaries would reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

123 Maresfield Parish Council is currently served by 13 councillors and is not warded. In order to facilitate its proposals for district warding in this area, the District Council proposed that Maresfield parish should be warded into three: one parish ward covering the main Maresfield settlement, one parish

ward covering the Nutley settlement and one parish ward covering the Fairwarp area. Neither parish ward names nor the number and distribution of councillors were proposed.

124 In the light of our draft recommendations for district warding in Maresfield parish, for Buxted & Maresfield, Danehill/Fletching/Nutley and Hartfield district wards, we adopted the District Council's proposed parish ward boundaries to correspond with the district wards covering the parish. In addition, we proposed that the parish ward covering Maresfield be named Maresfield parish ward and be represented by five councillors, the parish ward covering Nutley be named Nutley parish ward and be represented by six councillors and the parish ward covering Fairwarp be named Fairwarp parish ward and be represented by three councillors, a total of 14, one more than at present.

125 At Stage Three, Maresfield Parish Council objected to the proposed warding of the parish, as it feared that "Warding will create factions". However, as stated earlier, we consider that warding Maresfield parish is integral to our proposals for the district as a whole, and note that Maresfield comprises the three settlements described earlier. Therefore, in the light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in this area, we propose confirming our draft recommendations for Maresfield Parish Council as final.

Final Recommendation

Maresfield Parish Council should comprise 14 councillors, one more than at present, representing three wards: Fairwarp (returning three councillors), Maresfield (five) and Nutley (six). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Maps A3 and A4 in Appendix A.

126 Mayfield & Five Ashes Parish Council is currently served by 15 parish councillors and is not warded. In order to facilitate its proposals for district warding in this area, the District Council proposed that Mayfield & Five Ashes parish be warded into three: one parish ward covering the main Mayfield settlement, one parish ward covering the Five Ashes area and the other parish ward the northern area of the parish. Neither parish ward names nor the number and distribution of councillors were proposed.

127 In light of our draft recommendations for district warding in this area, reflecting the District Council's proposals for Cross in Hand/Five Ashes, Mayfield and Wadhurst district wards, we adopted the District Council's proposed parish ward boundaries to correspond with the district wards covering the parish as part of our draft recommendations. In addition, we proposed that the parish ward covering Mayfield be named Mayfield parish ward and be represented by 11 councillors, the parish ward covering Five Ashes be named Five Ashes parish ward and be represented by three councillors and the parish ward covering the north of the parish be named Rusher's Cross parish ward and be represented by one councillor, a total of 15, as at present.

128 At Stage Three, we received no specific comments regarding the parish warding of Mayfield & Five Ashes parish, and in the absence of any objections, we propose confirming our draft recommendations for Mayfield & Five Ashes Parish Council as final.

Final Recommendation

Mayfield & Five Ashes Parish Council should comprise 15 parish councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Five Ashes (represented by three councillors), Mayfield (11) and Rusher's Cross (one). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Maps A5 and A6 in Appendix A.

129 Polegate Town Council is currently served by 17 councillors representing the two town wards of Polegate North and Polegate South, which are represented by nine and eight councillors respectively. At Stage One, the District Council proposed that Polegate town be served by three district wards and three town wards: Polegate North district ward would contain one town ward, Polegate South district ward would contain one town ward, while the area nearest Willingdon & Jevington parish in the far south of Polegate town would form a town ward, which would make up part of the proposed Willingdon ward. Neither town ward names nor the number and distribution of councillors were proposed.

130 In light of our draft recommendations for district warding in Polegate town, reflecting the District Council's proposals for Polegate North, Polegate South and Willingdon wards, we adopted the District Council's proposed town ward boundaries to correspond with the district wards covering the town. In addition we proposed that the ward covering the north of the town be named North parish ward and be represented by 10 councillors, the area broadly covering the south of the town be named South parish ward and be represented by five councillors and the area covering the far south of the town be named Watermill parish ward and be represented by two councillors, a total of 17, as at present.

131 At Stage Three, Polegate Town Council objected to the proposed Watermill parish ward, as it believed that, by becoming part of Willingdon district ward, the proposal would "undoubtedly lead to a [parish] boundary change." This comment was reiterated by Councillor Mrs Williamson. However, as detailed earlier, we cannot recommend changes to external parish boundaries as part of this review, nor can we speculate on the outcome of possible future parish reviews. As an alternative to our draft recommendations, the Town Council proposed that Polegate should have three district wards and coterminous town wards, "whether there are 15 Town Councillors as proposed by the Town Council, or still 17 as proposed by the District Council." Willingdon & Jevington Parish Council supported our draft recommendations in relation to the proposed Watermill parish ward being included in the proposed Willingdon ward.

132 We carefully considered all the evidence received regarding the proposed town warding of Polegate. However, we do not consider that there has been sufficient evidence provided for us to move away from our draft recommendations. Polegate Town Council's objections are based on their assumption that our draft recommendations for the Watermill area will result in a parish boundary review and, subsequently, a loss of revenue. As stated earlier, we cannot speculate on the outcomes of any possible parish review and cannot take such issues into account as part of this review. We remain satisfied that our proposed Watermill parish ward is similar in nature to the rest of our proposed Willingdon ward and that the community in this area would not be adversely affected by forming part of the proposed Willingdon ward. In addition, we note that the District Council, the Liberal Democrats and Willingdon & Jevington Parish Council all expressed support for these recommendations at Stage Three, and we therefore propose confirming them as final.

Final Recommendation

Polegate Town Council should comprise 17 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: North (returning 10 councillors), South (five) and Watermill (two). The town ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A7 in Appendix A.

133 Rotherfield Parish Council is currently served by 13 councillors and is not warded. In order to facilitate its proposals for district warding in this area, the District Council proposed that Rotherfield parish should be warded into two: one parish ward covering the main Rotherfield settlement and one parish ward covering the remainder of the parish. Neither parish ward names nor the number and distribution of councillors were proposed.

134 In light of our draft recommendations for district warding in Rotherfield parish, reflecting the District Council's proposals for Frant/Withyham and Rotherfield district wards, we adopted the District Council's proposed parish ward boundaries to correspond with the district wards covering the parish as part of our draft recommendations. In addition, we proposed that the parish ward covering Rotherfield be named Rotherfield parish ward and be represented by 10 councillors and the parish ward covering the northern part of the parish be named Eridge & Mark Cross parish ward and be represented by three councillors, a total of 13, as at present.

135 At Stage Three, Rotherfield Parish Council objected to our proposals to ward the parish. It considered that "the proposed voting arrangements, should the Parish be divided for electoral purposes, are both complicated and confusing." Instead, it proposed that the whole of Rotherfield remain unwarded.

136 We have considered the objections raised by Rotherfield Parish Council in formulating our final recommendations. However, we do not consider that sufficient evidence has been provided for us to move away from our draft recommendations, particularly regarding the high levels of electoral inequality at district level which would result if the parish were not warded. In light of confirming our district warding for this area, we propose confirming our draft recommendations for Rotherfield Parish Council as final.

Final Recommendation

Rotherfield Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Eridge & Mark Cross and Rotherfield, represented by three and 10 councillors respectively. The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on Map A8 in Appendix A.

137 Uckfield Town Council is currently served by 20 councillors representing the four town wards of Uckfield East, Uckfield New Town, Uckfield Ridgewood and Uckfield West, which are represented by six, four, four and six councillors respectively. At Stage One, the District Council proposed that Uckfield be served by four district wards: Uckfield Central, Uckfield New Town, Uckfield North and Uckfield Ridgewood, with four coterminous town wards. Town ward names were not proposed. During

the District Council's local consultation, Uckfield Town Council requested a reduction in councillors from 20 to 15, to reduce the number of uncontested elections.

138 In light of our draft recommendations for district warding in Uckfield town, reflecting the District Council's proposals for the four new Uckfield district wards, we adopted the District Council's proposed town ward boundaries to correspond with the district wards within the town. In addition, we proposed that Uckfield Central, Uckfield New Town, Uckfield North and Uckfield Ridgewood district wards should comprise Uckfield Central, Uckfield New Town, Uckfield North and Uckfield Ridgewood town wards respectively. We also noted that the Town Council's proposal for a council of 15, a reduction of five, would provide for a ratio of three councillors to one district councillor. We considered this would provide for convenient and effective local government and therefore adopted the Town Council's proposed council size. We proposed that Uckfield Central, Uckfield New Town, Uckfield North and Uckfield Ridgewood town wards should be represented by three, three, six and three councillors respectively, a total of 15, five fewer than at present.

139 During Stage Three, we did not receive any comments specifically relating to our proposed town warding for Uckfield. In the absence of any objections, and in the light of confirming our proposed district wards in the area, we propose confirming our draft recommendation for Uckfield Town Council as final.

Final Recommendation

Uckfield Town Council should comprise 15 councillors, five fewer than at present, representing four wards: Central (returning three councillors), New Town (three), North (six) and Ridgewood (three). The town ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

140 Warbleton Parish Council is currently served by 11 parish councillors and is not warded. In order to facilitate its proposals for district warding in this area, the District Council proposed that Warbleton parish should be warded into two: one parish ward covering the Bodle Street Green settlement and the other parish ward covering the remainder of the parish. Neither parish ward names nor the number and distribution of councillors were proposed.

141 In light of our draft recommendations for district warding in Warbleton parish, reflecting the District Council's proposals for Heathfield East and Herstmonceux district wards, we adopted the District Council's proposed parish ward boundaries to correspond with the district wards within the parish. In addition, we proposed that the parish ward covering Bodle Street Green should be named Bodle Street Green parish ward and be represented by two councillors and the parish ward covering the majority of the parish should be named Warbleton parish ward and be represented by 11 councillors, a total of 13, two more than at present.

142 At Stage Three, we did not receive any comments specifically relating to our proposed parish warding for Warbleton parish. In the absence of any objections, and in the light of confirming our proposed district wards in the area, we propose confirming our draft recommendation for Warbleton Parish Council as final.

Final Recommendation

Warbleton Parish Council should comprise 13 parish councillors, two more than at present, representing two wards: Bodle Street Green and Warbleton, represented by two and 11 councillors respectively. The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A9 in Appendix A.

143 In our draft recommendations report we proposed that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the district, and are confirming this as final.

Final Recommendation

For parish and town councils, whole-council elections should continue to take place every four years, on the same cycle as that of the District Council.

Map 2: Final Recommendations for Wealden

6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

144 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Wealden and submitted our final recommendations to the Secretary of State, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992.

145 It is now up to the Secretary of State to decide whether to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 18 September 2001.

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

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

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for Wealden: Detailed Mapping

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

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the district and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail in Maps A2–A9 and the large map at the back of the report.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Hartfield parish.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed warding of Maresfield parish (part).

Map A4 illustrates the proposed warding of Maresfield parish (part).

Map A5 illustrates the proposed warding of Mayfield & Five Ashes parish (part).

Map A6 illustrates the proposed warding of Mayfield & Five Ashes parish (part).

Map A7 illustrates the proposed warding of Polegate town.

Map A8 illustrates the proposed warding of Rotherfield parish.

Map A9 illustrates the proposed warding of Warbleton parish.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the proposed warding arrangements for Crowborough, Hailsham, Healthfield & Waldron and Uckfield parishes and towns.

Map A1: Final Recommendations for Wealden: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Warding of Hartfield Parish

Map A3: Proposed Warding of Maresfield Parish (part)

Map A4: Proposed Warding of Maresfield Parish (part)

Map A5: Proposed Warding of Mayfield & Five Ashes Parish (part)

Map A6: Proposed Warding of Mayfield & Five Ashes Parish (part)

Map A7: Proposed Warding of Polegate Town

Map A8: Proposed Warding of Rotherfield Parish

Map A9: Proposed Warding of Warbleton Parish

