

LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND

FINAL
RECOMMENDATIONS
ON THE FUTURE
ELECTORAL
ARRANGEMENTS FOR
BARKING &
DAGENHAM

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

September 1999

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Barking & Dagenham.

Members of the Commission are:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)

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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Barking & Dagenham is inserted inside the back cover of the report.



Local Government Commission for England

7 September 1999

Dear Secretary of State

On 22 September 1998 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Barking & Dagenham under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in March 1999 and undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have confirmed our draft recommendations for Borough Council warding arrangements in their entirety, although some modifications have been made to ward names (see paragraph 73) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Barking & Dagenham.

We recommend that Barking & Dagenham Borough Council should be served by 51 councillors representing 17 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

We note that you have now set out in the White Paper *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People* (Cm 4014, HMSO), legislative proposals for a number of changes to local authority electoral arrangements. However, until such time as that new legislation is in place we are obliged to conduct our work in accordance with current legislation, and to continue our current approach to periodic electoral reviews.

I would like to thank members and officers of the Borough Council and other local people who have contributed to the review. Their co-operation and assistance have been very much appreciated by Commissioners and staff.

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Barking & Dagenham on 22 September 1998. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 23 March 1999, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

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

We found that the existing electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Barking & Dagenham:

- **in four of the 20 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average;**
- **this level of electoral equality is expected to deteriorate over the next five years, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the borough average in five wards, and by more than 20 per cent in one ward.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 73 and 74) are that:

- **Barking & Dagenham Borough Council should be served by 51 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 17 wards, three fewer than at present, which would involve changes to the boundaries of all but one of the existing wards.**

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

- **In 16 of the 17 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 8 per cent from the borough average.**

- **This level of electoral equality is forecast to improve, with the number of electors per councillor in all 17 wards expected to vary by no more than 7 per cent from the average for the borough in 2003.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 19 October 1999:

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

*Figure 1:
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary*

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1 Abbey	3	Abbey ward (part)
2 Alibon	3	Alibon ward (part); Fanshawe ward (part)
3 Becontree	3	Becontree ward; Manor ward (part)
4 Chadwell Heath	3	Chadwell Heath ward (part); Marks Gate ward
5 Eastbrook	3	Alibon ward (part); Eastbrook ward (part)
6 Eastbury	3	Cambell ward (part); Eastbury ward; Parsloes ward (part)
7 Gascoigne	3	Abbey ward (part); Gascoigne ward
8 Goresbrook	3	Cambell ward (part); Goresbrook ward (part)
9 Heath	3	Eastbrook ward (part); Heath ward (part); Valence ward (part)
10 Longbridge	3	<i>Unchanged</i>
11 Mayesbrook	3	Manor ward (part); Parsloes ward (part)
12 Parsloes	3	Fanshawe ward (part); Parsloes ward (part); Valence ward (part)
13 River	3	Goresbrook ward (part); River ward; Village ward (part)
14 Thames	3	Cambell ward (part); Goresbrook ward (part); Thames ward (part)
15 Valence	3	Triptons ward (part); Valence ward (part)
16 Village	3	Village ward (part)
17 Whalebone	3	Chadwell Heath ward (part); Heath ward (part); Triptons ward (part)

Note: Map 2 and the large map in the back of the report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.

Figure 2:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Barking & Dagenham

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Abbey	3	6,351	2,117	-5	6,705	2,235	-6
2 Alibon	3	6,594	2,198	-2	6,908	2,303	-3
3 Becontree	3	7,160	2,387	7	7,160	2,387	0
4 Chadwell Heath	3	6,980	2,327	4	7,303	2,434	2
5 Eastbrook	3	6,640	2,213	-1	7,435	2,478	4
6 Eastbury	3	7,064	2,355	5	7,259	2,420	1
7 Gascoigne	3	6,191	2,064	-8	7,143	2,381	0
8 Goresbrook	3	7,031	2,344	5	7,355	2,452	3
9 Heath	3	7,143	2,381	7	7,296	2,432	2
10 Longbridge	3	6,799	2,266	1	7,139	2,380	0
11 Mayesbrook	3	6,654	2,218	-1	7,017	2,339	-2
12 Parsloes	3	6,525	2,175	-3	6,701	2,234	-6
13 River	3	7,143	2,381	7	7,316	2,439	2
14 Thames	3	5,598	1,866	-17	7,663	2,554	7
15 Valence	3	6,616	2,205	-1	7,092	2,364	-1
16 Village	3	6,673	2,224	0	7,144	2,381	-0
17 Whalebone	3	6,842	2,281	2	6,984	2,328	-2
Totals	51	114,004	—	—	121,620	—	—
Averages	—	—	2,235	—	—	2,385	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Barking & Dagenham Borough Council's submissions.

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

1. INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the London borough of Barking & Dagenham.

2 In broad terms, the objective of this periodic electoral review (PER) of Barking & Dagenham is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor on the Borough Council is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the Borough Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards.

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

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992;
- the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements* contained in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (second edition published in March 1998), which sets out our approach to the reviews. We are not required to have regard to parliamentary constituency boundaries in developing our recommendations. Any new ward boundaries will be taken into account by the Parliamentary Boundary Commission in its reviews of parliamentary constituencies.

5 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the borough as a whole. Wherever possible we try 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

allowing proper reflection of the identities and interests of local communities.

6 We are not prescriptive on council size but, as indicated in our *Guidance*, would expect the overall number of members on a London borough council usually to be between 40 and 80. We start from the general assumption that the existing council size already secures effective and convenient local government in that borough but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against an upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified: in particular, we do not accept that an increase in a borough's electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a borough council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other boroughs.

The London Boroughs

7 Our programme of periodic electoral reviews of all 386 local authorities in England started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004. The 1992 Act requires us to review most local authorities every 10 to 15 years. However, the Act is silent on the timing of reviews by the Commission of the London boroughs. The Commission has no power to review the electoral arrangements of the City of London.

8 Most London boroughs have not been reviewed since 1977. Following discussions with local authority interests on the appropriate timing of London borough reviews, we decided to start as soon as possible after the May 1998 London local government elections so that all reviews could be completed, and the necessary orders implementing our recommendations made by the Secretary of State, in time for the next London elections scheduled for May 2002. Our reviews of the 32 London boroughs started on a phased basis between June 1998 and February 1999.

9 We have sought to ensure that all concerned were aware of our approach to the reviews. Copies of our *Guidance* were sent to all London boroughs, along with other major interests. In March 1998 we briefed chief executives at a meeting of the London branch of the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, and we also met with the Association of London Government. Since then we welcomed the opportunity to meet with chief officers and, on an all-party basis, members in the majority of individual authorities. This has enabled us to brief authorities about our policies and procedures, our objective of electoral equality having regard to local circumstances, and the approach taken by the Commission in previous reviews.

10 Before we started our work in London, the Government published for consultation a Green Paper, *Modernising Local Government – Local Democracy and Community Leadership* (February 1998) which, inter alia, promoted the possibility of London boroughs having annual elections with three-member wards so that one councillor in each ward would stand for election each year. In view of this, we decided that the order in which the London reviews are undertaken should be determined by the proportion of three-member wards in each borough under the current arrangements. On this basis, Barking & Dagenham was in the first phase of reviews.

11 The Government's subsequent White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, published in July 1998, set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. For all unitary councils, including London boroughs, it proposed elections by thirds. It also refers to local accountability being maximised where the whole electorate in a council's area is involved in elections each time they take place, thereby pointing to a pattern of three-member wards in London boroughs to reflect a system of elections by thirds.

12 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1998/99 PER programme, including the London boroughs, that until any direction is received from the Secretary of State, the Commission would continue to maintain the approach to PERs as set out in the March 1998 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we added that local authorities and other interested parties would no doubt wish to have regard to the Secretary of

State's intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas. Our general experience has been that proposals for three-member ward patterns emerged from most areas in London.

13 Finally, it should be noted that there are no parishes in London, and in fact there is no legislative provision for the establishment of parishes in London. This differentiates the reviews of London boroughs from the majority of the other electoral reviews we are carrying out elsewhere in the country, where parishes feature highly and provide the building blocks for district or borough wards.

The Review of Barking & Dagenham

14 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements for Barking & Dagenham. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in February 1977 (Report No. 185).

15 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 22 September 1998, when we wrote to Barking & Dagenham Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified the local authority associations, the Metropolitan Police, Members of Parliament and the Member of the European Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, and the headquarters of the main political parties. At the start of the review and following publication of our draft recommendations, we placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and other publicity, and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations was 14 December 1998. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

16 Stage Three began on 23 March 1999 with the publication of our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Barking & Dagenham*, and ended on 17 May 1999. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2. CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

¹⁷ The borough of Barking & Dagenham covers an area of some 3,611 hectares. It is situated between the rivers of Roding and Beam, and lies approximately nine miles from the City of London. It is primarily residential in character, with major industrial areas being located in the south of the borough, including the Ford Motor Company's Dagenham factory. Almost half of the housing in the borough is council managed, and includes the Becontree housing estate, formerly the largest municipal housing estate in Europe. There are also 900 acres of parks and open spaces, including the Eastbrookend Country Park and two nature reserves. It is traversed by the London Underground District line, the Fenchurch Street to Tilbury and Southend railway line and the Liverpool Street to Shenfield railway line.

¹⁸ To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward (the councillor:elector ratio) varies from the borough average in percentage terms. In the text which follows, this calculation may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

¹⁹ The electorate of the borough (February 1998) is 114,004. The Council currently has 51 councillors who are elected from 20 wards (Map 1 and Figure 3). Eleven wards are each represented by three councillors and nine wards elect two councillors each. As in all London boroughs, the whole council is elected together every four years. Since the last electoral review, there has been a decrease in electorate in the borough, with around 4 per cent fewer electors than two decades ago, but this has stabilised, and is expected to increase by 7 per cent over the next five years.

²⁰ At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,235 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,385 by the year 2003 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 four of the 20 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the

borough average. The worst imbalance is in Goresbrook ward in which each of the two councillors represents 20 per cent fewer electors than the borough average.

Map 1:
Existing Wards in Barking & Dagenham



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Figure 3:
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Abbey	3	7,045	2,348	5	7,399	2,466	3
2 Alibon	2	4,202	2,101	-6	4,516	2,258	-5
3 Becontree	2	5,254	2,627	18	5,254	2,627	10
4 Cambell	3	6,574	2,191	-2	7,007	2,336	-2
5 Chadwell Heath	3	6,828	2,276	2	6,970	2,323	-3
6 Eastbrook	3	6,631	2,210	-1	7,426	2,475	4
7 Eastbury	2	4,247	2,124	-5	4,247	2,124	-11
8 Fanshawe	3	6,246	2,082	-7	6,246	2,082	-13
9 Gascoigne	3	5,497	1,832	-18	6,449	2,150	-10
10 Goresbrook	2	5,350	2,675	20	5,521	2,761	16
11 Heath	3	6,649	2,216	-1	6,802	2,267	-5
12 Longbridge	3	6,799	2,266	1	7,139	2,380	0
13 Manor	2	4,783	2,392	7	4,783	2,392	0
14 Marks Gate	2	3,618	1,809	-19	3,941	1,971	-17
15 Parsloes	2	4,729	2,365	6	5,092	2,546	7
16 River	2	4,839	2,420	8	4,972	2,486	4
17 Thames	2	4,522	2,261	1	6,502	3,251	36
18 Triptons	3	6,521	2,174	-3	6,997	2,332	-2
19 Valence	3	6,404	2,135	-5	6,580	2,193	-8
20 Village	3	7,266	2,422	8	7,777	2,592	9
Totals	51	114,004	—	—	121,620	—	—
Averages	—	—	2,235	—	—	2,385	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Barking & Dagenham Borough Council's submission.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1998, electors in Marks Gate ward were relatively over-represented by 19 per cent, while electors in Goresbrook ward were relatively under-represented by 20 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

21 During Stage One we received six representations, including a borough-wide scheme from the Borough Council. 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 Barking & Dagenham*.

22 Our draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council's scheme, which achieved improved electoral equality, provided good boundaries while having regard to the statutory criteria, and proposed a pattern of entirely three-member wards. However, we moved away from the Borough Council's scheme in four areas, affecting six wards. First, we proposed an alternative ward boundary between Mayesbrook and Goresbrook wards, and put forward consequential changes to warding arrangements between Mayesbrook, Parsloes and Alibon wards in order to improve electoral equality. Second, we proposed an alternative ward boundary between Eastbury and Thames wards in order to improve projected electoral equality, following development of the Barking Reach area. We proposed that:

- (a) Barking & Dagenham Borough Council should be served by 51 councillors;
- (a) there should be 17 wards, involving changes to the boundaries of all but one of the existing wards.

Draft Recommendation

Barking & Dagenham Borough Council should comprise 51 councillors serving 17 wards.

23 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 16 of the 17 wards varying by no more than 8 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with all wards expected to vary by no more than 7 per cent from the borough average in 2003.

4. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

²⁴ During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 122 representations were received. A list of respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Barking & Dagenham Borough Council and the Commission.

Barking & Dagenham Borough Council

²⁵ The Borough Council supported our draft recommendations in their entirety. In particular, it supported the proposed ward names of Whalebone North and Whalebone South, and argued that these names had “strong and continuing” historical associations with this area.

Other Representations

²⁶ The Chadwell Heath Residents Association argued that the proposed wards of Whalebone North and Whalebone South should instead be named Chadwell Heath and Whalebone which, it argued, would better identify the communities within them. We received a further 119 submissions in relation to this area. Of those, 15 respondents opposed our proposed ward boundaries and names, with the majority favouring the retention of the status quo, while 79 respondents opposed the loss of the Chadwell Heath ward name, arguing that the new wards should be named Chadwell Heath North and Chadwell Heath South respectively. We also received 23 pro-forma letters, and two petitions containing 149 signatures, expressing the same view.

²⁷ A local resident supported our draft recommendations in full. We understand from the Borough Council that nine respondents supported our draft recommendations for the proposed wards of Whalebone North and Whalebone South.

5. ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

28 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Barking & Dagenham is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to the statutory criteria set out in the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the interests and identities of local communities – and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

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

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

31 Our *Guidance* states that, while we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, the objective of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of electoral equality, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates. We will require particular justification for schemes which result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance over 10 per cent in any ward. In reviews of predominantly

urban areas such as the London boroughs, our experience suggests that we would expect to achieve a high degree of electoral equality in all wards.

Electorate Forecasts

32 At Stage One, the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2003, projecting an increase in the electorate of 7 per cent from 114,004 to 121,620 over the five-year period from 1998 to 2003. It expected most of the growth to be in the Barking Reach area, located in the existing Thames and Goresbrook wards. The Council has estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to the unitary development plan for the borough, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries was obtained.

33 In our draft recommendations report we accepted that forecasting electorate is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

34 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

35 We indicated in our *Guidance* that we would normally expect the number of councillors serving a London borough to be in the range of 40 to 80. As already explained, the Commission's starting point is to assume that the current council size facilitates convenient and effective local government.

36 Barking & Dagenham Borough Council currently has 51 members. At Stage One, the Borough Council, Barking & Dagenham Labour

Party and Barking & Dagenham Liberal Democrats all proposed the retention of the existing council size.

37 In our draft recommendations report we 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 statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would best be met by a council of 51 members.

38 At Stage Three, we received no further representations in relation to council size. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendation for a council size of 51 as final.

Electoral Arrangements

39 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered the representations received, including those from the Borough Council, the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrat Group. From these representations some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations.

40 First, as already indicated, there was a consensus among respondents for the retention of the existing council size of 51.

41 Second, the current electoral arrangements provide for a mix of three-member and two-member wards in Barking & Dagenham, with nine two-member wards and 11 three-member wards. All representations received at Stage One agreed that there should be a pattern of 17 three-member wards for the borough, and we concur with this view.

42 Third, there was general consensus on the future ward boundaries for Barking & Dagenham, with agreement that the London Underground District Line should be used as a ward boundary wherever possible.

43 Finally, we noted the arguments put to us about community identities in the borough. We tried to reflect such considerations in our draft recommendations where it would be consistent with our objective of electoral equality, and noted that there was strong agreement locally on the boundaries of these communities, although there

was some disagreement over ward names in the north of the borough.

44 In our draft recommendations report we sought to build on the Council's proposals in order to put forward electoral arrangements which would achieve good electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. However, we made further modifications in order to achieve yet further improvements in electoral equality, while also seeking to reflect the statutory criteria. Inevitably, we could not reflect the preferences of all respondents in our draft recommendations.

45 We have reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three, and note that our draft recommendations have been strongly supported, except for ward names and boundaries in the Chadwell Heath area. In order to reflect these concerns we propose that modifications should be made to two of our proposed ward names. The following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Cambell, Goresbrook, River, Thames and Village wards;
- (b) Abbey, Eastbury, Longbridge and Gascoigne wards;
- (c) Becontree, Manor and Parsloes wards;
- (d) Alibon and Fanshawe wards;
- (e) Eastbrook, Heath, Triptons and Valence wards;
- (f) Chadwell Heath and Marks Gate wards.

46 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large map inside the back cover of the report.

Cambell, Goresbrook, River, Thames and Village wards

47 The wards of Cambell, Goresbrook, River, Thames and Village are located in the south of the borough, and are bounded by the River Thames and the London Underground District line. Cambell and Village wards are represented by three councillors, and Goresbrook, River and Thames wards by two councillors. Under existing arrangements, the wards of Cambell, River, Thames and Village all have electoral variances of less than 10 per cent. However, the number of

electors per councillor in Goresbrook ward varies from the borough average by 20 per cent. These figures are not projected to change significantly over the next five years, apart from in Thames ward which, as a result of the development of the Barking Reach area, is expected to be under-represented by 36 per cent by 2003.

48 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that Cambell ward should be divided between Goresbrook, Eastbury and Thames wards, that River ward should be combined with the north-eastern part of Goresbrook ward and that Village ward should broadly remain on its existing boundaries. Barking & Dagenham Liberal Democrats and Barking & Dagenham Labour Party both supported the Borough Council's proposals in this area.

49 In our draft recommendations report we adopted the Borough Council's proposals for River and Village wards in their entirety. However, we considered that the level of electoral inequality in the proposed Goresbrook and Thames wards would remain relatively high for a predominantly urban area and, in order to address this, we proposed transferring an area bounded by Hedgemans Road and Flamsted Road from Goresbrook ward to the proposed Mayesbrook ward, and an area bounded by Castle Road and Ripple Road from the proposed Thames ward to Eastbury ward. Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Village ward would be equal to the borough average, and it would vary from the average by 5 per cent, 7 per cent and 17 per cent in Goresbrook, River and Thames wards. In five years time Goresbrook, River, Thames and Village wards are expected to have electoral variances of 3 per cent, 2 per cent, 7 per cent and equal to the average respectively.

50 At Stage Three the Borough Council and a local resident supported our draft recommendations for these wards. No other representations were received. In the absence of other evidence at Stage Three, we remain persuaded that our draft recommendations would represent the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, and we have decided to confirm them as final.

Abbey, Eastbury, Longbridge and Gascoigne wards

51 The existing wards of Abbey, Eastbury, Longbridge and Gascoigne are located in the west of the borough, and are traversed by the London Underground District line, the London to Tilbury and Southend railway line and the East Ham and Barking by-pass. Abbey, Longbridge and Gascoigne wards are each represented by three councillors, and Eastbury ward is represented by two councillors. While Abbey, Eastbury and Longbridge wards currently enjoy reasonable electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average by 5 per cent, 5 per cent and 1 per cent respectively, electoral equality in Gascoigne ward is poor with 18 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average. In five years time, these figures are not projected to change significantly in Abbey, Longbridge or Gascoigne wards. However Eastbury ward is projected to have 11 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average by 2003.

52 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that the boundary between Abbey and Gascoigne wards should be modified to run down St Erkewald road to its junction with the London to Tilbury and Southend railway line, and it also proposed that the eastern boundary of Eastbury ward should be modified to take in the part of Cambell ward bordered by Ripple Road and Flamsted Road. Longbridge ward would retain its existing boundaries. Barking & Dagenham Liberal Democrats and Barking & Dagenham Labour Party supported the Borough Council's proposals.

53 In our draft recommendations report we endorsed the Borough Council's proposals for the wards of Abbey, Gascoigne and Longbridge. While we noted that under these proposals the level of electoral imbalance would remain relatively high in Abbey and Gascoigne wards, we considered that further improvements would only be possible at the expense of reflecting the interests and identities of communities and providing strong and logical boundaries. However, as indicated earlier, we proposed a boundary modification between the proposed Eastbury and Thames wards in the interests of electoral equality. Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed wards of Abbey,

Eastbury, Gascoigne and Longbridge would vary from the borough average by 5 per cent, 5 per cent, 8 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. While this level of electoral equality is not projected to change significantly in Abbey ward, it is expected to improve in Eastbury, Longbridge and Gascoigne wards, which would all have electoral variances of less than 2 per cent by 2003.

54 At Stage Three the Borough Council and a local resident supported our draft recommendations for these wards. No other representations were received. We are therefore content to confirm our draft recommendations, which we consider represent the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

Becontree, Manor and Parsloes wards

55 The existing wards of Becontree, Manor and Parsloes are situated in the west of the borough, and contain Mayesbrook Park and the University of East London. Each of the existing wards is represented by two councillors. Currently, all three wards have a relatively high degree of electoral inequality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average by 18 per cent, 7 per cent and 6 per cent respectively. While electoral equality is projected to improve in Manor ward, there would still be relatively high electoral imbalance in Becontree and Parsloes wards, which would have electoral variances of 10 per cent and 7 per cent in 2003.

56 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that Manor ward should be divided between the existing Becontree and Parsloes ward, and that the London Underground District Line should form the southern boundary to Parsloes ward. As a consequence of these changes, the Council proposed that Parsloes ward be renamed Mayesbrook ward. Barking & Dagenham Liberal Democrats and Barking & Dagenham Labour Party supported the Borough Council's proposals for these wards.

57 In our draft recommendations report we noted that the Borough Council's proposals would achieve significant improvements in electoral equality, and we adopted their proposals for Becontree ward in their entirety. However, as discussed earlier, we proposed transferring an area bordered by Flamsted Road and Hedgemans Road from Goresbrook ward to Mayesbrook ward,

and we proposed a consequential boundary modification between Mayesbrook and Parsloes ward to transfer 241 electors into Parsloes ward. Under our proposals, there would be improved electoral equality in Becontree and Mayesbrook wards, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average by 7 per cent and 1 per cent now, improving to equal to the average and 2 per cent in five years time.

58 At Stage Three, the Borough Council and a local resident supported our draft recommendations for these wards. No other representations were received. We are therefore content to confirm our draft recommendations for these wards, which we consider represent the best balance between electoral equality and respecting the interests and identities of local communities.

Alibon and Fanshawe wards

59 The existing wards of Alibon and Fanshawe are located in the centre of the borough. The London Underground District line forms the southern boundary to both wards, and Fanshawe ward contains a large part of Parsloes Park. Alibon ward is represented by two councillors, and Fanshawe ward by three councillors. Under current arrangements, the number of electors per councillor varies from the borough average by 6 per cent in Alibon ward, and by 7 per cent in Fanshawe ward. While this level of electoral equality is projected to remain relatively constant in Alibon ward, it is expected that the number of electors per councillor in Fanshawe ward would vary from the borough average by 13 per cent in five years time.

60 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that Pondfield Park should form the boundary between Alibon and Eastbrook wards, and that the boundary between Fanshawe ward and Alibon ward should be modified, with the new boundary running down the centre of Halbutt Street and the back of Barnmead Road. It proposed that the remainder of Fanshawe ward be combined with Valence ward south of Lindisfarne Road and Valence Wood Road and be renamed Parsloes ward. Barking & Dagenham Labour Party and Barking & Dagenham Liberal Democrats both supported the Borough Council's proposals.

61 In our draft recommendations report we noted that the Borough Council's proposals had achieved local consensus, and we were content to adopt them as the basis for our draft recommendations. However, as a consequence of our proposals for Mayesbrook ward, we proposed transferring an area bounded by Porters Avenue and Wren Road from Mayesbrook ward to Parsloes ward, and transferring the whole of Barnmead and Harris Roads from Parsloes to Alibon ward. Under our draft recommendations, Alibon and Parsloes wards would have 2 per cent and 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively now, and 3 per cent and 6 per cent fewer in five years time.

62 At Stage Three the Borough Council and a local resident supported our draft recommendations for these wards. No other representations were received. We are therefore content to endorse our draft proposals for these wards, which we consider represent the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, as final.

Eastbrook, Heath, Triptons and Valence wards

63 Under current arrangements, the existing wards of Eastbrook, Heath, Triptons and Valence are each represented by three councillors. At present, electoral equality is reasonable, with the number of electors per councillor in the four wards varying from the borough average by 1 per cent, 1 per cent, 3 per cent and 5 per cent respectively. However, while this level of electoral equality is expected to remain relatively constant in Triptons ward over the next five years, Eastbrook, Heath and Valence wards are projected to have electoral variances of 4 per cent, 5 per cent and 8 per cent respectively by 2003.

64 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that the existing Triptons ward should be divided, with the area south of Green Lane and west of Lymington Road being combined with Valence ward north of Valence Wood road. The remainder of Triptons ward would be combined with part of Marks Gate ward in a new Whalebone South ward, and the remainder of Valence ward would be divided between the existing Heath and Fanshawe wards. The Borough Council also proposed a minor boundary modification between Heath and Eastbrook wards and between Eastbrook and Alibon wards. Barking & Dagenham Labour Party and Barking & Dagenham Liberal Democrats both

supported the Borough Council's proposals for this area. We received one other submission, from a local resident, who opposed the transfer of the Fordyke estate from the existing Triptons ward to Whalebone South ward and put forward alternative warding arrangements.

65 In our draft recommendations report we endorsed the Borough Council's proposals for this area which we considered had achieved a degree of local support. We were not persuaded that the transfer of the Fordyke estate to Whalebone South ward would have an adverse effect on communities in the area. Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Valence ward would vary from the borough average by 1 per cent, and in Eastbrook and Heath wards by 1 per cent and 7 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is forecast to improve over the next five years in Heath ward, with the number of electors per councillor projected to vary from the borough average by 2 per cent in 2003, while Eastbrook and Valence wards would have electoral variances of 4 per cent and 1 per cent respectively.

66 At Stage Three the Borough Council and a local resident supported our draft recommendations. No other representations were received. We are therefore content to confirm our draft recommendations for these wards, which we consider represent the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, as final.

Chadwell Heath and Marks Gate wards

67 The existing wards of Chadwell Heath and Marks Gate are located in the north of the borough and are bordered by the boroughs of Havering and Redbridge. Chadwell Heath ward is represented by three councillors, while Marks Gate ward is represented by two councillors. Chadwell Heath ward currently enjoys a satisfactory level of electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average by 2 per cent. However, electoral equality in Marks Gate ward is poor, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average by 19 per cent. The level of electoral equality is projected to remain relatively constant over the next five years in both wards.

68 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed that Marks Gate ward should be expanded to include part of Chadwell Heath ward, with the new boundary following the High Road until the junction with Whalebone Lane. It proposed that the remainder of Chadwell Heath ward be combined with part of the existing Triptons ward, as discussed earlier, and part of the existing Heath ward, with the boundary running north of Green Lane to the borough boundary. The Borough Council proposed that the two new wards should be named Whalebone North and Whalebone South. Barking & Dagenham Labour Party supported the Borough Council's proposals. Barking & Dagenham Liberal Democrats supported the proposed ward boundaries, but argued that the proposed wards should be named Chadwell Heath North and Chadwell Heath South. This view was supported by the Chadwell Heath Residents Association and a local resident in separate submissions.

69 In our draft recommendations report we endorsed the Borough Council's proposals for this area. While we accepted that the Chadwell Heath area was a distinct community within the borough, we noted that the proposed new warding arrangements would include parts of Heath and Tripton wards, and we were not persuaded that retaining the name Chadwell Heath would satisfactorily reflect the diverse interests and identities of the constituent communities. We therefore adopted the Borough Council's proposed names of Whalebone North and Whalebone South wards. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the proposed wards would vary from the borough average by 4 per cent and 2 per cent respectively. In five years time the number of electors per councillor in both wards would vary from the borough average by 2 per cent.

70

and identities of communities. Under this proposal Whalebone North ward would be named Chadwell Heath ward and Whalebone South ward would be named Whalebone ward. In all other areas, we are confirming our draft recommendations, which we consider represent the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

Conclusions

73 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided to endorse our draft recommendations, subject to the following amendment:

- (a) Whalebone North and Whalebone South wards should be known as Chadwell Heath and Whalebone wards.

74 We conclude that, in Barking & Dagenham:

- (a) the number of councillors should remain unchanged at 51;
- (b) there should be 17 wards, three less than at present, which would involve changes to the boundaries of all but one of the existing wards.

75 Figure 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1998 and 2003 electorate figures.

76 As shown in Figure 4, our final recommendations for Barking & Dagenham Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards where the number of electors per councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from four to one. This balance of representation is expected to improve further with all wards expected to vary by less than 7 per cent in 2003. Our final recommendations are set out in more detail in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of this report.

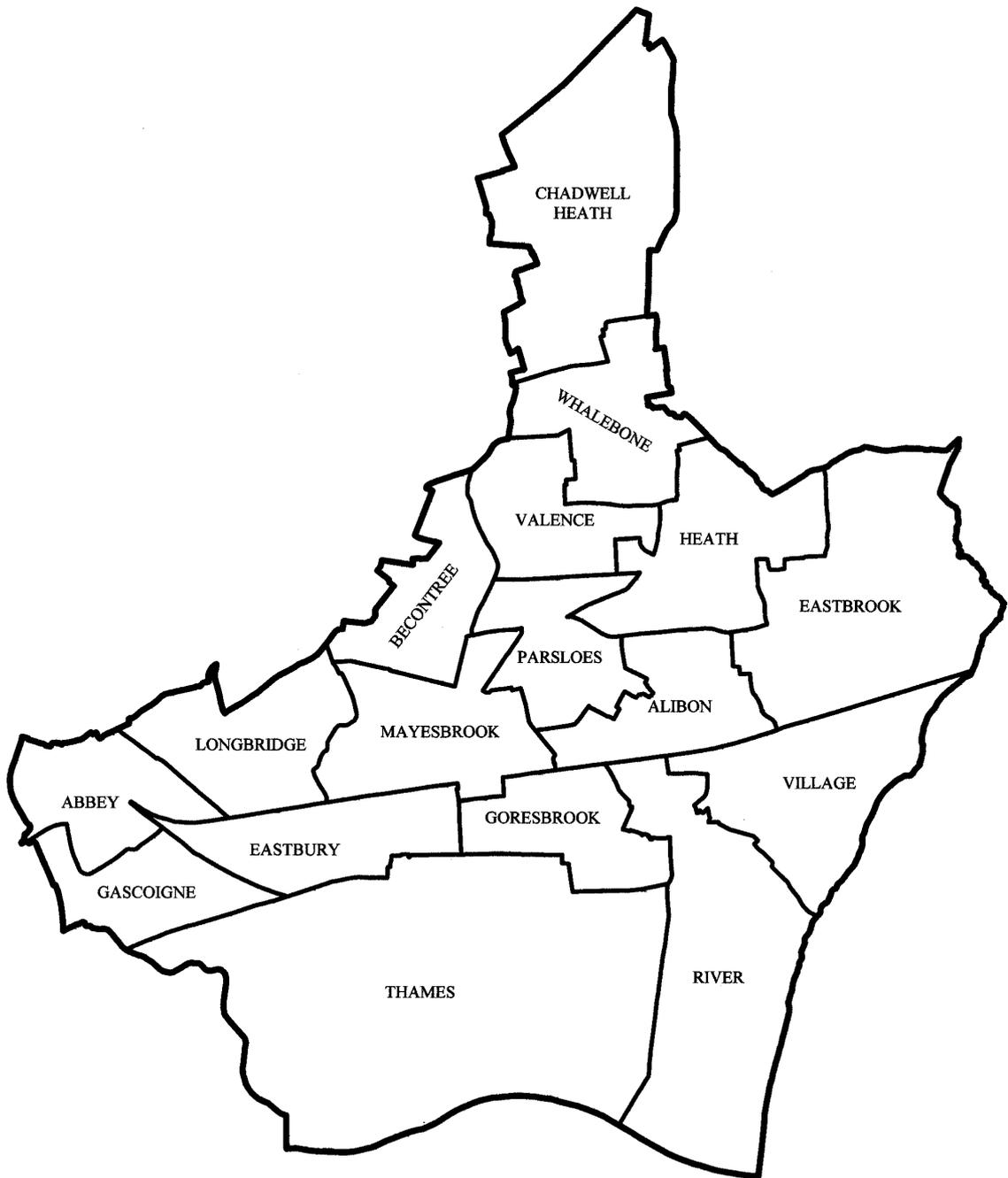
Final Recommendation

Barking & Dagenham Borough Council should comprise 51 councillors serving 17 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large map in the back of the report.

Figure 4 :
Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	1998 electorate		2003 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	51	51	51	51
Number of wards	20	17	20	17
Average number of electors per councillor	2,235	2,235	2,385	2,385
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	4	1	5	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	0	0	1	0

Map 2:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Barking & Dagenham



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6. NEXT STEPS

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

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

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

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

APPENDIX

Draft Recommendations for Barking & Dagenham

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations only in the proposed change of the ward names of Whalebone North and Whalebone South to Chadwell Heath and Whalebone.

