

**Local Government
Boundary Commission
For England
Report No. 576**

Review of Electoral Arrangements

**WELWYN HATFIELD
IN THE COUNTY OF
HERTFORDSHIRE**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

BOUNDARY COMMISSION

FOR ENGLAND

REPORT NO. **576**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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TO THE RT. HON. DOUGLAS HURD CBE MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT

PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE DISTRICT OF WELWYN
HATFIELD IN THE COUNTY OF HERTFORDSHIRE

BACKGROUND

1. The present electoral arrangements for the District of Welwyn Hatfield date from 6th May 1976, when the District of Welwyn Hatfield Electoral Arrangements Order 1976, giving effect to the proposals contained in our Report No. 68, came into force. Under these arrangements the District Council consists of 43 members representing 15 wards; 13 wards returning 3 members and 2 wards returning 2 members each. The council is elected by thirds.
2. In November 1986 Welwyn Hatfield District Council wrote to us drawing attention to the under-representation of the Haldens ward which had been out of balance with other wards since 1982 and where, by 1991, there would be a further significant increase in electorate. It stated that the electoral imbalance could be overcome by the division of the 3-member ward into two separate wards, Haldens and Panshanger, each returning three members. The district council suggested that, alternatively, the electorate in Haldens ward could be reduced by transferring parts of the ward to two adjacent wards. It also pointed out that Welwyn East ward was also subject to new development and could, by 1991, justify an increase in representation from two to three councillors.
3. In view of the serious imbalance in the Haldens ward, we decided to conduct a further electoral review of the district electoral arrangements, in accordance with the provisions of section 50(3) of the Local Government Act 1972. We formally announced the start of the review on 20th January 1987 in a letter to the district council, in which we invited it to prepare and submit to us a draft scheme of the electoral arrangements for the whole of its area, having regard

to Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972. Copies of the letter were also sent for information to Hertfordshire County Council, all the parish councils in the district, the members of parliament for the constituencies concerned, the headquarters of the main political parties, local newspapers and the local government press. The start of the review was also announced by public and press notices.

DISTRICT COUNCIL'S DRAFT SCHEME

4. The district council submitted a draft scheme to us on 14th September 1987. The scheme provided for sixteen wards, fifteen returning three councillors and one returning two councillors, giving a revised council size of 47. Ten wards; Handside, Peartree, Hollybush, Howlands, Sherrards, Hatfield North, Hatfield Central, Hatfield West, Welham Green and Redhall, and Northaw were the same as the existing wards. Details of the 1987 electorate and forecast figures for 1992 were provided in support.

5. The district council said its main objective was to correct the poor standard of representation in Haldens ward and, to achieve this, it proposed dividing the ward to create two new wards of Haldens and Panshanger, each returning three members. The district council also suggested that the under-representation of the electorate in the Welwyn East ward should be resolved by regrouping the parish wards which, at present, form Welwyn East and Welwyn West; to make up the new district wards of Welwyn North, returning two members, and Welwyn South, returning three members. The district council further proposed that the Hatfield parish ward of Newgate Street/Woodhill should be transferred from Hatfield East district ward, where the electorate is under-represented, to Brookmans Park and Little Heath district ward, where the electorate is over-represented. This would produce a better standard of representation in both district wards.

ORDNANCE SURVEY

6. Ordnance Survey examined the new ward boundaries proposed by the district council and suggested two amendments to achieve better defined boundaries.

One concerned the proposed Panshanger and Haldens district wards, which lie in the unparished area of Welwyn Garden City, where an alternative boundary line tied to the perimeter of the golf course was suggested. The other concerned the proposed boundary between the district wards of Welwyn North and Welwyn South, in the area near the A1/Roman Road junction, which would avoid splitting a group of properties. We noted that this latter suggestion would be dependent upon a minor change to the boundary between the parish ward of Danesbury and the parish ward of Mardley Heath (both in the parish of Welwyn) if the provisions of paragraph 3(2)(b) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 were to be met. We also noted, however, that in addition to providing a better boundary, the suggested transfer would better reflect local ties.

AN ALTERNATIVE SCHEME

7. The district council reported that the only objection to their draft scheme had been received from Welwyn Hatfield District Conservative Party, who had submitted an alternative scheme based on a council size of 49 members. The Conservative Party supported the district council's proposals to divide Haldens ward to create Panshanger ward, and to form the new wards of Welwyn North and Welwyn South. It expressed concern, however, at the council's proposal for the parish ward of Newgate Street/Woodhill to be transferred from the district ward of Hatfield East to the district ward of Brookmans Park and Little Heath. It felt that, as this proposal was submitted by the majority party, the motive for it was questionable.

8. The Conservative Party also felt that it would be desirable to aim at reverting to the councillor/electorate ratios which existed in 1973 when Welwyn Hatfield District Council was formed. It stated, however, that this would not be possible in the parish of Hatfield because the size of the parish wards and the provision in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 about breaching parish ward boundaries, made it impossible to propose district wards as they would have preferred. The Conservative Party believed that there were exceptional circumstances and that the Commission should exceed its normally

preferred maximum of three members per ward in this case. It proposed, therefore, that the wards of Hatfield East and Hatfield West should have four members each.

OUR DRAFT PROPOSALS

9. We examined both the schemes submitted. None of the proposed district ward boundaries would cross the boundaries of unwarded parishes or parish wards, so the requirements of paragraph 3(2)(b) and (c) of Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act were met. We noted that both schemes remedied imbalances in Haldens ward and in the Welwyn wards. Both schemes would produce six wards which would be slightly under- or over-represented, but no wards which would be markedly so. In our view, however, the Conservative Party had not established that the circumstances were sufficiently exceptional to justify a departure from our usual practice of not recommending wards with more than three members. Moreover, its scheme did not produce a better standard of representation than the district council's. We decided, therefore, that our draft proposals should be based on the district council's scheme and were satisfied that, in the particular circumstances of Welwyn Hatfield, bearing in mind the change in population and its distribution throughout the district, the increase in council size from 43 to 47 members was justified.

10. We considered, however, that the scheme could be improved if the boundaries between the parish wards of Danesbury and Mardley Heath were changed, in accordance with Ordnance Survey's suggestion. We also considered that marginally better standards of representation might be achieved in the four proposed district wards in Hatfield but, if the provisions of paragraph 3(2)(b) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 were to be met, changes would also need to be made to parish ward boundaries in the parish of Hatfield. We therefore asked the district council to consider reviewing parish ward boundaries in Welwyn and Hatfield.

11. The district council replied to the effect that it was prepared to make an order changing the boundary between the Welwyn parish wards of Danesbury and Mardley Heath, but that it was not prepared to make an order changing the ward

pattern in the parish of Hatfield since the current one properly reflected local affinities.

12. We noted the district council's response and its reasons for declining to change parish ward boundaries in Hatfield. We did not consider that the circumstances justified breaching parish ward boundaries in the town, bearing in mind the provisions of both Section 78 and Schedule 11 to the Act. We were satisfied that the proposals contained in the district council's draft scheme provided acceptable standards of representation and that if serious imbalances were to arise in the future, these could be remedied during the mandatory review of electoral arrangements for all principal areas which is due to commence in 1996.

13. We formulated our draft proposals, therefore, on the basis of the district council's scheme, modified to take account of the agreed revision of the parish ward boundary near the A1/Roman Road junction in Welwyn and the small technical amendment suggested by Ordnance Survey between the proposed Panshanger and Haldens district wards. We decided, however, to set out in our draft proposals letter our reasons for adhering to the district council's scheme in Hatfield.

14. Our draft proposals were issued on 15 March 1989. Comments were invited by 25 April 1989. Details were sent to everyone who had received our consultation letter. Notices were also inserted in the local press announcing that the draft proposals had been issued and were available for inspection at the district council's offices.

RESPONSE TO DRAFT PROPOSALS

15. We received two letters in response to our draft proposals. One from Welwyn Hatfield District Council supported our draft proposals and the other from Welwyn Parish Council welcomed the proposed transfer of a group of houses near the A1/Roman Road junction from the Danesbury parish ward to the Mardley Heath parish ward and, hence, from the Welwyn South district ward to the Welwyn North district ward.

FINAL PROPOSALS

16. We considered these responses, noting that there were no objections to our draft proposals for any representations supporting the rearrangement of parish wards in Hatfield, or suggesting that the circumstances might warrant breaching parish ward boundaries.

17. We are satisfied that our draft proposals will provide a better standard of representation throughout the district. We are also satisfied that the electoral arrangements based on our draft proposals will meet the requirements of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft proposals as our final proposals. A map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries is submitted with this report and a list of proposed ward names and the number of councillors proposed for each ward, together with an outline map of proposed wards, are attached.

PUBLICATION

18. In accordance with section 60(5)(b) of the 1972 Act, a copy of this report, together with a copy of the map, is being sent to Welwyn Hatfield District Council and will be available for inspection at the council's main offices. A copy of this report is also being sent to all those who received the consultation letter.

Signed

G J ELLERTON (Chairman)

J G POWELL (Deputy Chairman)

G E CHERRY

K F J ENNALS

G R PRENTICE

HELEN SARKANY

BRIAN SHOLES

S T GARRISH
Secretary

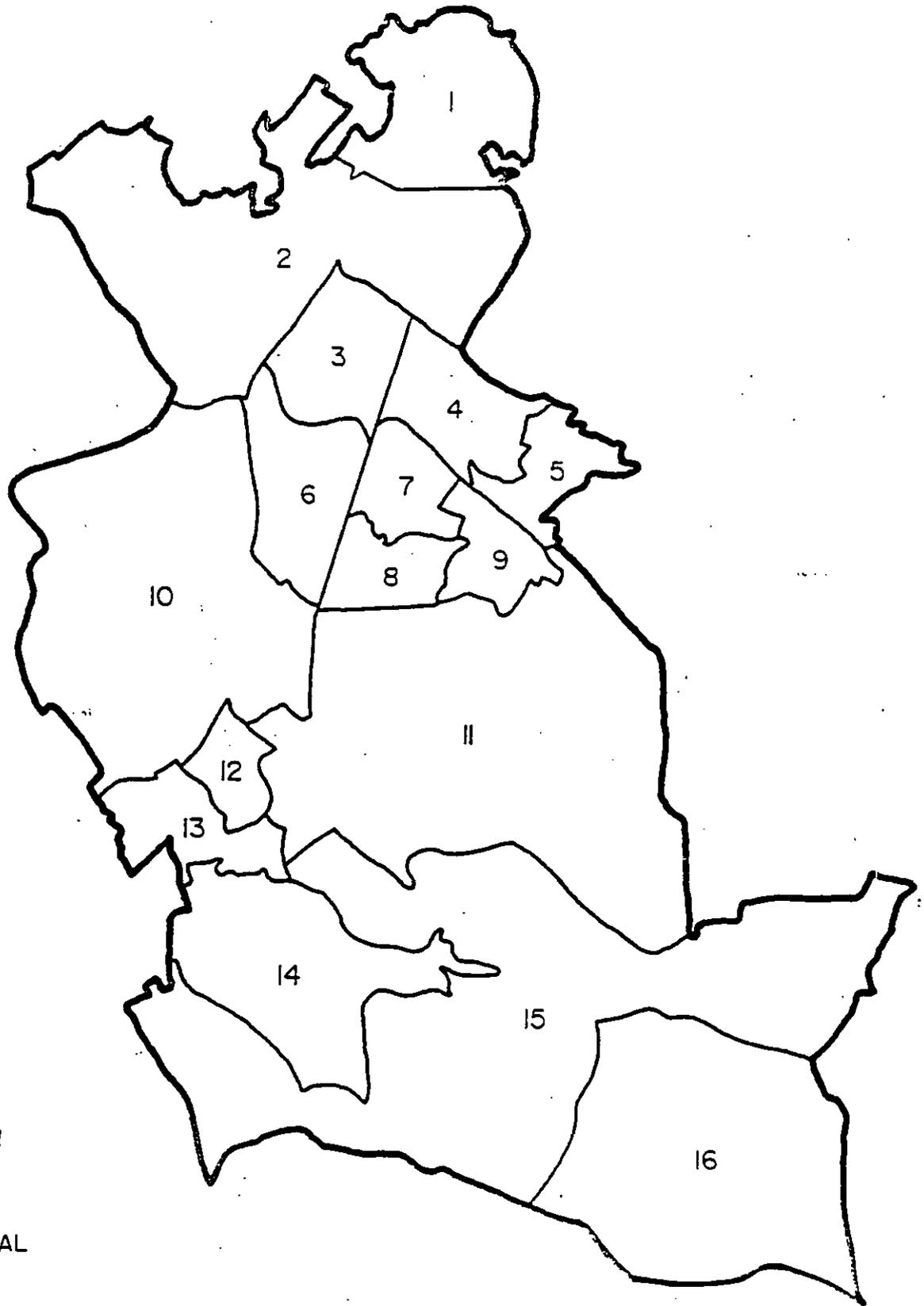
24th May

1989

WELWYN HATFIELD DISTRICT COUNCILPROPOSED WARDS AND NUMBER OF COUNCILLORS

<u>NAME OF WARD</u>	<u>NUMBER OF COUNCILLORS</u>
Handside	3
Peartree	3
Hollybush	3
Howlands	3
Sherrands	3
Haldens	3
Panshanger	3
Hatfield North	3
Hatfield Central	3
Hatfield West	3
Hatfield East	3
Brookmans Park and Little Heath	3
Welwyn Green and Redhall	3
Northaw	3
Welwyn North	2
Welwyn South	3
	—
Total	<u>47</u>

WELWYN HATFIELD DISTRICT
PROPOSED WARDS



1. WELWYN NORTH
2. WELWYN SOUTH
3. SHERRARDS
4. HALDENS
5. PANSHANGER
6. HANDSIDE
7. PEARTREE
8. HOLLYBUSH
9. HOWLANDS
10. HATFIELD NORTH
11. HATFIELD EAST
12. HATFIELD CENTRAL
13. HATFIELD WEST
14. WELHAM GREEN AND REDHALL
15. BROOKMANS PARK AND LITTLE HEATH
16. NORTHAW

