

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for East Cambridgeshire

Report to the Electoral Commission

April 2002

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Large maps illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Ely, Littleport and Soham are inserted inside the back cover of this report

WHAT IS THE BOUNDARY COMMITTEE FOR ENGLAND?

The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. The functions of the Local Government Commission for England were transferred to the Electoral Commission and its Boundary Committee on 1 April 2002 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001 (SI 2001 No 3692). The Order also transferred to the Electoral Commission the functions of the Secretary of State in relation to taking decisions on recommendations for changes to local authority electoral arrangements and implementing them.

Members of the Committee are:

Pamela Gordon (Chair)
Professor Michael Clarke CBE
Kru Desai
Robin Gray
Joan Jones
Ann M Kelly
Professor Colin Mellors

Archie Gall (Director)

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

This report sets out our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of East Cambridgeshire.

SUMMARY

The Local Government Commission for England (LGCE) began a review of East Cambridgeshire's electoral arrangements on 17 April 2001. It published its draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 27 November 2001, after which it undertook an eight-week period of consultation. As a consequence of the transfer of functions referred to earlier, it falls to us, the Boundary Committee for England, to complete the work of the LGCE and submit final recommendations to the Electoral Commission.

- **This report summarises the representations received by the LGCE during consultation on its draft recommendations, and contains our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission.**

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

- **in 12 of the 18 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and six wards vary by more than 20 per cent;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to improve slightly, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 11 wards and by more than 20 per cent in five wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 85–86) are that:

- **East Cambridgeshire District Council should have 39 councillors, two more than at present;**
- **there should be 19 wards, instead of 18 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 14 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one, and four wards should retain their existing boundaries.**

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 12 of the proposed 19 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in only one ward, Downham Villages, expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district by 2006.**

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 parish of Ely;**
- **new warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Littleport, Soham and Woodditton.**

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Electoral Commission, which will not make an Order implementing them before 4 June 2002:

**The Secretary
Electoral Commission
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

Table 1: Final Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1 Bottisham	2	The parishes of Bottisham, Brinkley, Burrough Green, Lode and Westley Waterless	Map 2
2 Burwell	3	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parish of Burwell	Map 2
3 Cheveley	2	The parishes of Ashley, Cheveley and Kirtling and the proposed Woodditton Urban parish ward of Woodditton parish	Maps 2 and A2
4 Downham Villages	2	The parishes of Coveney, Downham, Mepal and Witcham	Map 2
5 Dullingham Villages	1	The parishes of Dullingham and Stetchworth and the proposed Woodditton Rural parish ward of Woodditton parish	Maps 2 and A2
6 Ely East	2	Part of Ely parish (the proposed Ely East parish ward)	Large map and Map 2
7 Ely North	3	Part of Ely parish (the proposed Ely North parish ward)	Large map and Map 2
8 Ely South	2	Part of Ely parish (the proposed Ely South parish ward)	Large map and Map 2
9 Ely West	2	Part of Ely parish (the proposed Ely West parish ward)	Large map and Map 2
10 Fordham Villages	2	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Chippenham, Fordham, Kennett and Snailwell	Map 2
11 Haddenham	3	The parishes of Haddenham, Wentworth and Witchford	Map 2
12 Isleham	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parish of Isleham	Map 2
13 Littleport East	2	Part of Littleport parish (the proposed Littleport East parish ward)	Large map and Map 2
14 Littleport West	2	Part of Littleport parish (the proposed Littleport West parish ward)	Large map and Map 2
15 Soham North	2	Part of Soham parish (the proposed Soham North parish ward)	Large map and Map 2
16 Soham South	3	The parish of Wicken; part of Soham parish (the proposed Soham South parish ward)	Large map and Map 2
17 Stretham	2	The parishes of Stretham, Thetford and Wilburton	Map 2
18 Sutton	2	The parish of Sutton	Map 2
19 The Swaffhams	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Reach, Swaffham Bulbeck and Swaffham Prior	Map 2

Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.

2 The wards on the above table are illustrated on Map 2, Maps A1–A2 in Appendix A and the large maps at the back of the report.

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 East Cambridgeshire

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Bottisham	2	2,901	1,451	6	2,910	1,455	-1
2 Burwell	3	4,391	1,464	7	4,480	1,493	1
3 Cheveley	2	3,042	1,521	11	3,110	1,555	6
4 Downham Villages	2	3,105	1,553	13	3,270	1,635	11
5 Dullingham Villages	1	1,512	1,512	10	1,520	1,520	3
6 Ely East	2	2,808	1,404	2	2,940	1,470	0
7 Ely North	3	3,626	1,209	-12	4,416	1,472	0
8 Ely South	2	1,482	741	-46	2,740	1,370	-7
9 Ely West	2	2,754	1,377	0	2,784	1,392	-6
10 Fordham Villages	2	2,638	1,319	-4	2,680	1,340	-9
11 Haddenham	3	4,241	1,414	3	4,290	1,430	-3
12 Isleham	1	1,607	1,607	17	1,610	1,610	9
13 Littleport East	2	2,598	1,299	-5	3,020	1,510	3
14 Littleport West	2	2,682	1,341	-2	3,090	1,545	5
15 Soham North	2	2,470	1,235	-10	3,050	1,525	4
16 Soham South	3	4,827	1,609	17	4,550	1,517	3
17 Stretham	2	2,746	1,373	0	2,780	1,390	-6
18 Sutton	2	2,585	1,293	-6	2,680	1,340	-9
19 The Swaffhams	1	1,530	1,530	11	1,530	1,530	4
Totals	39	53,545	-	-	57,450	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,373	-	-	1,473	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by East Cambridgeshire 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 East Cambridgeshire. The five districts in Cambridgeshire have now been reviewed as part of the programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England started by the LGCE in 1996. We have inherited that programme, which we currently expect to complete in 2004.

2 East Cambridgeshire's last review was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which reported to the Secretary of State in July 1980 (Report no. 389). The electoral arrangements of Cambridgeshire County Council were last reviewed in December 1983 (Report no. 460). We expect to begin reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements towards the end of the year.

3 In making final recommendations to the Electoral Commission, we have had regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No 3692), i.e. the need to:
 - a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
 - b) secure effective and convenient local government; and
 - c) achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of East Cambridgeshire was conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (LGCE, fourth edition, published in December 2000). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review.

5 Our task is to make recommendations to the Electoral Commission 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 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.

7 The LGCE was not prescriptive on council size. Insofar as East Cambridgeshire is concerned, it started from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but was willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, the LGCE found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and stated that any proposal for an increase in council size would need to be fully justified. In particular, it did 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.

8 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 17 April 2001, when the LGCE wrote to East Cambridgeshire District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. It also notified Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Constabulary, the local authority associations, the County of Cambridgeshire Association of Local Councils, Members of Parliament with constituencies in the district, the Members of the European Parliament for the Eastern region and the headquarters of the main political parties. It placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the review further. The LGCE's Stage One consultation period was put into abeyance from 10 May 2001 until 7 June 2001 as a consequence of the General Election; the closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 13 August 2001. At Stage Two it considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared its draft recommendations.

9 Stage Three began on 27 November 2001, with the publication of the LGCE's report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for East Cambridgeshire*, and ended on 29 January 2002. During this period comments were sought from the public and any other interested parties on the preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four the draft recommendations were reconsidered in the light of the Stage Three consultation and we now publish the final recommendations.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

10 The district of East Cambridgeshire covers an area of 65,516 hectares on the eastern side of the county of Cambridgeshire. It is bounded by the county of Norfolk to the north and east, the county of Suffolk to the south-east, the district of Fenland to the north-west, the district of Huntingdonshire to the west and the district of South Cambridgeshire to the south-west. The district has a population of 67,900 and is mainly farmland. It contains four significantly populated areas, Ely, Littleport, Soham and Burwell, which account for just over half of the district's population. The district is entirely parished, with 35 parishes in total.

11 The electorate of the district is 53,545 (February 2001). The Council presently has 37 members who are elected from 18 wards, five of which are relatively urban in Ely, Littleport and Soham, with the remainder being mainly rural. One ward is represented by five councillors, one is represented by four councillors, two are each represented by three councillors, eight are each represented by two councillors and six are single-member wards. The Council is elected as a whole every four years.

12 To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, the LGCE 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 figure may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

13 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,447 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,553 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic change and migration since the last review, the number of electors per councillor in 12 of the 18 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, six wards by more than 20 per cent and two wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalances are in Cheveley ward where each councillor represents 34 per cent fewer electors than the district average, and in Ely Northern ward where each councillor represents 34 per cent more electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in East Cambridgeshire

Table 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Bottisham	2	2,221	1,111	-23	2,230	1,115	-28
2 Burwell	3	4,391	1,464	1	4,480	1,493	-4
3 Cheveley	2	1,906	953	-34	1,920	960	-38
4 Downham	2	2,434	1,217	-16	2,480	1,240	-20
5 Dullingham Villages	1	1,711	1,711	18	1,720	1,720	11
6 Ely Northern	2	3,884	1,942	34	4,330	2,165	39
7 Ely Southern	2	2,278	1,139	-21	2,380	1,190	-23
8 Ely West	3	4,524	1,508	4	6,170	2,057	32
9 Fordham Villages	2	2,638	1,319	-9	2,680	1,340	-14
10 Haddenham	2	3,334	1,667	15	3,350	1,675	8
11 Isleham	1	1,607	1,607	11	1,610	1,610	4
12 Littleport	4	5,268	1,317	-9	6,110	1,528	-2
13 Soham	5	7,297	1,459	1	7,600	1,520	-2
14 Stretham	1	1,835	1,835	27	1,850	1,850	19
15 Sutton	2	3,258	1,629	13	3,470	1,735	12
16 The Swaffhams	1	1,530	1,530	6	1,530	1,530	-1
17 Witchford	1	1,821	1,821	26	1,870	1,870	20
18 Woodditton	1	1,608	1,608	11	1,670	1,670	8
Totals	37	53,545	-	-	57,450	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,447	-	-	1,553	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by East Cambridgeshire 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 2001, electors in Cheveley ward were relatively over-represented by 34 per cent, while electors in Ely Northern ward were significantly under-represented by 34 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

14 During Stage One the LGCE received nine representations, including a district-wide scheme from East Cambridgeshire District Council, and representations from Cambridgeshire County Council, two district councillors and five parish councils. In the light of these representations and evidence available to it, the LGCE reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in its report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for East Cambridgeshire*.

15 The LGCE's draft recommendations were based on the District Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality. However, the LGCE moved away from the District Council's proposals in the southern part of the district and in Ely, in order to improve electoral equality further and bearing in mind local community identities and interests. The LGCE noted the support given to large elements of the Council's proposals, and the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties. However, the LGCE noted that the District Council's proposals resulted in an incorrect allocation of councillors for Ely. After giving careful consideration to the best allocation of councillors between Ely and the remainder of the district, the LGCE concluded that the best allocation could be met under a council size of 39, which had also been proposed by Councillor Twentyman. It proposed that:

- East Cambridgeshire District Council should be served by 39 councillors, compared with the current 37, representing 19 wards, one more than at present;
- the boundaries of 14 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one, while four wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- there should be new warding arrangements for the parishes of Ely, Littleport, Soham and Woodditton.

Draft Recommendation

East Cambridgeshire District Council should comprise 39 councillors, serving 19 wards. The whole council should continue to be elected every four years.

16 The LGCE's proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 12 of the 19 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with only one ward, Downham Villages, varying by more than 10 per cent from the average by 2006.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

17 During the consultation on its draft recommendations report, the LGCE received eleven representations. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of East Cambridgeshire District Council.

East Cambridgeshire District Council

18 East Cambridgeshire District Council supported the draft recommendations in the centre and north of the district, and particularly supported the allocation of an additional district councillor to Ely. However, the Council opposed the draft recommendations for the southern parishes, and instead submitted revised proposals based on Councillor Twentyman's Stage One proposal, allocating an additional councillor to the southern parishes. However, given that the Council supported the proposal to allocate a further councillor to Ely, this would increase the council size to 40. The Council further proposed three minor boundary amendments in the towns of Littleport and Ely, and a reallocation of city councillors in Ely.

Cambridgeshire County Council

19 Cambridgeshire County Council reiterated its Stage One view that more importance should be placed on coterminosity between district wards and county electoral divisions. The County Council also stated that the Commission should respect any proposals on which there was consensus between District and Parish/Town Councils, and that it was concerned about the timing of the review.

Parish Councils

20 Seven representations were received from parish, town and city councils in the area during Stage Three. Bottisham Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations for Bottisham ward, and stated that its "natural affinity is to Lode and the parishes of Swaffham Bulbeck and Swaffham Prior, and this is the configuration of the ward that we feel would best serve our residents' interests". City of Ely Council supported our warding arrangements for Ely, in particular the allocation of an additional district councillor. Haddenham Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations for Haddenham ward. It stated that "none of the local ties which exist with Haddenham and Wilburton exist at all between Haddenham and Witchford, which are at least three miles apart". It suggested a three-member ward comprising the parishes of Wentworth, Witchford, Little Thetford and Stretham, retaining the existing two-member Haddenham ward. Littleport Parish Council stated that it "could see no point in the exercise to ward a parish of this size and therefore were not in favour of the recommendations for Littleport".

21 Reach Parish Council supported the draft recommendations for remaining in a ward with The Swaffhams, although it further noted that the District Council proposed an enlarged ward, also including Bottisham and Lode parishes, which, it stated, "is probably necessary" and with which it therefore agreed. Soham Town Council supported the draft recommendations for the district in general, but opposed the warding of Soham, stating that it saw no justification in dividing a parish in order to facilitate district warding. Woodditton Parish Council supported the warding arrangements for its parish. However, it objected to the allocation of eight parish councillors to the urban ward and three to the rural, contending that the majority of the current parish councillors are linked to the rural part of the parish. The Council requested that the Commission reconsider its proposals.

Other Representations

22 A further two representations were received during Stage Three, from district councillors. Councillor James Fitch (a member for Bottisham ward and County Councillor for the Burwell/Bottisham division) opposed the draft recommendations for Bottisham ward and supported the District Council's proposed three-member ward comprising the parishes of Bottisham, Lode, Swaffham Bulbeck, Swaffham Prior and Reach, in addition to the consequent 40-member council. Councillor Valerie Leake, also a member for Bottisham ward, opposed the draft recommendations for this ward, and stated her preference for the Council's 40-member scheme, which would allocate an additional councillor to the southern parishes.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

23 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for East Cambridgeshire 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 (as amended) – the need to secure effective and convenient local government; reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and secure the matters referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (equality of representation). Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

24 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.

25 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.

26 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

27 Since 1975 there has been a 29 per cent increase in the electorate of East Cambridgeshire district. The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of 7.3 per cent from 53,545 to 57,450 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in Ely and Littleport. In order to prepare these forecasts, 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. Having accepted that this is an inexact science and, having considered the forecast electorates, the LGCE stated in its draft recommendations report that it was satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

28 At Stage Three, the District Council recognised that there had been concerns over the electorate forecasts for the district. It duly sought clarification from Cambridgeshire County Council, which produced the forecasts, on two occasions during Stage Three. The District Council stated that the forecast should be taken as “exactly that – forecasts which are not an accurate figure but an estimate”, but that it was content that the model of forecasting used was “the best tool available for the job at present”. We therefore remain satisfied that projected electorate figures from the District Council represent the best estimates currently available.

Council Size

29 As already explained, the LGCE started its review by assuming that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although was willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case.

30 East Cambridgeshire District Council currently has 37 members. At Stage One the District Council, having undertaken local consultation with parishes and council members on a draft scheme, proposed a council of 38 members representing 18 wards. Under the Council's scheme, Ely would be allocated eight councillors, with 30 councillors being allocated to the remainder of the district. The Council stated that in Ely "it was decided that eight rather than nine members ... was appropriate, both because the projected growth in the electorate will only be complete towards the end of the review period, and because it is clearly easier to manage a numerically slightly larger ward in an urban rather than a rural environment".

31 However, the LGCE found that, given the size of Ely's electorate, the number of councillors to which it would be entitled under a 38-member council would be 7.57 initially, increasing to 8.52 by 2006 as a result of the projected increase in Ely's electorate. The LGCE therefore allocated the correct number of nine councillors to Ely. As a consequence of this decision, the LGCE considered whether the District Council's proposal for 38 members would indeed provide the best balance of representation. Under a council size of 39, Ely would be entitled to 7.8 councillors initially (8.74 by 2006) and the remainder of the district would be entitled to 31.23 councillors initially (30.26 councillors by 2006). The LGCE further noted that, although Councillor Twentyman's proposals were for a 39-member council, he proposed allocating an extra councillor in the south of the district, rather than Ely. Therefore, having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the LGCE concluded that East Cambridgeshire should be represented by 39 councillors overall and that allocating nine councillors to Ely and 30 councillors to the rest of the district would provide for the best balance of representation.

32 At Stage Three, the District Council supported the draft recommendation to increase the allocation of councillors in Ely to nine. However, it further proposed allocating an additional councillor to the southern parishes, therefore proposing a council size of 40. Two district councillors supported the District Council's proposals.

33 We note the proposal from the District Council and the two district councillors to allocate a further councillor to the southern parishes, and hence proposing a council size of 40. However, having reviewed the allocation of councillors, we found that the best allocation for the southern parishes remains under a 39-member council. Even under a council size of 40, the area is entitled to 6.31 councillors and should be allocated six councillors, rather than seven as proposed by the District Council. We therefore found little justification to notably over-represent this area by the allocation of seven councillors (and hence a council of 40 members), as proposed by the District Council and the two district councillors. We therefore propose confirming the draft recommendation for a council size of 39 as final.

Electoral Arrangements

34 The LGCE carefully considered all representations received during Stage One. It noted the level of support given to the Council's scheme in much of the district, and concluded that the District Council's scheme should be adopted as the basis for the draft recommendations, notwithstanding the amendment to the council size and its subsequent effect on electoral variances. However, in order to improve the levels of electoral equality, bearing in mind the

identities and interests of the communities, it proposed amendments in three areas: Ely, Littleport and the southern part of the district.

35 Having considered all representations received during Stage Three, we propose confirming the majority of the LGCE's draft recommendations as final. We note the local opposition to the draft recommendations for the southern parishes. However, we cannot accept the proposals submitted by the District Council and the district councillors, as they are based on an incorrect allocation of councillors for the southern parishes, as detailed previously. To use the proposed wards under a council size of 39 would result in unacceptably high levels of electoral inequality. However, we propose making three minor boundary amendments in Ely and Littleport, as proposed by the District Council.

36 The draft recommendations have been reviewed in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Downham, Littleport and Sutton wards;
- (b) Ely Northern, Ely Southern and Ely West wards;
- (c) Haddenham, Soham, Stretham and Witchford wards;
- (d) Burwell, Fordham Villages, Isleham and The Swaffhams wards;
- (e) Bottisham, Cheveley, Dullingham Villages and Woodditton wards.

37 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

Downham, Littleport and Sutton wards

38 These three wards are situated at the northern edge of the district. Littleport is a four-member ward, while Downham and Sutton each have two members. The number of electors per councillor is 16 per cent below the district average (20 per cent below by 2006) in Downham ward, which comprises the parishes of Coveney, Downham and Witcham; 9 per cent below (2 per cent below by 2006) in Littleport ward, which comprises the parish of Littleport, and 13 per cent above (12 per cent above by 2006) in Sutton ward, which comprises the parishes of Mepal and Sutton.

39 At Stage One the District Council proposed amending the boundaries of all three wards. It proposed a revised two-member Downham Villages ward, comprising the parishes of Coveney, Downham, Mepal and Witcham, stating that feedback from its public consultation had shown Witcham Parish Council to be in favour of Mepal parish being included in the current Downham ward. The District Council also proposed creating two two-member wards of Littleport East and Littleport West, "based as far as possible on existing polling districts". It stated that some of the polling district boundaries could no longer be clearly defined as they had been built over, and so proposed amending these boundaries. As a consequence, the boundary between the two wards would run from north to south, from the parish boundary, utilising the boundary between existing polling districts IG1 and IH1, along the line of the Old Croft River to the ring road. It would then run along Camel Road and along the backs of properties to the west of Pontois Hill, Crown Lane, High Street and Ely Road to Grange Lane, and then northwards along the ring road before proceeding in a north-westerly direction to Black Bank Road.

40 The Council further proposed amending the boundary of Sutton ward by transferring the parish of Mepal to its proposed Downham Villages ward. It had considered warding the parish of

Mepal, but decided “it was not an option as local opinion would be against this and Mepal is a small, close-knit community”. Under the District Council’s proposals for a 38-member council, the number of electors per councillor would be 10 per cent above the district average in Downham Villages ward (8 per cent above by 2006), 8 per cent below in Littleport East ward (equal to the average by 2006), 5 per cent below in Littleport West ward (2 per cent above by 2006) and 8 per cent below in Sutton ward (11 per cent below by 2006).

41 Littleport Parish Council objected to the proposals to ward the parish and stated that “consideration for the substantial new developments have not been taken into account” in the District Council’s proposals. Mepal Parish Council was of the opinion that Mepal should remain in Sutton ward as it has “far more in common with Sutton than with the other parishes”.

42 Having given careful consideration to the representations received for this area, the LGCE noted that the District Council’s proposals would provide significant improvements to electoral equality while providing a satisfactory reflection of community identities. It noted the wishes of Littleport Parish Council, but could not concur with them, as retaining Littleport as one ward would necessitate recommending a four-member ward. It was the LGCE’s opinion, and continues to be our view, that numbers in excess of three members per ward result in an unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate. The LGCE also noted the wishes of Mepal Parish Council, but could not concur with them in the interest of electoral equality in this part of the district. Therefore the LGCE adopted the District Council’s proposals for these wards as part of its draft recommendations. However, it modified the southern part of the Council’s proposed boundary between Littleport East and Littleport West wards to include the whole of Highfield Farm in Littleport East ward as its access is on to Ely Road.

43 Under the draft recommendations for a 39-member council the number of electors per councillor would be 13 per cent above the district average (11 per cent above by 2006) in Downham Villages ward, which would comprise the parishes of Coveney, Downham, Mepal and Witcham; 5 per cent below (3 per cent above by 2006) in Littleport East ward; 2 per cent below (5 per cent above by 2006) in Littleport West ward, and 6 per cent below (9 per cent below by 2006) in Sutton ward.

44 During Stage Three, two representations were received in response to the draft recommendations for these wards. The District Council supported the LGCE’s recommendations for Downham and Sutton and proposed a minor boundary amendment between Littleport East and Littleport West wards, using the backs of properties on Horsey Hale rather than the centre of the road. The District Council further pointed out that our proposed boundary would run through the proposed Highfield Estate, and requested that the boundary be moved southwards to ensure this did not occur. Littleport Parish Council stated that it could see “no point in the exercise to ward a parish of this size and therefore were not in favour of the recommendation for Littleport”.

45 We have given careful consideration to the representations received for these wards during Stage Three. We note the District Council’s proposed boundary amendments, and are content to adopt its proposal to alter the boundary to include the proposed Highfield Estate in Littleport West. This will have no effect on electoral equality in either ward. However, we propose retaining the boundary down the centre of Horsey Road, as we believe it provides for a more identifiable boundary than the backs of the properties on the road. We note Littleport Parish Council’s comments, reiterating its objections to the warding of the parish. However, as previously mentioned, the area is entitled to four district councillors and therefore requires the creation of two district wards. Furthermore, current legislation requires that when a parish is divided between district wards it should be divided into parish wards, along the same boundary.

46 Subject to this one amendment to the boundary between Littleport East and Littleport West wards, we are content to confirm the draft recommendations as final for Downham, Littleport and Sutton wards.

47 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Downham Villages, Littleport East, Littleport West and Sutton wards would be the same as under the LGCE's draft recommendations. Our final recommendations for the proposed wards of Downham Villages and Sutton are illustrated on Map 2; those for Littleport East and Littleport West are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Ely Northern, Ely Southern and Ely West wards

48 The city of Ely is situated towards the north of the district, and is the only parish in the district which is currently warded. Ely Northern and Ely Southern wards are each represented by two members, while Ely West ward is represented by three members. The number of electors per councillor is 34 per cent above the district average in Ely Northern ward (39 per cent above by 2006), 21 per cent below in Ely Southern ward (23 per cent below by 2006) and 4 per cent above in Ely West ward (32 per cent above by 2006).

49 At Stage One the District Council did not propose any wards which would breach the external boundaries of Ely parish, arguing that "its population will grow substantially but slowly over the period covered by this review" and "it did not seem practicable to add to it or subtract from it". As previously discussed, the Council proposed an increase in the number of councillors representing Ely overall from seven to eight because of the forecast electorate growth by 2006. It proposed two three-member wards of Ely North and Ely West and a two-member ward of Ely South, modifying the boundaries of the three existing wards. The boundary between Ely North and Ely West wards would follow Egremont Street and Downham Road rather than Lynn Road as at present, and the boundary between Ely North and Ely South wards would follow Prickwillow Road and Clayway Drove rather than Kiln Lane. The existing boundary between Ely South and Ely West wards along Cambridge Road would be retained. Under the District Council's proposals for a 38-member council, the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent below the district average in Ely North ward (9 per cent above by 2006), equal to the average in Ely South ward (3 per cent below by 2006) and 12 per cent below in Ely West ward (10 per cent above by 2006).

50 When considering the District Council's proposals for this area, the LGCE noted that the Council's proposals would provide improvements in electoral equality. However, it was not able to adopt them, as they were based on an incorrect allocation of councillors for Ely. The correct allocation of councillors for Ely is nine. In order to provide for nine councillors, the LGCE proposed creating a fourth ward from the southern part of the Council's proposed Ely North ward, between Downham Road and Lynn Road, and the northern part of the Council's proposed Ely West ward, bounded by West Fen Road, Beald Way, Fieldside and St Mary's Street. This two-member ward would be called Ely West ward; the remainder of the Council's proposed Ely West ward would become the two-member ward of Ely South, while the remainder of the Council's proposed Ely North ward would become the three-member Ely North ward. The Council's proposed two-member Ely South ward would be renamed Ely East ward.

51 Under the draft recommendations for a 39-member council the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent above the district average in Ely East ward (equal to the average by 2006), 12 per cent below in Ely North ward (equal to the average by 2006), 45 per cent below

in Ely South ward (6 per cent below by 2006) and equal to the average in Ely West ward (6 per cent below by 2006).

52 During Stage Three, two representations were received in response to the draft recommendations for these wards. The District Council agreed with the increase in councillors in Ely from eight to nine, stating that “nine will help meet the already committed future growth in Ely”. The Council further proposed that the consequent Ely East parish ward be split into two wards and parish councillors reallocated accordingly, in order to reflect the mixture of rural and urban elements within the parish ward. The District Council also proposed three minor amendments to ward boundaries on West Fen Road, West End and Lynn Road. It proposed moving numbers 141 to 159 of West Fen Road and numbers 1 and 1a of West End from Ely South ward into Ely West ward, to ensure all electors from these roads are represented in the same ward. The Council further proposed moving the boundary on Lynn Road between Ely North and Ely West wards to run to the north of the properties on St Audrey’s Way, rather than between properties on Lynn Road for administrative convenience. City of Ely Council gave its approval to the draft recommendations for Ely.

53 We have given careful consideration to the representations received for these wards during Stage Three. We note the general support received for the LGCE’s draft recommendations for the Ely wards and intend adopting them as our final recommendations, subject to two minor boundary amendments. We are content to accept the District Council’s proposed amendments for the boundary between Ely South and Ely West along West Fen Road and West End, in order to ensure all electors on West Fen Road and West End are represented in the same ward. However, we do not intend altering the boundary between Ely North and Ely West on Lynn Road, as we do not believe that the District Council’s proposal would significantly improve the provision of effective and convenient local government by providing for a clearer boundary. Similarly, given City of Ely Council’s support for the draft recommendations, we do not propose adopting the District Council’s proposal to create two parish wards within Ely East district ward.

54 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Ely East, Ely North and Ely West wards would be the same as under the LGCE’s draft recommendations. The number of electors per councillor in Ely South would be 46 per cent below the district average initially (7 per cent below by 2006). Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Haddenham, Soham, Stretham and Witchford wards

55 The rural two-member Haddenham ward and the single-member Stretham and Witchford wards are in the north-western corner of the district, south-west of Ely. The five-member Soham ward is in the centre of the district, to the south of Ely. The number of electors per councillor is 15 per cent above the district average (8 per cent above by 2006) in Haddenham ward, which comprises the parishes of Haddenham and Wilburton; 1 per cent above (2 per cent below by 2006) in Soham ward, which comprises the parishes of Soham and Wicken; 27 per cent above (19 per cent above by 2006) in Stretham ward, which comprises the parishes of Stretham and Thetford, and 26 per cent above (20 per cent above by 2006) in Witchford ward, which comprises the parishes of Wentworth and Witchford.

56 At Stage One the District Council proposed a new three-member Haddenham ward, comprising the parishes of Haddenham, Wentworth and Witchford “as the variance is low and the ward makes geographical sense”. Having consulted on these proposals the Council believed that more parishes would be satisfied with this than with other possible warding arrangements.

The Council proposed warding the parish of Soham, thereby creating a two-member Soham North ward comprising parts of Soham town centre and the rural area to the north, and a three-member Soham South ward, comprising the southern part of Soham town and the parish of Wicken. The boundary would run from the parish boundary in the west in a north-easterly direction along Great Drove and Soham Lode. After crossing the railway line and proceeding through the town centre, it would run north-easterly across Soham Fen to the parish boundary.

57 The Council also proposed a two-member Stretham ward, comprising the parishes of Little Thetford, Stretham and Wilburton. It contended that this was in response to its public consultation which showed that “Stretham did not wish to be linked to Witchford”, although it was aware that Wilburton and Haddenham parish councils were not in favour of this proposed warding arrangement. The Council further argued that there were good road and community links between the constituent parishes of the proposed ward. Under the District Council’s proposals for a 38-member council, the number of electors per councillor would be equal to the district average in Haddenham ward (5 per cent below by 2006), 12 per cent below in Soham North ward (1 per cent above by 2006), 14 per cent above in Soham South ward (equal to the average by 2006) and 3 per cent below in Stretham ward (8 per cent below by 2006).

58 Haddenham Parish Council stated that it “regrets the conclusions that have been arrived at” by the District Council, namely that it should be linked with the parishes of Wentworth and Witchford. Councillor Warren, member for Haddenham ward, contended that the ward should retain its existing boundaries on the grounds that the existing ward is compact and the constituent villages share amenities.

59 Having given careful consideration to the representations received for this area, the LGCE noted that the District Council’s proposals would provide significant improvements to electoral equality while providing a satisfactory reflection of community identities. It noted the views of Haddenham Parish Council and Councillor Warren, but could not concur with them in the interest of electoral equality in this part of the district. It therefore adopted the District Council’s proposed wards for this area as part of its draft recommendations. However, it made a minor modification to the eastern part of the Council’s proposed boundary between Soham North and Soham South wards in order to ensure that the boundary adhered to ground detail.

60 Under the draft recommendations for a 39-member council the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the district average (3 per cent below by 2006) in Haddenham ward, which would comprise the parishes of Haddenham, Wentworth and Witchford; 10 per cent below (4 per cent above by 2006) in Soham North ward, which would comprise the proposed parish ward of Soham North; 17 per cent above (3 per cent above by 2006) in Soham South ward, which would comprise the proposed parish ward of Soham South and the parish of Wicken, and equal to the average (6 per cent below by 2006) in Stretham ward, which would comprise the parishes of Stretham, Thetford and Wilburton.

61 During Stage Three, three representations were received in response to the draft recommendations for these wards. The District Council acknowledged that the draft recommendations had “generated considerable differences of opinion between individual local Members and local communities” and noted that the district councillor for Haddenham had expressed opposition to the proposals. However, the Council reaffirmed its support for its Stage One proposal to split the parishes of Haddenham and Wilburton and therefore supported the draft recommendations.

62 Haddenham Parish Council stated its opposition to the draft recommendations, stating that the parishes of Haddenham and Wilburton have “unlimited local ties” and that “none of the local ties which exist between Haddenham and Wilburton exist at all between Haddenham and Witchford which are at least three miles apart”. Soham Town Council supported the draft recommendations for the district in general, but opposed the warding of Soham, stating that it saw no justification in dividing a parish in order to facilitate district warding.

63 We have given careful consideration to the representations received for these wards during Stage Three. We note the District Council and Soham Town Council’s general support for the draft recommendations. We note Soham Town Council’s opposition to the creation of two parish wards. However, as previously mentioned, when a parish is divided between district wards, it must be divided into parish wards. We note and acknowledge Haddenham Parish Council’s opposition to the splitting of Haddenham and Wilburton parishes. However, given the absence of any viable alternatives and the support from the District Council, we are content to confirm the draft recommendations as final for this area.

64 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Haddenham, Soham North, Soham South and Stretham wards would be the same as under the LGCE’s draft recommendations. Our final recommendations for the proposed wards of Haddenham and Stretham are illustrated on Map 2; those for Soham North and Soham South wards are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Burwell, Fordham Villages, Isleham and The Swaffhams wards

65 These four wards are situated in the southern half of the district. The two-member Fordham Villages and single-member Isleham wards lie to the north of Newmarket, while the single-member The Swaffhams ward and the three-member Burwell ward lie to the west of it. The number of electors per councillor is 1 per cent above the district average (4 per cent below by 2006) in Burwell ward, which comprises the parish of Burwell; 9 per cent below (14 per cent below by 2006) in Fordham Villages ward, which comprises the parishes of Chippenham, Fordham, Kennett and Snailwell; 11 per cent above (4 per cent above by 2006) in Isleham ward, which comprises the parish of Isleham, and 6 per cent above (1 per cent below by 2006) in The Swaffhams ward, which comprises the parishes of Reach, Swaffham Bulbeck and Swaffham Prior.

66 At Stage One the District Council proposed no changes to the electoral arrangements for all four wards. It also stated that Burwell Parish Council supported this proposal. Although it recognised that the electoral variance for Fordham Villages ward would be relatively high, it claimed to be responding to public support for the retention of the ward and stated that Councillors Abbott and Woodbridge felt that to link the ward with Isleham ward, a possible alternative, would create a ward too large to manage effectively. It proposed no change to Isleham ward as “it is a relatively isolated community and has limited links with its surrounding areas”. In proposing no change to The Swaffhams ward the Council pointed out that this would result in only a small variance, and that it coincided with strongly held local opinion. Under the District Council’s proposals for a 38-member council the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent above the average (1 per cent below by 2006) in Burwell ward, 6 per cent below (11 per cent below by 2006) in Fordham Villages ward, 14 per cent above (6 per cent above by 2006) in Isleham ward and 9 per cent above (1 per cent above by 2006) in The Swaffhams ward.

67 Reach Parish Council expressed support for the District Council's proposals.

68 Having given careful consideration to the District Council's proposals for this area, the LGCE noted that the Council's proposals would provide satisfactory levels of electoral equality, while reflecting local community identities. The LGCE therefore adopted the District Council's proposals as its draft recommendations for these wards.

69 Under the draft recommendations for a 39-member council the number of electors per councillors would be 7 per cent above the average (1 per cent above by 2006) in Burwell ward, 4 per cent below (9 per cent below by 2006) in Fordham Villages ward, 17 per cent above (9 per cent above by 2006) in Isleham ward and 11 per cent above (4 per cent above by 2006) in The Swaffhams ward.

70 During Stage Three, two representations were received in response to the draft recommendations for these wards. The District Council stated its support for the draft recommendations with the exception of The Swaffhams ward, which it proposed joining with the parishes of Bottisham and Lode to form a new three-member ward. Reach Parish Council stated its support for the draft recommendation to retain the existing wards. However, it recognised that the larger ward proposed by the District Council, including the parishes of Bottisham and Lode, was "probably necessary".

71 We have given careful consideration to the representations received regarding these wards during Stage Three. We note the support for the retention of the existing Burwell, Fordham Villages and Isleham wards, as proposed in the draft recommendations, and therefore intend confirming them as final. We note the District Council's proposal to create a new three-member ward, comprising the existing The Swaffhams ward and the parishes of Bottisham and Lode. However, as mentioned previously, the District Council's Stage Three proposals for the warding of the southern parishes is based on an incorrect allocation of councillors, and results in a council size of 40. Given that we are confirming the LGCE's draft recommendation for a council size of 39, we cannot accept the District Council's proposals for the southern parishes as they result in an unacceptable level of electoral inequality. We therefore propose confirming the draft recommendations for The Swaffhams ward as final.

72 Under our final recommendations, the numbers of electors per councillor in Burwell, Fordham Villages, Isleham and The Swaffhams wards would be the same as under the draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2

Bottisham, Cheveley, Dullingham Villages and Woodditton wards

73 These four wards are situated in the far south of the district. Bottisham and Cheveley each return two members, while Dullingham Villages and Woodditton are single-member wards. The number of electors per councillor is 23 per cent below the average (28 per cent below by 2006) in Bottisham ward, which comprises the parishes of Bottisham and Lode; 34 per cent below (38 per cent below by 2006) in Cheveley ward, which comprises the parishes of Ashley and Cheveley; 18 per cent above (11 per cent above by 2006) in Dullingham Villages ward, which comprises the parishes of Brinkley, Burrough Green, Dullingham, Stetchworth and Westley Waterless, and 11 per cent above (8 per cent above by 2006) in Woodditton ward, which comprises the parishes of Kirtling and Woodditton.

74 At Stage One the District Council proposed that there should be no change in the electoral arrangements for Bottisham ward. Although it was aware that this would create a large variance,

it could see “no practical alternative options which realistically address this”. It also stated that the members for Bottisham ward and Bottisham Parish Council supported the District Council’s proposal. The Council also proposed no change in the electoral arrangements for Dullingham Villages ward, citing support from the member for Dullingham and the parish councils in the ward. The Council stated that “the local electorate believe they will receive a better representation by maintaining this ward with this higher variance than having a lower variance and being linked to villages ... which have no community links”. The Council proposed that the two existing wards of Cheveley and Woodditton should be joined to form the two-member ward of Southern Villages, regarding it as “the best compromise available”. Under the District Council’s proposals for a 38-member council the number of electors per councillor would be 21 per cent below the average (26 per cent below by 2006) in Bottisham ward, 21 per cent above (14 per cent above by 2006) in Dullingham Villages ward and 25 per cent above (19 per cent above by 2006) in Southern Villages ward.

75 Lode Parish Council expressed opposition to the District Council’s consultation proposals, which entailed linking the parishes of Bottisham and Lode with the other southern parishes of Burrough Green, Brinkley and Westley Waterless in a new district ward. It proposed an alternative warding arrangement which would link the two parishes with the parish of Stow-cum-Quy in the neighbouring South Cambridgeshire district.

76 Councillor Twentyman, member for Cheveley ward and chairman of the PER Working Party, submitted proposals for an alternative warding pattern for the area, stating that they were supported by all the members of the Council’s PER working party, the elected members for the existing wards in the area, the chairmen and some members of several local parish councils, both the County Councillors for the area and the Leader, the chairman and vice chairman of the Council. Councillor Twentyman contended that his proposals would provide better levels of electoral variance in the area by providing an extra councillor which would solve the problem of the Council’s proposed Dullingham Villages and Southern Villages wards being notably under-represented.

77 Councillor Twentyman proposed warding the existing Woodditton ward, utilising polling district boundaries, with the proposed Woodditton Rural parish ward being placed in a two-member district ward with the parishes of Ashley, Cheveley and Kirtling. The remainder of the existing Woodditton ward, the proposed Woodditton Urban parish ward, would be placed in a new two-member ward of Dullingham Villages with the parishes of Brinkley, Burrough Green, Dullingham, Stetchworth and Westley Waterless. Councillor Twentyman proposed the same warding arrangements as the Council for the other villages in this part of the district. Under his proposals for a 39-member council, the number of electors per councillor would be 24 per cent below the average in Bottisham ward, 6 per cent below in Cheveley ward and 13 per cent below in Dullingham Villages ward. These figures are only for 2006, as no 2001 figures were provided. Councillor Twentyman also submitted alternative proposals from members of the PER working party for a three-member ward comprising the parishes of Bottisham, Lode, Reach, Swaffham Bulbeck and Swaffham Prior. Under these proposals for a 39-member council serving seventeen wards, the number of electors per councillor would be 15 per cent below the average in Bottisham and The Swaffhams ward, 6 per cent below in Cheveley ward and 13 per cent below in Dullingham Villages ward. Again, these figures are only for 2006, as no 2001 figures were provided.

78 While giving careful consideration to the representations received for this area, the LGCE noted that the constraints of the district boundary make the achievement of a good balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria difficult. It also noted that the District

Council, in responding to the wishes of the parish councils in the area, had proposed wards which had high electoral variances. It was the LGCE's opinion that these variances were unacceptably high and, accordingly, it could not adopt the Council's proposals as its draft recommendations. The LGCE noted the views of Lode Parish Council, but was unable to consider a ward which crosses district administrative boundaries. It was also unable to consider further the proposals put forward by Councillor Twentyman as they provided for an extra councillor in this part of the district, which would result in the area being over-represented.

79 In the absence of any further proposals for this area, the LGCE put forward its own proposals for this part of the district, building upon the suggestion to ward Woodditton parish, as proposed by Councillor Twentyman. It proposed a two-member Bottisham ward, comprising the parishes of Bottisham, Burrough Green, Brinkley, Lode and Westley Waterless. For the rest of the area, the LGCE concluded that Councillor Twentyman's proposal to ward the parish of Woodditton, based on existing polling district boundaries, would provide a warding pattern which would provide the best electoral equality, while having regard to local community identities. However, it proposed modifying Councillor Twentyman's proposed parish ward boundaries to create a Woodditton Urban parish ward, which would include properties bordering Newmarket, and a Woodditton Rural parish ward, with the boundary running along Woodditton Road. Furthermore, it proposed including the Woodditton Urban parish ward in the proposed Cheveley ward, with the proposed Woodditton Rural parish ward being included in the Dullingham Villages ward, retaining the urban overspill from Newmarket in the same ward. The proposed two-member Cheveley ward would comprise the parishes of Ashley, Cheveley, Kirtling and the Woodditton Urban parish ward of Woodditton parish. The proposed single-member Dullingham Villages ward would comprise the parishes of Dullingham, Stetchworth and the Woodditton Rural parish ward of Woodditton parish. Under the draft recommendations for a 39-member council the number of electors per councillor would be 6 per cent above the average (1 per cent below by 2006) in Bottisham ward, 11 per cent above (6 per cent above by 2006) in Cheveley ward and 10 per cent above (3 per cent above by 2006) in Dullingham Villages ward.

80 During Stage Three, five representations were received in response to the draft recommendations for these wards. As previously mentioned, the District Council opposed the draft recommendation for these wards, stating that it "ignores the very real strength of local feeling against it and the very real practical problem of managing such wards, and that it gives excessive weighting to numerical considerations and not enough to social, geographical, cultural and practical ones". The Council put forward Councillor Twentyman's Stage One proposal, allocating an additional councillor to the southern parishes in order to facilitate an alternative warding pattern of one three-member ward and two two-member wards, as outlined above.

81 Four further representations were received during Stage Three, from parish councils and district councillors. Bottisham Parish Council stated its opposition to the draft recommendations to link the parishes of Bottisham and Lode with the parishes of Brinkley, Burrough Green and Westley Waterless, stating that they had "no natural community links". Two district councillors opposed the draft recommendations on the same basis and supported the District Council's proposal to allocate an additional councillor to the southern parishes. Woodditton Parish Council stated it had "no objection" to the draft recommendation to ward Woodditton parish in order to facilitate the district wards. However, it objected to the proposed allocation of parish councillors between the rural and urban parish wards, as discussed below.

82 We have given careful consideration to the representations received regarding these wards during Stage Three. As a consequence of not adopting the Council's proposals to allocate a further councillor to the southern parishes, as detailed earlier, we cannot adopt its proposed

warding arrangements in the area, as they would lead to an unacceptable level of electoral inequality of over 25 per cent in Bottisham ward. We also note Woodditton Parish Council's broad support for the district wards in the area. Therefore, having examined the LGCE's proposed warding arrangements for the southern parishes, we are of the view that they secure the best balance between achieving good levels of electoral equality and meeting the other statutory criteria, and are content to confirm the draft recommendations for Bottisham, Cheveley, Dullingham Villages and The Swaffhams wards as final

83 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Bottisham, Cheveley and Dullingham Villages wards would be the same as under the draft recommendations. Our final recommendations for these wards are illustrated on Map 2 and Map A2.

Electoral Cycle

84 By virtue of the amendments made to the Local Government Act 1992 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001, we have no powers to make recommendations concerning electoral cycle.

Conclusions

85 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to the LGCE's consultation report, we have decided substantially to endorse its draft recommendations, subject to the following amendments:

- we propose modifying the boundary between Ely South and Ely West wards to ensure all electors in West End and West Fen Road are included in Ely West ward;
- we propose modifying the boundary between Littleport East and Littleport West wards to ensure that all of the proposed Highfield Estate will be represented in Littleport West ward.

86 We conclude that, in East Cambridgeshire:

- there should be an increase in council size from 37 to 39;
- there should be 19 wards, one more than at present;
- the boundaries of 14 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one, and four wards should retain their existing boundaries.

87 Table 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2001 and 2006 electorate figures.

Table 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	37	39	37	39
Number of wards	18	19	18	19
Average number of electors per councillor	1,447	1,373	1,553	1,473
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	12	7	11	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	6	1	5	0

88 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 from 12 to seven. This level of electoral equality would improve further by 2006, with only one ward, Downham Villages, varying by more than 10 per cent from the average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

East Cambridgeshire District Council should comprise 39 councillors serving 19 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A including the large maps inside the back cover.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

89 When reviewing parish 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 should also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. In the LGCE's draft recommendations report it proposed consequential changes to the warding arrangements for the parishes of Ely, Littleport, Soham and Woodditton to reflect the proposed district wards.

90 The City of Ely Council is currently served by 15 councillors representing three wards: Ely North, Ely South and Ely West, represented by four, four and seven councillors respectively. In its draft recommendations, the LGCE proposed creating four parish wards, Ely East, Ely North, Ely South and Ely West, to reflect the proposed district ward boundaries. It proposed that Ely East, Ely South and Ely West parish wards should each be represented by three councillors and Ely North by six councillors.

91 At Stage Three, the LGCE received two representations regarding the parish of Ely, from the District Council and City of Ely Council. The District Council supported the majority of the draft recommendations, but proposed splitting the proposed Ely East parish ward into two, an urban and a rural ward. City of Ely Council fully supported the draft recommendations for Ely. We

have noted the District Council’s proposal but, in the light of the support from the City of Ely Council for the proposed parish ward boundaries, we propose confirming the LGCE’s draft recommendations for warding Ely as final.

Final Recommendation

City of Ely Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Ely East (returning three councillors), Ely North (six), Ely South (three) and Ely West (three). The parish 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.

92 The parish of Littleport is currently served by 15 councillors and is not warded. The LGCE noted that, in response to the District Council’s Stage One consultation, Littleport Parish Council stated that it objected to the warding of the parish. However, as previously mentioned, if a parish is to be divided between separate district wards, it must also be divided into parish wards. Therefore, in the light of the LGCE’s draft recommendations for district wards in this area, it proposed creating two parish wards, Littleport East and Littleport West, to reflect the proposed district ward boundaries. It further proposed that Littleport East parish ward should be represented by seven councillors and Littleport West parish ward should be represented by eight councillors.

93 At Stage Three Littleport Parish Council reiterated its objection to being warded, stating that it “saw no point in the exercise to ward a parish of this size”. However, as previously mentioned, a parish must be split into parish wards if it is to be divided between district wards. Therefore, subject to the minor boundary amendment outlined previously, we propose confirming the LGCE’s draft recommendations as final.

Final Recommendation

Littleport Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Littleport East (returning seven councillors) and Littleport West (eight). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

94 The parish of Soham is currently served by 15 councillors and is not warded. At Stage One, Soham Town Council stated that it would “reluctantly accept the suggested warding for Soham for District Council elections” but that it would “strongly oppose any system of warding being introduced for Town Council elections”. However, as previously mentioned, when a parish is split between two district wards it must be divided between into parish wards. Therefore, in the light of the draft recommendations for district wards in this area, the LGCE proposed creating two parish wards, Soham North and Soham South, to reflect the district ward boundaries. It further proposed that Soham North parish ward should be represented by seven councillors and Soham South parish ward should be represented by eight councillors.

95 Soham Town Council reiterated its Stage One view during Stage Three. However, as outlined above, if a parish is to be divided between separate district wards it should also be divided into wards. Given the District Council’s support for the draft recommendations for Soham, we are content to confirm the draft recommendations for Soham parish as final.

Final Recommendation

Soham Town Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Soham North (returning seven councillors) and Soham South (eight). The boundary between the two town wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

96 The parish of Woodditton is currently served by 11 councillors and is not warded. In the light of its draft recommendations for district wards in this area, the LGCE proposed creating two parish wards, Woodditton Rural and Woodditton Urban, to reflect the district ward boundaries. It further proposed that Woodditton Rural parish ward should be represented by three councillors and Woodditton Urban parish ward should be represented by eight councillors.

97 During Stage Three, Woodditton Parish Council supported the proposed warding arrangements for the area. However, it requested that the Commission reconsider the allocation of parish councillors between the urban and rural wards, although it provided no specific alternative allocation. Having reviewed the allocation of councillors in Woodditton parish, we propose the Woodditton Urban parish ward be represented by seven councillors and Woodditton Rural parish ward be represented by four. Subject to this amendment, we propose confirming the LGCE's draft recommendations for Woodditton parish as final.

Final Recommendation

Woodditton Parish Council should comprise 11 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards. That part of Woodditton parish to be included in the proposed Dullingham Villages ward should be named Woodditton Rural parish ward (returning four councillors) and that part of Woodditton parish to be included in the proposed Cheveley ward should be named Woodditton Urban parish ward (returning seven councillors), as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

Map 2: Final Recommendations for East Cambridgeshire

6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

98 Having completed the review of electoral arrangements in East Cambridgeshire and submitted our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No 3692).

99 It is now up to the Electoral Commission 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 4 June 2002.

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

The Secretary
Electoral Commission
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for East Cambridgeshire: Detailed Mapping

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

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

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Woodditton parish.

The **large maps** inserted at the back of this report illustrate the proposed warding arrangements for Ely, Littleport and Soham.

Map A1: Final Recommendations for East Cambridgeshire: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed warding of Woodditton parish