LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS: ELECTORAL AREAS FOR THE ASSEMBLY OF THE GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

August 1998
Members of the Commission are:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)
Helena Shovelton (Deputy Chairman)
Peter Brokenshire
Professor Michael Clarke
Pamela Gordon
Robin Gray
Robert Hughes

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)
On 19 May we commenced a review of the electoral areas for the Assembly of the Greater London Authority (GLA). We were directed to have regard to the White Paper, A Mayor and Assembly for London. This set out a number of criteria, namely that:

- the new Assembly would have 25 members, of which 11 would be elected across London as a whole and 14 from individual electoral areas;
- our task is to consider, in consultation with all affected interests, how the 14 individual electoral areas should be defined and named, bearing in mind they should each comprise an area no smaller than a whole London borough;
- the electoral areas should comprise contiguous boroughs and may, if we consider it appropriate, link boroughs either side of the River Thames;
- in defining the electoral areas we should bear in mind the need to achieve reasonable electoral equality and to reflect the nature and functions of the new Assembly.

Our draft recommendations for the 14 new electoral areas and their names are illustrated in Map 1 and detailed in Figure 1 (pages vi and vii). Our key conclusions are that:

- the principle of electoral equality – ensuring that, as far as possible, a vote cast in one electoral area carries the same weight as a vote cast in another – should be the most important consideration when constructing the electoral areas;
- there is a case for combining similar boroughs in new electoral areas so that differing perspectives on strategic issues can find a voice within the new Assembly;
- we should where possible seek to reflect the boundaries of sub-regional partnerships in the new arrangements;
- strategic transport links should not be a major consideration;
- there is not a convincing strategic or electoral equality case for combining areas either side of the River Thames in the electoral areas;
- and
- the boundaries of existing Parliamentary or European constituencies should not be a major consideration when constructing electoral areas for the Greater London Assembly.

This report sets out our draft recommendations on which comments are invited.

- We will consult on our draft recommendations for six weeks from 1 September 1998. Because we take this consultation very seriously, we may move away from our draft recommendations in the light of responses received during this period. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations.

- After considering all representations, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations and then make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.

- Provision for the electoral areas of the Assembly will be made in the Bill to establish the new GLA. This is expected to be introduced in the next Parliamentary session. The Secretary of State will give full consideration to our final recommendations in preparing those provisions.

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 13 October 1998:

The Chief Executive
GLA Review
Local Government Commission for England
Dolphyn Court
10/11 Great Turnstile
London WC1V 7JU
**Figure 1: Draft recommendations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of electoral area</th>
<th>Constituent boroughs</th>
<th>Electorate (1998)</th>
<th>% variance from the average member: elector ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Havering and Redbridge</td>
<td>Havering and Redbridge</td>
<td>355,31</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 City and London East</td>
<td>Barking &amp; Dagenham, City of London, Newham and Tower Hamlets</td>
<td>390,300</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Islington and Lee</td>
<td>Hackney, Islington and Waltham Forest</td>
<td>392,722</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Enfield and Haringey</td>
<td>Enfield and Haringey</td>
<td>348,335</td>
<td>-3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 London Central</td>
<td>Hammersmith &amp; Fulham, Kensington &amp; Chelsea and Westminster</td>
<td>340,000</td>
<td>-6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Barnet and Camden</td>
<td>Barnet and Camden</td>
<td>363,927</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Brent and Harrow</td>
<td>Brent and Harrow</td>
<td>326,254</td>
<td>-9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Ealing and Hillingdon</td>
<td>Ealing and Hillingdon</td>
<td>389,339</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 London South West</td>
<td>Hounslow, Kingston-upon-Thames and Richmond-upon-Thames</td>
<td>383,579</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Merton and Wandsworth</td>
<td>Merton and Wandsworth</td>
<td>331,881</td>
<td>-8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Croydon and Sutton</td>
<td>Croydon and Sutton</td>
<td>358,31</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Lambeth and Southwark</td>
<td>Lambeth and Southwark</td>
<td>344,001</td>
<td>-5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Greenwich and Lewisham</td>
<td>Greenwich and Lewisham</td>
<td>328,656</td>
<td>-9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Bexley and Bromley</td>
<td>Bexley and Bromley</td>
<td>394,106</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average size of electoral area</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>360,254</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total electorate for London</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>5,044,562</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Office for National Statistics*
1. INTRODUCTION

1 In the referendum which was held on 7 May, Londoners voted to create a new strategic authority for the capital, the Greater London Authority (GLA). It will comprise a directly elected Mayor and an elected Assembly.

2 The White Paper, A Mayor and Assembly for London¹, set out the Government's policy for the composition of the Assembly. It is to have 25 members. Of these, 11 are to be elected across London as a whole; the remaining 14 are each to be elected from individual electoral areas.

3 Our task is to consider, in consultation with all affected interests, how those individual electoral areas should be defined and named. We are required to recommend appropriate arrangements to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions by 30 November 1998.

4 Our work was triggered by a formal Direction issued to us by the Secretary of State under the Greater London Authority (Referendum) Act 1998. The Direction requires us to submit a report showing the electoral areas into which we recommend that Greater London should be divided for the Assembly elections, and the names by which each area should be known. It specified that the total number of electoral areas must be 14, and that there is to be one member per electoral area.

5 Our work relates exclusively to the definition of these electoral areas: it does not extend to arrangements for the election of the Mayor, nor of the 11 other members of the Assembly who are to be elected from across London as a whole.

Our timetable and review process

6 At the start of our work, we published Guidance² setting out our timetable and the review process, our approach to the task, and a number of modelled options intended to focus and promote debate among interested parties.

7 Our work is being carried out in a four-stage process, in accordance with the provisions of section 8 of the 1998 Act. At Stage One, when we started our work, we wrote to a wide range of interested parties:

- London local authorities;
- Members of Parliament and Members of the European Parliament with constituency interests in Greater London;
- the national headquarters of the main political parties;
- the local authority associations; and
- those parties referred to in Annex D to the Guidance.

8 Those and other interested parties were invited to make proposals as to the electoral areas into which Greater London should be divided, and on the names of those areas. Advertisements announcing the start of our work and the availability of the Guidance appeared in the Press. At the end of Stage One, all the representations were made available for inspection at our offices by appointment, and a list of respondents was made available on request.

9 Stage Two of the report began on 1 July 1998. During this stage, we carefully considered all the proposals we had received, and prepared the draft recommendations which are set out in this report.

10 Stage Three begins on 1 September 1998 and will end on 13 October 1998. This stage involves consultation on the draft recommendations contained in this report. The report has been sent to all those who received a copy of the letter announcing the beginning of the review, and to those who submitted representations during Stage One. Its availability has been publicised in the local press, and the London boroughs² have been asked to place copies on deposit for public inspection at their offices. In addition, copies are

² Electoral Areas for the Assembly of the Greater London Authority: Guidance, May 1998. We are the expensive "things" in the report to include the City of London Corporations and the 32 London boroughs.
available in local libraries. The report is also available for inspection at our offices. Copies are also available on request on receipt of a £1 stamped addressed envelope (A4 size).

11 As with Stage One, all representations we receive will be made available for inspection by appointment at our offices at the end of Stage Three, and a list of respondents will be made available on request.

12 At Stage Four, we will carefully consider all the further representations received during Stage Three and then decide what final recommendations to make to the Secretary of State. Because we take consultation very seriously, we may move away from our draft recommendations in the light of Stage Three responses. Our final recommendations will be set out in a report, which will be published and publicised in the same way as this report. Once our final recommendations have been published, any further correspondence should be sent to the Secretary of State.

13 Provisions for the Assembly’s electoral areas will be made in the Bill to establish the new authority. This is expected to be introduced in the next Parliamentary session. The Secretary of State will give full consideration to our final recommendations in preparing those provisions.

The Commission’s modelled options

14 At the start of this review, we undertook a preliminary evaluation of a wide range of the possible combinations of electoral areas available, to allow us to identify those which appeared to provide the most satisfactory outcome in terms of electoral equality. From this evaluation, six modelled options were produced, detailing different possible combinations of London boroughs to form the 14 electoral areas (Models A to E, Appendix A). In addition, we outlined the considerations we took into account when formulating the options (Appendix B). We considered that such an approach would assist constituents to focus upon those schemes most likely to achieve acceptable levels of electoral equality. However, we also stressed that our minds were not closed to other possible combinations of boroughs.

15 The six modelled options provided the following characteristics:

- at average electoral variance from the London-wide average (weighted average electoral area variance) of between 5 per cent and 6 per cent;
- no electoral area with a variance of more than 15 per cent from the London-wide average;
- three options that crossed the river (other than at Richmond- upon-Thames), and three that did not;
- more than one option for 30 of the 33 London boroughs.

2. THE COMMISSION’S APPROACH

16 In undertaking our work two fundamental qualities have underpinned our approach. The first is the openness and transparency of our processes. The legislation places a high premium on consultation, which we will observe throughout our deliberations. The second is our own political independence. We can anticipate that political groups might wish to appraise different options in terms of their potential electoral advantage. However, the issue of electoral advantage is wholly outside our remit.

17 As outlined in our Guidance and in Appendix B to this report, there was a number of factors that we took into account when formulating our approach to our task.

The criteria

18 The Secretary of State’s Direction requires that electoral areas should not comprise an area smaller than a whole London borough, which therefore means that boroughs should form the building blocks for the Assembly’s electoral areas. In addition, we are required to take into account paragraphs 4.12, 4.13 and 4.17 of the Government’s White Paper A Mayor and Assembly for London, which sets out that the Assembly will have 25 members, 14 of whom should represent specific voting areas. As to the 14 electoral areas, paragraph 4.17 observes:

“...we expect there to comprise combinations of contiguous boroughs and respect existing borough boundaries. Where the LGC thinks this is appropriate, boroughs north and south of the River Thames might be combined. The LGC will also be directed to recommend names for the constituencies. It will be for the LGC to propose the most appropriate groupings of boroughs, bearing in mind the need to achieve reasonable electoral equality – i.e. achieve constituencies covering broadly equal numbers of voters – and to reflect the nature and function of the Assembly.”

19 More generally, paragraph 4.11 of the White Paper envisages that Assembly members will need to think and act strategically, looking at London-wide issues in the round and at the long-term interest of the capital. The White Paper envisages that Assembly members should not duplicate the local representational role already undertaken by local councillors, Members of Parliament and Members of the European Parliament.

Electoral equality

20 Our starting point when constructing modelled options was to ensure that, when dividing Greater London into 14 electoral areas, we should achieve an acceptable level of electoral equality, so that, as far as possible, a vote cast in one electoral area carries the same weight as a vote cast in another. We consider this to be a fundamental democratic principle which needs to be reflected in any voting system.

21 We recognised, however, that we could not devise Greater London into electoral areas on the basis of strict arithmetic equality of voting power. The Direction constrains us by its requirement that we use boroughs as the building blocks, as opposed to the 74 Parliamentary constituencies in London or the 10 European constituencies. As detailed in Figure 2 overleaf, there is significant variation between the sizes of the electorates in the different boroughs. This means that it is possible to combining them in several different ways to produce the required 14 electoral areas, each with different implications for the level of electoral balance.

The nature and functions of the Assembly

22 In our Guidance, we recognised that there were several schemes which would deliver roughly equivalent levels of electoral equality, and that the choice between them would rest largely on other considerations. We indicated that we would expect these to be matters relating to the nature and function of the Assembly. It is to be a strategic body, and the White Paper is clear that its members
should not be duplicating the representative roles of councillors and Members of Parliament. We also indicated that the further that proposals put to us moved away from the principle of electoral equality, the greater would be the need for them to show other benefits.

The White Paper envisages that the Assembly’s role will be unique in British local government — acting as a scrutinizer of the decisions and actions of the Mayor, while at the same time contributing to the strategic governance of London. Paragraph 3.20 of the White Paper states that:

“The Assembly’s role has a number of components:
- to assist in policy development — the Mayor will be required to consult the Assembly or the committees of the Assembly, about his or her strategies relating to the GLAs functions. Also the Assembly will be able to put proposals to the Mayor, who will have to respond;
- to approve or amend the Mayor’s budget — the Mayor will be required to consult the Assembly about his or her draft budget, to consider any amendments it proposes and to submit a final budget for the Assembly’s approval;
- to examine London issues — the Assembly will investigate and report on issues of importance to Londoners and make proposals based on its findings. It may do this at the Mayor’s invitation or on its own account. The Assembly will be given powers to hold hearings and to call witnesses from London organisations;
- to examine the Mayor’s strategies and performance — we expect the Assembly to establish standing committees to undertake regular reviews of the Mayor’s strategies and plans and review his or her actions and performance of duties;
- to participate in the staff appointments procedure — the Mayor or Mayor’s representative and members of the Assembly will establish an appointments committee to deal with staff appointments; and
- to serve as members of the police and fire authorities — the Assembly will provide members for those authorities and may contribute up to four members of the board of the LDA [London Development Agency].”

25 We invited interested parties to submit arguments and, where appropriate, supporting evidence to demonstrate how their favoured configurations for electoral areas might better enable Assembly members to perform these functions.

### Names of electoral areas

25 We are also required to recommend names for the 14 electoral areas. In our Guidance we did not make proposals in relation to the name of electoral areas. Instead, we outlined a number of possible alternative approaches:

- a simple numbering system, from 1 to 14;
- a compass-based system;
- names based on the groupings of boroughs (e.g. Havering and Redbridge);
- names based on geographical features or well-known areas or localities within the electoral areas, and not (so as to avoid confusion) those already used as a borough or Parliamentary constituency name.

26 We invited comments both on the general approach and on specific names.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local authority</th>
<th>Number of electors</th>
<th>Local authority</th>
<th>Number of electors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barking &amp; Dagenham</td>
<td>113,997</td>
<td>Islington</td>
<td>118,461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barnet</td>
<td>227,270</td>
<td>Kensington &amp; Chelsea</td>
<td>102,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bexley</td>
<td>167,832</td>
<td>Kingston-upon-Thames</td>
<td>102,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brent</td>
<td>169,920</td>
<td>Lambeth</td>
<td>183,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bromley</td>
<td>226,273</td>
<td>Lewisham</td>
<td>176,041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>135,757</td>
<td>Merton</td>
<td>131,861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croydon</td>
<td>225,937</td>
<td>Newham</td>
<td>147,369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ealing</td>
<td>210,607</td>
<td>Redbridge</td>
<td>175,266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enfield</td>
<td>202,895</td>
<td>Richmond-upon-Thames</td>
<td>125,154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenwich</td>
<td>152,615</td>
<td>Southwark</td>
<td>160,416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hackney</td>
<td>116,680</td>
<td>Sutton</td>
<td>132,194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammersmith &amp; Fulham</td>
<td>112,096</td>
<td>Tower Hamlets</td>
<td>123,967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haringey</td>
<td>145,940</td>
<td>Waltham Forest</td>
<td>157,581</td>
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<td>Harrow</td>
<td>156,334</td>
<td>Wandsworth</td>
<td>199,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Havering</td>
<td>179,865</td>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>125,391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillingdon</td>
<td>178,732</td>
<td>City of London Corporation</td>
<td>5,167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hounslow</td>
<td>156,195</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Office for National Statistics
3. THE COMMISSION’S ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

27. As indicated previously, our task is to consider, in consultation with interested parties, how the individual electoral areas of the Assembly should be defined and named. In reaching conclusions on the draft recommendations we have taken into account all the representations received during Stage One.

28. We received views from a total of 99 interested parties during Stage One. They included London-wide organisations such as the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry; the London Planning Advisory Committee; and the Metropolitan Police; the majority of the London boroughs; the four main political parties; and a number of Members of Parliament, local councillors and members of the public. A summary of the representations received is at Appendix C.

Electoral equality

29. The Government’s White Paper sets as the task of proposing “the most appropriate groupings of boroughs, bearing in mind the need to achieve reasonable electoral equality – i.e. achieve constituencies covering broadly equal numbers of voters”. We regarded the need to achieve a reasonable level of electoral equality to be at the heart of our work in developing our recommendations. Nevertheless, for a number of reasons, our work cannot be a purely arithmetical exercise.

30. When starting our task, we invited views on six modelled options (Models A to F, Appendix A) which we felt would provide reasonable electoral equality across the 14 electoral areas, while offering interested parties a degree of choice over the most appropriate pattern of voting areas. However, we recognised that there were other possible combinations of borough areas, each with different implications for the level of electoral balance. We did not rule these out, but indicated that they were alternative schemes put to us moved away from the principle of electoral equality the greater would be the need for them to show other benefits.

31. Most respondents agreed that electoral equality should be an important consideration when constructing the electoral areas. There was some disagreement, however, as to how much emphasis should be placed on this factor. While the Liberal Democrats concurred with our initial view that variances should not exceed 15 per cent from the average in any electoral area, the Conservative Party considered that a workable configuration could be obtained with no electoral areas having a variance in excess of 10 per cent. The schemes from the Liberal Democrats, the Greens and the Conservatives all achieved an average level of imbalance of no more than 6 per cent.

32. Conversely, the Labour Party considered electoral equality to be of less importance than it is in constructing local authority wards and Parliamentary constituencies, because of the inflexibility caused by the large ‘building blocks’, i.e. the London boroughs, and the strategic nature of the authority. It commented that “schemes that are otherwise robust and demonstrate overall advantages should not be disallowed because of a marginal increase in electoral disparity”.

33. In only three parts of London were there any support for electoral areas with variances in excess of 15 per cent from the London-wide average. In East London, the London borough of Havering, Barking & Dagenham Health Authority, Keith Darvill MP, the Uplington Constituency Labour Party and a resident all supported combining Havering and Barking & Dagenham. It was argued that while such a combination would result in an electoral area with 18 per cent fewer electors than the London-wide average, it would have the benefit of grouping areas with geographical, transport and economic links. In Central London, the Labour Party proposed combining Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea and Wandsworth. Although such an electoral area would have 19 per cent more electors than the average, the Labour Party expressed the view that the three boroughs shared a community of interest. Finally, a resident proposed combining Enfield and Barnet, which would result in an electoral area with 19 per cent more electors per councillor than the average.
However, in each of these cases, there was also support for alternative combinations of boroughs which provided a better level of electoral equality. In the case of Havering, there was some support expressed by other respondents for mergers with either Redbridge or Bexley, and in the case of Barking & Dagenham, there was support for a merger with Tower Hamlets and Newham, most notably by the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Newham themselves. Similarly, in the case of Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea and Wandsworth, the Green, Liberal Democratic and Conservative Parties, and the councils themselves, supported different combinations. In the case of Enfield and Barnet, the respective councils supported Enfield/Haringey and Barnet/Camden combinations.

We remain firmly of the view that the achievement of a reasonable level of equality of representation between the 14 electoral areas must be fundamental to our task. Nevertheless, we accept there is an argument not to be overly prescriptive in our approach to electoral equality, by recommending to the Secretary of State only a pattern of electoral areas which contains the lowest level of electoral imbalance and dismissing all others. Most of the boroughs which will form the basis for the electoral areas make for large, unwieldy building blocks which we have no power to tailor. Also, we recognise there is an argument that the additional voting power provided by the 11 Assembly members, who will be elected from across London as a whole, suggests that there should be some relative flexibility in our approach to electoral balance.

Finally, there are considerations of stability, and the achievement of a pattern of areas that will have an enduring capacity, and which will not need frequent amendment and readjustment to maintain an optimum level of electoral equality.

**Existing borough linkages**

We also recognised in our Guidance that electoral equality need not be the only criterion when considering the electoral areas for the Assembly. When considering the choice between options offering similar levels of electoral equality other factors come into play, such as matters relating to the representation of functions of the Assembly. Indeed, many submissions stressed the importance of reflecting existing transport or economic links between boroughs as a rationale for groupings.

London-wide bodies tended to place a greater emphasis on the strategic nature of the Assembly, arguing that when considering areas we should consider the existing sub-divisions of London. The London Chamber of Commerce and Industry considered that “for purposes of consultation, representation and accountability with the business community, building on existing sub-regional identities will be important”. Similarly, the London Planning Advisory Committee argued that the analysis of strategic planning issues and the formulation of policy would be assisted by the sub-division of London into areas exhibiting similar characteristics and issues. It therefore considered that existing sub-regional partnerships should form the basis for our recommendations. The London TEC Council considered that electoral areas should relate to labour market linkages, enabling Assembly members to identify with sub-regional interests in training, business support and economic development.

North West London TEC considered that combining Brent and Harrow in an electoral area would help cement the alignment of interests and increase the accountability of agencies which are based on the boroughs’ boundaries. In particular, they cited Brent and Harrow Area Health Authority, Business Link London North West, North West London TEC and the North West London Chamber of Commerce. One of the main reasons cited by the London boroughs of Croydon and Merton for their combination was the construction of the Tramlink between their two areas. The councils argued that, by providing an east/west transport corridor between the two boroughs, the Tramlink project would strengthen the links between them and develop economic activity in the area. Similarly, Haringey considered that the north/south radial transport routes in its area provided good communications with its neighbouring borough of Enfield, and drew our attention to the lack of links across the River Lee which, it contended, created difficulties in east/west movement.

However, many boroughs have links with more than one of their neighbours. For example, Greenwich preferred being linked with Bexley, as both boroughs are partners in the Thames Gateway London Partnership, the South East London Leadership Partnership and the regeneration of the Thamesmead area, as well as sharing a Health Authority and Chamber of Commerce. However, Greenwich conceded that arguments could be made for a link with Lewisham on the basis that many of the developments in the west of the borough, such as the Greenwich Peninsula, the Greenwich light rail and the Docklands Light Railway extension, also significantly affect Lewisham.

The Labour Party considered that the electoral areas should reflect the main strategic transport routes in the capital. This would result in a radial pattern. It considered that transport policy would, perhaps, be the single most important responsibility of the new authority and, as such, routes tend to generate issues of strategic importance, that they would provide an appropriate focus for Assembly representation. It also considered that major sub-regional projects, such as Docklands, Tramlink and Heathrow Airport, should be contained within single electoral areas.

We agree that there is a strong case for taking account of the sub-regional partnerships within London in reaching our draft recommendations. The partnerships transcend borough boundaries and create opportunities for economic regeneration and other links between boroughs with similar needs. We consider it likely that Assembly members will, for the purposes of consultation and accountability, benefit from and provide a voice for those sub-regional areas on pan-London issues. Similar considerations apply to the areas covered by health authorities and single regeneration initiatives.

Having said that, most boroughs have some links and partnerships with all their neighbours. For example, the London Borough of Greenwich shares regeneration partnerships with both Bexley and Lewisham. Given the multiplicity of partnerships and other initiatives across London, it is clearly impractical for any pattern of electoral areas to reflect all the sub-regions and partnerships which currently exist.

We have noted the arguments put to us in relation to strategic transport links. However, we consider that they should only have a marginal effect on our considerations. For the most part, the London boroughs are well-linked by trunk roads, and there are very few areas which are not easily accessible from neighbouring boroughs. We accept that when there are few or no transport links, such as between Havering and Bexley, the case for combining adjoining boroughs is less strong. However, by contrast, in the case of Croydon, the borough has significant transport links with all its neighbouring boroughs, and are we not persuaded that any particular transport link should be given precedence in our consideration. We consider that while radial transport routes may have a strategic resonance, similar arguments could equally be applied to other routes, such as the North Circular Road.

**Similarity versus diversity**

One of the key issues raised in submissions to us is whether the electoral areas should combine broadly similar or diverse areas. We recognise in our Guidance that there was an argument as to whether community of interest should play a role in the pattern of the electoral areas, or whether combining areas with a diversity of interest might better enable Assembly members to reflect London-wide concerns.

The Labour Party argued that “accessibility to the electorate implies that there should be some community of interest across any given [electoral area]”. However, it stated that this did not mean the electoral areas need have “homogeneous demographic profiles”, but that they would have strong internal communications, form a coherent shape and have no significant geographical barriers within them.

The Conservative Party considered that London-wide issues could not be properly be considered without the interests of local communities being taken into account. It cited Heathrow Airport which, while a strategic issue, had varying impacts on different communities within London. It argued that the electoral areas should retain a representative function so as to encourage voter identification with, and the democratic legitimacy of, the Greater London Authority. Lastly, it felt that the interests of local communities must be properly represented, and that similar boroughs should be combined in the electoral areas so as to avoid internal conflict.

The Liberal Democrats also considered that the electoral areas should cover boroughs of a similar nature. The Party was not persuaded that there was a case for deliberately combining boroughs with divergent outlooks, and argued that the representation of divergent views would best be served by different members representing different divergent areas within the Assembly.

The Green Party accepted that boroughs with diverse economies and cultures could be placed...
together to form the electoral areas, but considered that this would not enable Assembly members to think more strategically. Rather, it contended that the electoral areas should be based on groupings of boroughs which had a “narrower mix of issues”. It argued that such a structure would enable the Assembly to take account of concerns from all parts of London. As a result, it supported a modified version of Model C, which largely avoided combining outer-London and inner-London boroughs.

50 The views of the London boroughs were mixed, as illustrated in the responses received from the neighbouring boroughs of Lewisham and Greenwich. Greenwich argued that, while it has a greater similarity with Lewisham and that the two boroughs share many local issues, combining them in an electoral area “would detract from the strategic, London-wide role that the GLA representative will have”. Conversely, Lewisham stated that Greenwich seemed its most obvious partner, as it has several links with that borough, and its combination with Greenwich would enable Lewisham to benefit from “the potential perceptual advantage of connecting with the Millennium project”. Some boroughs, such as Newham, argued that members of the Assembly would require a vision for the whole of London, with a capacity to think on a citywide scale and across both local interests, and that combining inner- and outer-London areas would support this approach. Other boroughs expressed different views. Merton, for example, did not favour linking with Wandsworth, on the grounds that the result would link Inner- and outer-London boroughs which had widely differing needs and social and demographic differences.

51 Some respondents considered that the Assembly could help to overcome what they considered to be arbitrary borough boundaries. The Finchley Park Action Group commented that the problems in its area derived from its having been divided between three local authorities and Parliamentary constituencies, resulting in no-one having responsibility for taking an overview. Similarly, Greenwich argued that the continuing development of the Thamesmead community was hindered by being divided between itself and Bexley.

52 The Government’s White Paper envisages that “appropriate areas” will need to think and act strategically, looking at London-wide issues in the round and at the long-term interests of the capital... [and should not] duplicate the local representative role already undertaken by councillors, Members of Parliament and Members of the European Parliament.” Clearly, it would be counter-productive for Assembly members to duplicate the role and functions which are currently undertaken by elected representatives at both the borough and Parliamentary level. However, that does not mean the 14 Assembly members returned from the 14 electoral areas will be left without any representational role. Each will be returned from a specific geographic area of London, and will be accountable to their electorate. They will therefore be expected to reflect the concerns, interests and aspirations of their constituents in the forum of the Assembly when considering and debating the direction of London-wide policies and strategies.

53 This then raises the question as to how that representational role might best be facilitated and reflected in the pattern of electoral areas we recommend to the Secretary of State. As can be seen from the views expressed to us, there are two schools of thought, each of which has its merits.

54 Electoral areas which combine diverse boroughs would enable Assembly members to benefit from receiving a wide range of different, possibly conflicting, views on the governance of London. This approach might also encourage those members to place emphasis on the needs of London as a whole. Conversely, such an approach might make it difficult for Assembly members to reflect particular areas or groups in London and thus their accountability to those areas and groups may be weakened. There is also a danger that it could lead to a sense of disfranchisement, with Assembly members being perceived as being insufficiently representative of a significant proportion of the electorate within individual electoral areas. While accepting that all London boroughs are internally diverse in terms of their socio-economic make-up, we anticipate that such perceptions are less likely to arise in circumstances where electoral areas are based on groupings of broadly similar boroughs.

55 There is a further point of relevance. It is not within the individual electoral areas that Assembly members will be debating and taking decisions on the strategic direction of London, but in the forum of the Assembly, with members elected from different parts of the capital. It is therefore unlikely that there will be any conflict of interest or conflict of loyalty or any conflict of business. Furthermore, the Assembly area will need to be dependent on Assembly members themselves being elected from electoral areas which are based on diverse boroughs.

56 Accordingly, on balance, we agree with the view expressed to us by the majority of the respondents that the Assembly’s allocation of electoral areas is an appropriate mix of combining diverse boroughs. However, given the geographic location of the London boroughs in relation to each other, and the need to arrive at a reasonable level of electoral equality, we recognise that it may not be possible to achieve total consistency in this respect.

Cross-river options

57 The White Paper states that “where the [Commission] thinks this is appropriate, borough north and south of the River Thames might be combined.” In starting our work, we considered it appropriate to include within our modelled options a number of possible cross-river combinations, other than that at Richmond-upon-Thames, and to explore the responses.

58 Views were mixed as to whether cross-river options were acceptable, and also as to where such options would be appropriate. The Port of London Authority welcomed our willingness to consider combining areas either side of the River Thames in the incoming new electoral areas. It argued that no difficulties arise in Richmond-upon-Thames from its existing cross-river status, and that we should maximise the opportunity now available to provide cross-river options “at the longer term strategic benefit of the capital”. In contrast, LPA said that “there is no advantage in cross-river options if there is a good case for borough groupings on each side of the river”. In particular, it cited the combination of Haringey and Barking which, it commented, have no transport links and could be better linked with Greenwich and Redbridge respectively. The South East Museums Service argued that “cross-river partnerships are few, full of pre-ussed barriers and are difficult to sustain”.

59 The Liberal Democrats considered that, while cross-river options posed no problems in central and western London, they would not be feasible east of Tower Bridge. They suggested that Hammersmith & Fulham and Wandsworth should be combined, as at that point the river is narrow and it is bridged by Putney and Wandsworth Bridges. They also commented that the two boroughs have significant links with the river and similar communities of interest. The Labour Party proposed that Wandsworth be combined with Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster. The Conservative Party and the Green Party preferred not to have any cross-river options. The Green Party commented that “we believe that Londoners do, on the whole, regard the River Thames as a cultural barrier”.

60 None of the London boroughs which submitted views supported the creation of cross-river electoral areas. Hammersmith & Fulham argued that “over and above the cultural division created by the River Thames, there are no particular community ties or joint working arrangements” between the borough and Wandsworth. Similarly, Westminster said that while cross-river options would be necessary for Richmond-upon-Thames, they were needless elsewhere.

61 We do not consider that there is a convincing electoral equality case for combining areas either side of the River Thames. In each of the areas where cross-river options have been proposed, there is an alternative option which provides better electoral equality. In all areas, cross-river options have gained the support of some London-wide bodies, they have rarely achieved much local support from residents of the boroughs concerned, and have been opposed by the respective councils. We note the points made by the Port of London Authority about the need to recognise the River Thames as a strategic economic and transport resource. However, we do not believe that cross-river combinations of boroughs are necessary to achieve this.

62 On balance, we are not persuaded that we should seek to create a pattern of electoral areas which spans the River Thames other than at Richmond-upon-Thames. In each of the cases where cross-river options have been advanced there are alternative options which would provide good electoral equality and combine similar areas. We also accept that, so varying degrees along its length, the river acts as a physical barrier to north/south movement.

Other physical barriers

63 Perhaps the most obvious other physical barrier in London is the River Lee, which acts as the western boundary for Newham and Waltham Forest boroughs. Whilst the river is relatively narrow with a number of crossing points, further north, in the upper Lee Valley, it is abated
by reservoirs and marshes making a more significant physical barrier between areas. An electoral area combining Enfield and Waltham Forest would have only two significant crossing points, the A110 and the A406 North Circular Trunk Road.

64 The Labour Party contended that the upper River Lee is a significant geographical barrier and that it should act as a boundary between electoral areas. Haringey said that its local economy has north-south links along the Lee Valley which have been reinforced by the difficulties of east/west movement across the River Lee. However, the Conservative Party considered that Enfield should be grouped with Waltham Forest, as they share regeneration issues relating to the upper Lee Valley.

65 We consider that the River Lee (and Lee Valley) does act as a significant boundary at its northern extent, both physically and in community terms. To the north, the Lee Valley is wider than many stretches of the River Thames and acts as a boundary between communities in North and East London. Its strip of vehicular crossing points makes it a barrier to east/west movement. We have therefore decided that we should have regard to the upper River Lee when constructing the electoral areas.

Administrative convenience

66 A number of respondents argued that we should take administrative convenience into account in reaching our recommendations. In particular, it was suggested that we should try to avoid dividing Parliamentary constituencies between electoral areas.

67 The Labour Party argued that "the pairing of London boroughs for the creation of Parliamentary constituencies has led to development of cooperation between those boroughs for the conduct of elections. The integrity of those pairings was tested at public inquiries and in most cases we would argue that they link boroughs with communities of interest". It also said that having regard to Parliamentary constituencies would assist the organisation of political parties and minimise confusion in the electorate. Similarly, Westminster said that it has been a long-established practice for the City of London to be joined with Westminster for electoral purposes, and that it would be illogical to divide the constituency.

68 We have concluded that the division of some Parliamentary constituencies is unavoidable, bearing in mind that the Secretary of State’s Direction requires us to use borough areas as the building blocks for new electoral areas. While the new Assembly will be required to work closely with other elected representatives, we do not consider that limited overlapping of boundaries would have a significant impact. The Assembly of the Greater London Authority is to be a strategic body, and the White Paper is clear that its members should not be duplicating the representative roles of councillors and Members of Parliament. We have therefore concluded that whether electoral areas are coterminous with Parliamentary constituencies should not be a major factor in determining our recommendations.

City of London

69 We recognise that in many ways the City of London differs from the other London boroughs, and this has presented us with a particular dilemma. Because of its low resident electorate, the City can be combined with boroughs to its north, south, east or west with very little impact on the level of electoral equality. Recognising that electoral equality should be the most important consideration when constructing the electoral areas.

70 Lambeth argued that it should be combined with the City of London and Southwark, as it had a number of links and initiatives with the City, evidenced by the Cross-River Partnership and travel to work patterns. Similarly, Newham proposed that it should be combined with the City of London, in addition to Tower Hamlets and Barking & Dagenham. It stated that "the City is a key partner in the regeneration of east London and this is an opportunity to strengthen the links at a strategic level, and to support the policy of the Government Office for London in focusing regeneration in East London".

71 The Corporation of London, on the other hand, while stating that the majority of its residents attending a public meeting or responding in writing had expressed a preference for the City combining with Westminster as a whole, decided to maintain a neutral position.

72 We accept that, in terms of the character of the residential areas, the City probably has more in common with the boroughs to the west. We also recognise that it is linked with Westminster for Parliamentary purposes but, as already outlined, we do not believe that 'parliamentary constituency boundaries should be a major consideration for us.

73 Nor have we been persuaded that we should combine areas either side of the River Thames, as suggested by Lambeth. We find more persuasive the arguments advanced by Newham, that the City is a key partner in the regeneration of East London, and that combining the City of London with areas to its east could assist in focusing regeneration eastwards. We consider that the issue of similarity should be considered in its broadest terms in relation to the City, and given the developing commercial sector in both the City and Docklands, those areas would best be represented by being within a single electoral area.

Draft recommendations

74 Our draft recommendations are illustrated in Map 1 and detailed in Figure I on pages vii and viii.

75 Having considered carefully all the evidence and representations we received during Stage One of the consultation process we have concluded that electoral equality should be the most important consideration when constructing the electoral areas.

76 We recognise that there is no consensus over the appropriate balance between strategic or community links, or whether the electoral areas should be formed from similar or diverse boroughs. We have concluded that, on balance, there would be benefit in combining similar areas for the purposes of representation within the Assembly. Similarly, we recognise that it is likely that Assembly members will, for purposes of consultation and accountability with sub-regional bodies, provide a voice for those sub-regional areas on pan-London issues. Accordingly, where practical, there would be some merit in reflecting these sub-regional partnerships. Conversely, we are not persuaded to adopt strategic transport links as the basis of the electoral areas.

77 We do not consider that there is a convincing electoral or strategic case for combining areas either side of the River Thames (other than at Richmond-upon-Thames). We note that in each of the instances where such proposals have been put forward there are alternative options which would provide better electoral equality and have local support. We have concluded that the river does act as a physical barrier, and is perceived as a psychological barrier, between north and south London. Accordingly, we are not persuaded that there is a case for creating electoral areas that combine areas either side of the Thames (other than at Richmond-upon-Thames). In the case of the River Lee, we consider that, while the river often acts as a focus for various recreational activities, in the upper Lee Valley it is a significant boundary in both physical and community terms.

78 We have concluded that the division of some Parliamentary constituencies between electoral areas is unavoidable, and that while the Assembly will be required to work closely with other elected representatives, limited overlapping of boundaries would not have a significant impact. We have therefore concluded that the boundaries of Parliamentary constituencies should not be a major factor in determining our recommendations.

79 We consider that, south of the River Thames, the new electoral areas should be based on our Model C. This model provided a broad measure of support from respondents. It will provide electoral areas which combine similar boroughs and, for the most part, reflect the sub-regional and other partnerships which exist in this part of London. It will also achieve reasonable levels of electoral equality, with no individual electoral area having an imbalance of more than 9 per cent from the average.

80 We have been persuaded, however, to make some modifications to this model north of the River Thames. The barrier presented by the River Lee makes the combination of the boroughs of Enfield and Waltham Forest undesirable. In this part of London we believe a more appropriate pattern of electoral areas, combining similar boroughs and reflecting partnerships, can be achieved by linking Waltham Forest with Hackney and Islington, and Camden with Barnet. This would result in electoral areas with imbalances of 9 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. Enfield and Haringey would then form a separate electoral area, with a variance of 3 per cent from the average. Our final change to Model C is to link the City of London with the boroughs to its east: Barking and Dagenham, Newham and Tower Hamlets.

Names of electoral areas

81 Our draft recommendations for the names of the electoral areas are set out in Figure I on page vii.  

12 L O C A L G O V E R N M E N T C O M M I S S I O N F O R E N G L A N D  

13 L O C A L G O V E R N M E N T C O M M I S S I O N F O R E N G L A N D
4. NEXT STEPS

85. We are putting forward draft recommendations on the future electoral areas for the Assembly of the Greater London Authority. Now it is up to the people of London to let us have their views. We will take fully into account all representations received by 13 October 1998. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment and a list of respondents will be available on request after the end of the consultation period.

86. Views may be expressed by writing directly to:

The Chief Executive
GLA Review
Local Government Commission for England
Dolphins Court
10/11 Great Tumstide
London WC1V 7U

87. In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered, before reporting finally to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions by 30 November 1998. At that stage, the consultation exercise will end. Our final recommendations will be set out in a report, which will be published and publicised in the same way as this report.

88. Provisions for the electoral areas of the Assembly will be made in the Bill to establish the new authority. This is expected to be introduced in the next Parliamentary session. The Secretary of State will give full consideration to our final recommendations in preparing those provisions.
## APPENDIX A

**The Commission's Modelled Options**  
(May 1998)

Figure A1:  
Summary of modelled options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Weighted average electoral area variance (per cent)</th>
<th>Number of electoral areas</th>
<th>Highest electoral area variance (per cent)</th>
<th>Cross-river options (other than at Richmond)</th>
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<td>&gt;10 per cent</td>
<td>&gt;20 per cent</td>
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<td>3</td>
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**Notes:**  
1. The Weighted Average Electoral Area Variance represents the imbalance for the 14 electoral areas as a whole. It is the average of individual electoral area imbalances, weighted by size of the electorate in each electoral area.

2. The number of electoral areas in which the ratio of electors to Assembly member would vary by more than 10 per cent and/or more than 20 per cent from the average ratio for the Authority as a whole.
APPENDIX B

Appraisal of Modelled Options

Electoral equality

1. In preparing for our task, we undertook a preliminary evaluation of a wide selection of the possible combinations available, to allow us to identify those which would provide the most satisfactory outcome in terms of electoral equality. We recognised that it was possible to propose minor variations to those options which provide the best electoral equality, and that these would have a relatively minor impact on overall equality levels. For example, the City of London, with an electorate of only 5,167, could, under all our modelled options, be included in at least three of the 14 different electoral areas with minimal impact on electoral equality. We considered such an approach would achieve few benefits and decided to put forward a cross-section of the available options.

2. We used two measures of electoral equality when formulating our modelled options for consultation. We measured the Weighted Average Electoral Area Variance (WAEAV) of the different possible combinations. This enabled the Commission to compare the average level of inequality in electoral areas across the whole of London. We recognised, however, that as a good average level of equality may disguise some high variances in individual constituencies, we should consider the variances in each electoral area alongside the average for the whole of London.

3. In developing our modelled options, we sought to ensure that no single electoral area would have a variance in excess of 15 per cent from the average, and that the Weighted Average Electoral Area Variance should not exceed 5 per cent from the average. While we did not rule out the possibility of recommending an electoral area with a variance in excess of 15 per cent, we considered that this approach should provide significant flexibility.

4. We also stated in our Guidance that our minds were open to any of the other possible combinations. However, the further they moved away from the principle of electoral equality, the greater would be the need for them to show other benefits.

The credibility issue

5. The White Paper states that “we expect these [the 14 voting areas] to comprise combinations of contiguous boroughs and respect existing borough boundaries”. We recognised when formulating our options that there were a number of boroughs which, while contiguous, have relatively dense networks. The most obvious example of this is at Crystal Palace, where Southwark, Croydon, Bromley and Lambeth all meet. While it would have been possible to join Bromley and Lambeth, Bromley and Southwark or Croydon and Southwark, we considered that such options might have little credibility with stakeholders, and therefore discarded these options.

Cross-river options

6. The White Paper stated that “where the [Commission] thinks this is appropriate, boroughs north and south of the River Thames might be combined”. We considered that it was appropriate to put forward cross-river options for consideration, and then to consider any arguments for or against such options at the Draft Recommendations stage. We recognised, however, that some cross-river options, such as those which combine areas with no or relatively few physical links, might be not credible, but concluded that they should not be excluded at the start of the review.
Key boroughs

While there is a significant number of possible options, some boroughs, due to their relatively large electorates and/or geographical location, can be merged with relatively few other boroughs. We considered that it was appropriate where possible to ensure that there was more than one option for each of the London boroughs, so as not to inhibit local debate. This, however, should not be at the expense of electoral equality.

Within our modelled options, only three boroughs – Barking & Dagenham, Newham and Tower Hamlets – would be grouped together under all six options. All three boroughs have relatively low electorates, between 113,000 and 148,000, and we found that combining them with larger boroughs tended to produce high inequalities either overall or in one specific electoral area.

Single borough options

We recognised that it would be possible to construct a scheme which would contain an electoral area based on one of the larger boroughs, such as Barnet, Bromley or Croydon, but retain a reasonable level of electoral equality overall. However, in view of the White Paper’s statement that Assembly members should not “duplicate the local representation roles of borough councillors”, we considered that single-borough electoral areas could create such a situation. We therefore excluded such options in our Guidance.

APPENDIX C

Representations Received

Electoral areas

London-wide bodies

1 We received views from 15 London-wide bodies on the most appropriate electoral areas for the Assembly. The London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) considered that for purposes of consultation, representation and accountability with the business community, building on existing sub-regional identities would be important in constructing the electoral areas. It supported Model C on the grounds that this option best achieved such an objective.

2 The London Planning Advisory Committee (LPAC) argued that the prime criterion for the groupings of boroughs into two or three should be the strategic purpose and functions of the Greater London Authority as a city-regional body. LPAC felt that it would be valuable to sub-divide London into areas exhibiting similar characteristics and issues, taking into account existing sub-regional partnerships. This, it said, would assist in the analysis of strategic planning issues and formulating policy. However, other bodies, such as the Metropolitan Police and the London Regional Passengers’ Committee (LRPC) commented that the boundaries of the electoral areas would have little practical effect on their services.

3 The London Tourist Board and the Port of London Authority argued that there would be benefits in creating electoral areas that combined boroughs on either side of the River Thames. The London Tourist Board commented that there was scope for using economic sub-regions as the basis of the 14 electoral areas, but considered that with initiatives such as the Thames Gateway crossing the River Thames in the east, the river should not be considered a dividing line between communities. Similarly, the Port of London Authority argued that the future of the Port of London relies on the River Thames being viewed as a strategic transport and economic resource, and that this was not always possible where decisions were made by individual boroughs with local issues in mind. Combining boroughs across the Thames, it argued, would encourage a more strategic view to be taken.

4 The London Research Centre said that projected changes in population should be considered when establishing the most appropriate electoral areas, in order to form a stable set of electoral arrangements and reduce the need for future changes to electoral area boundaries. With this in mind, it undertook an analysis of our six modelled options, and concluded that Models A, B, C and D were the most stable and would have the smallest range of variances over time.

5 The umbrella organisation for Training & Enterprise Councils in London, the London TEC Council, considered that electoral areas should relate to labour market linkages, enabling Assembly members to identify with the sub-regional interests in training, business support and economic development. While none of the six modelled options fully accommodated their criteria, it argued that Models C and E best fitted the local labour markets as evidenced by travel to work patterns. Of the two however, the Council preferred Model C on the grounds that it “best fit the local labour markets as evidenced in travel to work pattern” in North London.

Political parties

6 We received four London-wide submissions from political parties. The Greater London Regional Office of the Labour Party (The Labour Party) said that it had consulted with its local parties to construct its own London-wide proposal. It argued that when constructing the electoral areas, we should take into account electoral parity, ease of representation, administrative convenience, accessibility to the electorate, and the strategic functions of the authority. It considered that accessibility to the electorate implied that there should be some community interest across each
electoral area in the form of strong internal communications, and that each area should have a consistent electorate and contain no significant geographical barriers.

7 For this reason, the Labour Party argued that the River Thames east of the City of London and the upper Lee Valley should not be breached, and that the electoral areas should broadly follow a radial pattern, so as to be understandable and to reflect strategic transport links. Under its proposals, Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea to the north of the River Thames would be combined with Wandsworth to the south. It also proposed that major sub-regional projects such as Docklands, Croydon Tramlink and Heathrow Airport should be contained within single electoral areas. It considered that electoral parity was of less importance, given that large buildings blocks used to form the electoral areas, (the boroughs), reduced flexibility, and because Assembly members were to be strategic rather than have an interface with electors. We also received submissions from three constituency Labour parties and two from a London borough Labour Group.

8 The Conservative Party supported Model C, arguing that it most closely reflected the three criteria it considered important when forming electoral areas for the Assembly: electoral equality, voter identification and minimising the number of differing communities within electoral areas. It argued that, as a workable configuration of electoral areas can be obtained without variances exceeding 10 per cent from the average, there was no apparent justification for any pattern which resulted in a higher variance. It took the view that the electoral areas should retain a representative function, in so far as voter identification with, and the democratic legitimacy of, the Greater London Authority. Lastly, it argued that the interests of local communities must be properly represented and that electoral areas must be configured in such a way as to avoid conflict within them. We received a further 10 submissions from constituency Conservative Parties, and seven from London borough Conservative Groups, all of whom preferred Model C.

9 The Liberal Democrats produced a London-wide proposal. They felt that two points should be paramount when considering new electoral areas. First, they should provide a reasonable level of electoral equality with no areas having a variance in excess of 15 per cent from the average. Second, they should cover boroughs of a similar nature. They felt that divergent views were best represented by each individual member representing an area which does not contain divergent communities. Greenwich was a case for creating a cross-river electoral area by combining Hammersmith & Fulham and Wandsworth as, in this area, the River Thames is comparatively narrow and both boroughs have significant links and similar communities of interest.

10 The Green Party supported Model C, albeit with some modifications at North West London. It argued that there were a number of key principles to consider when creating the electoral areas: they should encourage participation, be compact and have a physical integrity. It considered that, by definition, electoral areas cannot be strategic, and therefore the strategic role of the Assembly could not realistically be reflected in the way electoral areas were formed. It considered that combining diverse boroughs would not make Assembly members think more strategically. It also argued that the River Thames acts as a barrier, and that the long-term success of the electoral areas would be judged on the extent to which electors identify with them.

11 We received one submission from a Residents' Association Group of members, from the London Borough of Havering. They preferred the boroughs of Havering and Bexley to be combined in a single electoral area.

The London boroughs

12 We received responses from 24 of the 33 London boroughs, with most submissions restricting their comments to their own locality. There was no consensus between the boroughs on the criteria which should be used in constructing the electoral areas.

13 A number of London boroughs considered that the Greater London Assembly's strategic role should be reflected in any new electoral areas. For example, Croydon considered that the construction of Tramlink would develop an east-west transport corridor providing a focus for the development of economic activity and regeneration. Similarly, Haringey argued that north/south radial transport routes provide good connections with its neighbouring borough of Enfield. Newham saw that Stratford was the hub of the regeneration corridor of East London and, by reflecting these links in new electoral areas, a coherent East London focus would be created, furthering the common interests of the area.

14 Some boroughs considered it important for the electoral areas to contain similar areas, while others considered that they should maintain the status quo. Greenwich argued that while there was greater similarity with Lewisham, and they shared many local issues, combining them in an electoral area would detract from the strategic, London-wide role that the GLA representative will have. Conversely, Lewisham stated that Greenwich seemed its most obvious partner as it had several links with that borough. Combination with Greenwich in an electoral area would enable Lewisham to benefit from "the potential perceptual advantage of connecting with the Millennium [project]."

15 Boroughs were also divided over the case for electoral areas that combined parts of London either side of the River Thames. Wandsworth considered that all three cross-river modelled options should be excluded. It argued that the Thames acted as a major barrier to movement, resulting in Wandsworth having few strategic and geographic links with Hammersmith & Fulham. Conversely, Lambeth stated that its regeneration strategy had an objective of strengthening the borough's role as a Central London borough, and that, given its transport links and involvement with the Cross-River Partnership, it would benefit from combining with Southwark and the City of London.

Other representations

16 We received 38 representations from other interested parties during Stage One. These included representatives of other Members of Parliament. Sir Sydney Chapman, MP for Chipping Barnet, supported Option C. The Rt Hon Peter Brooke, MP for the Cities of London and Westminster, argued that, in London, we should take into account the employed population of an area, in addition to its electorate. Nigel Beard, MP for Bethnal Green and Cranford, considered that Bexley and Greenwich boroughs should be combined, on the grounds that they were already linked at parliamentary and health authority level, and shared road and rail links and regeneration partnerships. Keith Davey, MP for Upminster, argued that Barking & Dagenham should form an electoral area with Havering to its east. While he recognised that such a combination would provide an electoral area with 18 per cent fewer electors than the average, he considered that in strategic considerations linking the two areas outweighed this disadvantage. In particular, he cited the geographic similarities between the two boroughs, and their shared transport, community and economic links.

17 Some residents and residents' groups argued that the Assembly could help to overcome what they considered to be arbitrary divisions. The Finsbury Park Action Group argued that the problems of the Finsbury Park area derived from its being divided between three local authorities and parliamentary constituencies. The Group considered that combining Hackney, Islington and Islington could provide a single voice for the area. Similarly, the Chiswick Protection Group felt that the links between Chiswick and Hammersmith would best be reflected by combining Hounslow and Ealing in a single electoral area.

18 Some submissions gave weight to strategic considerations, such as regeneration, in the formulation of electoral areas. For example, the North West London Training & Enterprise Council argued that Brent and Harrow should be combined in a new electoral area, on the grounds that this would help to cement the alignment and increase the accountability of a number of agencies and organisations which currently operate on those boundaries.

19 While many considered that the River Thames acted as a practical barrier to movement, reducing the convenience for Assembly members, some felt that there was merit in combining boroughs north and south of the river. For example, one resident argued that combining Wandsworth and Hammersmith & Fulham would result in an electoral area that might alternate between political parties, thereby increasing voter interest and turnout at election times.

Names of electoral areas

20 Views were mixed on the most appropriate names for new electoral areas. The Labour Party considered that, bearing in mind the potential drawbacks of the alternatives, "there seems no obvious alternative to numbering seats, particularly as this would emphasise the London-wide strategic role of the Assembly members as opposed to the more traditional representative function". The Green Party put forward a number of names, suggesting that Lee Valley and Wandle be used. The Conservative Party said it had no strong feelings on the matter, but was not inclined to support names which referred to particular features as this could detract from the perceptual advantage of equal representation. Equally, it felt that numbering would be too anonymous. Its preference was to support names based on geographical identification, such as compass points.
21 Boroughs offered differing approaches to naming. Westminster argued that in the case of its preferred option (combining with the City of London, Hammersmith & Fulham and Kensington & Chelsea) the most appropriate name would be Central London, as it was geographically descriptive and easy for voters to understand. Greenwich stated that it disliked the use of numbering, which it felt to be “unimaginative and uninteresting”. It considered a compass-based system would be “too complex and confusing”. Wandsworth preferred using the name of the local river, Wandle, for the combination of Wandsworth and Merton. Brent preferred the use of the geographical landmark Wembley for its preferred combination of Brent and Harrow. However, the Leader of the Conservative Group on the council argued that the geographical landmark of Wembley would be inappropriate, as it was associated with a much smaller area with an identity of its own. He expressed a preference for using the names of both boroughs.

22 The London Pride Partnership considered a number of different methods of naming the electoral areas. It rejected numbering, or naming them after hills, ridges, well-known destinations, the ancient hundreds or railways, on the basis that these names would be either unacceptable or incomprehensible to residents. It argued that given the White Paper’s statement that the electoral areas should not duplicate the representational role of councils or others, their names should not be groups of existing borough names. While it considered that some rivers, such as the Thames, Lee or Wandle, may prove suitable as names for electoral areas, others such as the River Cray, Ching or Hogsmill were regarded as having less of a recognition factor. It concluded that the most simple, clear and uncontentious of all the methods presented would be to use what it called “the compound compass model”. This model would combine the title London, with the primary description (Central, Inner or Outer), and the secondary description based on the compass direction (North, East, South, West, South East, South West or North West).

23 Alternative views were expressed by other respondents. Beckenham Conservative Association preferred the use of Kentridge as a name for an electoral area based on Bromley and Bexley. One resident argued that we should use compass points for names, while another argued that the names of the new electoral areas should reflect a combination of former administrative units, traditional popular names and geographical features.