

Local Government  
Boundary Commission  
For England  
Report No. 389

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

CHAIRMAN

Sir Nicholas Morrison KCB

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

Mr J M Rankin QC

MEMBERS

Lady Bowden

Mr J T Brockbank

Mr R R Thornton CBE DL

Mr D P Harrison

Professor G E Cherry

To the Rt Hon William Whitelaw, CH, MC, MP.  
Secretary of State for the Home Department

PROPOSALS FOR REVISED ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE DISTRICT  
OF EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE IN THE COUNTY OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE

1. We, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, having carried out our initial review of the electoral arrangements for the District of East Cambridgeshire in accordance with the requirements of section 63 of, and Schedule 9 to, the Local Government Act 1972, present our proposals for the future electoral arrangements for that district.
2. In accordance with the procedure laid down in section 60(1) and (2) of the 1972 Act, notice was given on 13 May 1974 that we were to undertake this review. This was incorporated in a consultation letter addressed to the East Cambridgeshire District Council, copies of which were circulated to the Cambridgeshire County Council, the Members of Parliament for the constituencies concerned, Parish Councils in the district and the headquarters of the main political parties. Copies were also sent to the editors of local newspapers circulating in the area and of the local government press. Notices inserted in the local press announced the start of the review and invited comments from members of the public and from interested bodies.
3. East Cambridgeshire District Council were invited to prepare a draft scheme of representation for our consideration. In doing so, they were asked to observe the rules laid down in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, and the guidelines which we set out in our Report No 6 about the proposed size of the council and the proposed number of councillors for each ward. They were asked to take into account views expressed to them following their consultation with local interests. We therefore asked that they should publish details of their provisional proposals about a month before they submitted their draft scheme to us, thus allowing an opportunity for local comment.

4. The District Council have passed a resolution under section 7(4)(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 requesting the Secretary of State to provide for a system of whole council elections.

5. On 16 December 1975, the District Council presented their draft scheme of representation. The Council proposed to divide the area of the district into 19 wards, each returning 1, 2, 3 or 4 councillors to form a council of 36 members.

6. We considered the draft scheme submitted by the Council, together with copies of correspondence received by the Council during the preparation of the scheme. The comments showed general agreement with the basis of the Council's draft scheme, but some variations were proposed for the Dullingham Villages ward, Downham, Coveney and Witcham ward, and Fordham Villages ward.

7. We accepted a suggestion made by Downham Parish Council and Witcham Parish Council that Downham parish should form a separate single-member ward. Accordingly, we decided that the parishes of Coveney and Witcham should be joined with the parishes of Wentworth and Witchford to form a ward, returning one councillor.

8. We considered the District Council's scheme for a 4 member ward, comprising the parishes of Soham and Wicken, and decided, in accordance with our guidelines, to allocate 3 members to the Soham ward, while indicating that we would consider at final proposals stage whether additional representation would be appropriate for this area, if by that time the parish of Soham had been divided into wards.

9. We noted that generally, where a district ward comprised a group of parishes, the District Council had suggested that the name of the ward should include the name of each of the constituent parishes. In some instances the result was cumbersome. We decided to propose that where parishes had been grouped in this way the name of the ward should be that of the parish with the largest electorate.

10. Subject to the changes referred to paragraphs 7, 8 and 9 above, we decided that the District Council's draft scheme provided a reasonable basis for the future electoral arrangements for the district in compliance with the rules in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act and our guidelines, and we formulated our draft proposals accordingly.

11. On 6 February 1976, we issued our draft proposals and these were sent to all who had received our consultation letter or commented on the District Council's draft scheme. The Council were asked to make these draft proposals and the accompanying map, which illustrated the proposed ward boundaries, available for inspection at their main offices. Representations on our draft proposals were invited from those to whom they were circulated and, by public notices, from other members of the public and interested bodies. We asked for comments to reach us by 2 April 1976.

12. The District Council, Witcham Parish Council, Coveney Parish Council and the Member of Parliament for the constituency objected to the inclusion of the parish of Witchford in a ward with the parishes of Coveney, Wentworth and Witcham. The District Council reiterated their preference for their draft scheme, in which the parishes of Wentworth and Witchford formed one ward while Coveney and Witcham parishes were grouped with the parish of Downham to form a two-member ward. The other objectors considered that Witchford was a growing village with urban characteristics, whereas Coveney, Wentworth and Witcham parishes were rural communities. They felt that the best grouping would consist of the parishes of Coveney, Wentworth and Witcham. Alternatively they would accept the arrangements in the District Council's draft scheme.

13. Stretchworth Parish Council objected to the proposed single-member Dullingham Villages ward. They considered the area to be too scattered to be adequately served by one member and requested that it should be divided into two single-member wards.

14. The District Council, Soham Parish Council and Wicken Parish Council objected to our proposal to allocate 3 members to the Soham ward. They rejected the suggestion to ward the parish of Soham and requested that the ward be represented by 4 members. Soham Parish Council stated that unsuccessful efforts had been made in the past by various bodies to find a line which would divide the parish satisfactorily.

15. The District Council, Wilburton Parish Council and Wicken Parish Council objected to our proposal to name wards comprising groups of parishes after the constituent parish with the largest electorate. The District Council felt that resentment would be caused in the parishes whose names were not included.

16. We recognised that with 3 councillors the Soham ward would be under-represented and we were prepared to consider a division of the parish into two district wards of approximately equal electorate, each returning two members. The District Council and the Parish Councils of Soham and Wicken were asked to give their views on a possible boundary line.

17. In response, the District Council, and both Parish Councils repeated their opposition to the warding of the parish. The Member of Parliament for the constituency expressed his support for their views.

18. In view of the comments on our draft proposals for the district we decided that we needed further information to enable us to reach a conclusion. Therefore, in accordance with section 65(2) of the 1972 Act and at our request, Mr W J Pedley was appointed an Assistant Commissioner. He was asked to hold a local meeting and report to us. The Assistant Commissioner held a meeting at Soham on 4 April 1979. A copy of his report to us of the meeting is attached at Schedule 1 to this report.

19. In the light of the discussion at the meeting and his inspection of the areas concerned, the Assistant Commissioner recommended that our draft proposals

be amended only to the extent of allocating 4 members to Soham ward, thereby increasing the size of the council to 35 members.

20. We reviewed our draft proposals in the light of the comments we had received and of the report of the Assistant Commissioner, taking into consideration the up-dated electorate figures supplied by the council.

21. We accepted the Assistant Commissioner's conclusions that it would not be desirable for the parish of Soham to be divided for district electoral purposes, and that with the parish of Wicken it should make up a single Soham district ward with increased representation.

22. When we examined the implications of the consequential increase in council size, in the light of the up-dated electorate figures, we came to the conclusion that we would be justified, in the interests of obtaining a better electoral balance, in increasing the representation of Soham ward to 5 members and in reverting to the Council's scheme for Downham and Witchford wards which gave 2 members to the former and 1 member to the latter.

23. Subject to these amendments, which increased the total council membership to 37, we were disposed to confirm our draft proposals as final proposals. We accordingly invited the District Council to make Orders under section 50(4) of the 1972 Act to create parish wards which would be compatible with the proposed district wards in the Ely and Littleport areas, which had been suggested by the Council. We indicated however that if they were to suggest different boundaries for the parish wards which in the light of the up-dated figures of electorate, would provide a better balance of representation for the district wards for Ely and Littleport, we would be prepared to adopt them.

24. Subsequently we were informed that the Council declined to make an Order for the division of Littleport into parish wards. We decided, in the circumstances, to accept a single district ward of Littleport returning 4 members.

25. The warding Order for the Ely area was made by the Council on 20 May 1980, and subject to the amendments referred to in paragraphs 21 to 24 above we confirmed our draft proposals as our final proposals.

26. Details of these final proposals are set out in Schedules 2 and 3 to this report. Schedule 2 gives the names of the wards and the number of councillors to be returned by each. Schedule 3 is a description of the area of the new wards. The boundaries of the new wards are shown on the attached map.

#### PUBLICATION

27. In accordance with section 60(5)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, a copy of this report and a copy of the map are being sent to the East Cambridgeshire District Council and will be available for public inspection at the Council's main offices. Copies of this report (without the map) are being sent to those who received the consultation letter and those who made comments.

L.S.

Signed:

NICHOLAS MORRISON (CHAIRMAN)

JOHN M RANKIN (DEPUTY CHAIRMAN)

PHYLLIS BOWDEN

TYRRELL BROCKBANK

G E CHERRY

D P HARRISON

R R THORNTON

LESLIE GRIMSHAW (Secretary)

12th June 1980

The Secretary,  
Local Government Boundary Commission for England,  
Room 123,  
20 Albert Embankment,  
LONDON. SE1 7TJ

Sir,

Review of Electoral Arrangements  
District of East Cambridgeshire

Having been appointed an Assistant Commissioner by the Home Secretary, in accordance with section 65(2) of the Local Government Act 1972, I was asked by the Commission to hold a public meeting to hear representations and local views on their draft proposals for the electoral arrangements for the District of East Cambridgeshire. I was advised that the meeting was part of the process of local consultation, and should be run on lines as informal as possible, so as to encourage a full exchange of views, but consistent with the need to ensure a fair hearing. I have the honour to submit the following report.

1. Date of Meeting

A local meeting was held in the Place Pavilion, Recreation Ground, off Fountains Lane, Soham, in the above named District on Wednesday the 4th April, 1979 commencing at 1000 hours and concluding at 1150 hours.

The afternoon was spent in a series of visits and inspections to which reference is made in Paragraph 11.

2. Attendance

The signed attendance list accompanies this Report.

Those who spoke or participated in the proceedings are listed below:-

East Cambridgeshire District Council

Mr. E.L.S. Poole - Secretary,

Little Downham Parish Council

Mr. A.J. White - Chairman of that Council

Soham Parish Council

Miss P.L. Kirk - Vice-Chairman of that Council and  
East Cambridgeshire District Councillor

Wicken Parish Council

Mr. F.S. Fuller - Parish Councillor

The Labour Party

Mr. C.K. Hempstead.

Each speaker had the opportunity of commenting on what had been said by others in addition to expressing their own opinions.

Witcham Parish Council        )  
Mr. Clement Freud            )  
Coveney Parish Council  
Stetchworth Parish Council  
Wilburton Parish Council

The above named had written to the Commissioner objecting to the Draft Proposals as they affected the respective Parishes. No one appearing on their behalf I read their letters to the Meeting.

On the 12th April I received from the District Council a letter from Brinkley Parish Council dated 2nd April. It suggested that Dullingham Villages ward should be named Radfield ward.

### 3. The Council's Draft Scheme

The draft Scheme provided for 19 wards, each returning 1, 2, 3 or 4 Councillors to make a Council of 36, one more than under existing arrangements. Eleven of the proposed wards were the same as existing wards.

### 4. The Commission's Draft Proposals

The Commission considered the Draft Scheme of the Council and concluded that it offered a reasonable standard of representation but they noted that it contained a four member ward contrary to the Commission's guidelines set out in their Report No. 6. This particular ward, named Soham by the Commission, comprises the Parishes of Soham and Wicken. The District Council had decided against warding the Parish of Soham which on its own would be entitled to four members. Wicken was not large enough to stand alone with a single representative. The Commission decided, for their draft Proposals a three member ward for the combined Parishes pointing out that if Soham were warded they would be prepared to consider allocating extra representation when they reviewed their Proposals.

The District Council had proposed a two member ward comprising the Parishes of Little Downham, Coveney and Witcham. In commenting on the draft Scheme Little Downham did not want to be joined with other Parishes. Witcham Parish Council

approved the draft Scheme but hoped that Little Downham could have one of the two members to deal solely with that Parish.

The Commission decided to make the Parish of Little Downham a separate single member ward which they named Downham, and<sup>to</sup> combine the Parishes of Coveney and Witcham with the Parishes of Wentworth and Witchford.

The draft Proposals provided for a Council of 34 members elected from 19 wards.

#### 5. Comments on the Draft Proposals

The eight written comments on the Proposals received before the meeting are summarised as follows:-

##### (A) East Cambridgeshire District Council

##### (i) Downham and Witchford wards

The Council could see no justification for removing Coveney and Witcham from their proposed Little Downham ward, nor for the joining together in a new ward the Parishes of Coveney, Witcham, Wentworth and Witchford. In the draft Scheme the ratio of electors per Councillor for their Downham and Witchford wards was in line with that of other wards accepted by the Commission.

##### (ii) Soham ward

The Council believed that there were exceptional circumstances which justified the Parish of Soham not being divided into wards as proposed by the Commission and that the Parishes of Soham and Wicken together should have four representatives.

##### (iii) Ward Names

The Council saw no justification for the ward names proposed by the Commission. The names submitted had received the most careful consideration and in the opinion of the Council their proposals would avoid confusion in the minds of electors. They believed that naming should be left for local decision. The selection of a single parish

name would inevitably cause resentment in parishes where a name was not included in the ward name.

(B) Witcham Parish Council

The Council did not object to their Parish being joined with the Parish of Coveney but disliked a union with Witchford. The latter Parish was said to be a large growth village and their problems had become "those of an urban nature and vastly different" from problems "of a rural nature".

Witchford would undoubtedly supply the Council representative and that person would have no knowledge or affinity with other villages in the ward proposed by the Commission.

The Parish Council believed that the best grouping would be the Parishes of Witcham, Coveney and Wentworth.

Failing this they would accept the Draft Scheme of the District Council, i.e. Little Downham, Witcham and Coveney in one ward.

(C) Mr. Clement Freud

Mr. Freud supported the views expressed by Witcham Parish Council and described Witchford as a main road conurbation.

(D) Coveney Parish Council

This Parish Council objected to the proposals for reasons similar to those expressed by Witcham Parish Council. They also suggested the Parish groupings proposed by Witcham and the same alternative.

(E) Stetchworth Parish Council

The Council were not satisfied with the representation proposed. The area was alleged to be too large and scattered to be served adequately by one representative. They suggested two representatives. One to serve two Parishes and one to serve the remaining three Parishes which together comprise the ward to be known as Dullingham Villages.

(F) Soham Parish Council

It appeared to the Parish Council that little regard had been given to special circumstances in the Parish.

They referred to the Parish of Littleport which with 12% fewer electors than Soham and Wicken would have one more representative.

The Local Education Authority had experienced great difficulty in "warding" the Parish for its own purposes and the County Council had abandoned schemes for warding in the past. It was on experiences such as these that the Parish Council said that there were "very exceptional circumstances" which should permit more than three members. They supported the District Council's proposed Scheme.

(G) Wicken Parish Council

Prior to the reorganisation of Local Government Wicken had a rural district Councillor. They were happy with existing arrangements and the Council's Scheme which would provide four members for the united Parishes of Soham and Wicken.

They objected to the loss of identity of Wicken in the name of the ward proposed by the Commission.

(H) Wilburton Parish Council

The Council desired the ward to include the names of both Parishes and that it be called Haddenham and Wilburton ward.

6. Cases advanced at the Meeting

The following paragraphs 7 to 10 deal with the cases advanced at the Meeting in support of or against the draft Proposals of the Commission.

My assessment of the weight of arguments advanced is contained in paragraph 12.

7. East Cambridgeshire District Council

Mr. E.L.S. Poole appeared for the Council and called no witnesses.

He reiterated the contents of the written comments of the Council and supported all but Stetchworth of the Parishes which had put in written comments.

He drew my attention to the ratio of electors per Councillor in Little Downham and the neighbouring parishes. Under the Council's scheme on 1979 figures the ratio for Little Downham, Coveney and Witcham was 1:987 and 1:957 for Wentworth and Witchford. The proposals of the Commission would mean that the ratio for Little Downham would be 1:1466 and for Coveney, Witcham, Wentworth and Witchford 1:1506. Whilst Little Downham preferred to remain a single District ward that ward would be under represented compared with other wards. It hardly seemed justifiable that Coveney, Witcham, Wentworth and Witchford should also be under represented if the Commission's proposals were implemented.

He referred to the comments summarised in Paragraph 5 (B), (C) and (D).

The proposals conformed more closely to the requirements of Paragraph 3 of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

In answer to questions from me Mr. Poole said that

- (a) The 1979 electorate figures for Coveney, Wentworth and Witcham were 618 and for Witchford 888.
- (b) Witchford was not a growth area and the amount of land for development was limited.
- (c) In the village of Witchford the school on the South side of the main road was a Primary School and there was a Village College on the North side of the village. These premises served Witchford and some of the adjoining villages.

We agreed that he should address me further when Soham Parish Council had been heard.

#### 8. Little Downham Parish Council

Mr. White, the Chairman of the Parish Council, put in a written statement which I read to the Meeting.

A minute of the Parish Council dated the 16th October, 1975 said that a Parish "6 miles across from Ball Farm to the Ely-Coveney Road and 4 miles across from Oxlade to Chittisham" was enough for "one man to look after properly". Little

Downham should stand alone and that the Parishes of Coveney, Witcham, Witchford and Wentworth should form a separate ward and return two members.

This minute and the remainder of the written statement supports the proposal of the Commission except on the number of members for the proposed Witchford ward.

9. Soham Parish Council and Wicken Parish Council

Miss P. Kirk, the Vice-Chairman of Soham Parish Council, told me that Soham was the second largest Parish in East Cambridgeshire District. It was a centre of some importance between Newmarket and Ely. A special relationship existed with Wicken which parish supported the submission that a special case for non-warding existed.

The District Council had warded the Parish of Littleport. At first glance it seemed that a strong parallel existed with that Parish. The two were fairly comparable in size and have outlying settlements. However, Littleport was one complete village. The proposed Soham ward consisted of two.

She said that prior to reorganisation Soham had four representatives and Wicken one. Under existing arrangements the Parishes together had four members on the District Council and this worked well. Wicken was a growing village.

She quoted the member-electorate ratio on 1979 figures of the smaller villages as being 1:1130 and the average ratio for the larger villages was 1:1183. If the Soham Parish was warded down the centre of the A.142 as had been suggested the Eastern ward ratio would be 1:1076. Less than that of the smaller villages. The Western ward ratio would be 1:1460, slightly greater than the larger villages.

In order to create some semblance of balance between the two proposed wards the Commission had added Downfield on the West side of the A.142 to the Eastern ward. If accepted this would cause confusion in the minds of the electorate and would fail in any case because of housing development planned for the Eastern side of the A.142.

On the completion of known house building an electorate of 5,600 was possible by 1981 and justified five members on the District Council.

If a case was made out that there were exceptional circumstances they hoped that the Commission would not be reluctant to acknowledge it. The District Council having opted for full elections at the end of each term of office the Parish Councils saw no reason for a maximum representation of three. Moreover, Soham, together with other parishes is situate in one County Council ward so that absence of warding for District Council purposes would have no influence on County Council elections.

They doubted whether a precedent would be created if Soham was not warded, even though Ely and Littleport had accepted warding.

She stressed the strong community spirit which existed. Electors knew their Councillors well and if, because of warding, they did not know their Councillor the electorate might not ask for help.

The electorate had difficulty in understanding the system of warding and the reaction which all Councillors had from them was "Why change, we are happy and everything works well. If we have to change wards we shan't take any notice and will go on as usual."

In the event of warding there could be change affecting the constitution of the Parish Council. Soham was a vigorous local government unit and local people would not easily countenance change. Warding was not a necessity in rural areas and people, if muddled, would stay away from elections.

I asked what the exceptional circumstances were. I was told that the two wards suggested would be long and narrow and part of one village being joined to another. The Working Party to which reference has already been made only suggested the division down the centre of the A.142 if warding was inevitable. The suggestion was rejected by the District Council. The Education Authority had tried to zone the Parishes for its own purposes and failed.

Mr. Hempstead, representing the Labour Party, declared that there had not been proper consultation. Mr. Poole challenged this and asked if the Party had submitted any comments on the Draft Scheme or the Draft Proposals. Mr. Hempstead said that it had not, they accepted the Commission's proposals.

Nevertheless, Mr. Hempstead was of the opinion that warding was possible by using the river as a boundary. This would divide the proposed Soham ward into a North ward and a South ward.

Councillor K.P. Leonard said that the Council had discussed all possibilities, including warding, as suggested by Mr. Hempstead. Such a division would create an imbalance, there would be no semblance of equality. Mr. Hempstead agreed.

I referred to the written comments of the Parish Council of Soham on the Draft Proposals. In support of their claim that special circumstances prevented warding they referred to Hasse and the Great Fenn on the east side of the A.142 and Barway and Wicken on the West side. I asked Miss Kirk to explain the significance. Hasse and Great Fenn were small settlements 2½ to 3 miles from the centre of Soham. Barway and Wicken were 3 miles from the centre, Barway was a hamlet. Only agricultural land lay between them and the built up area of Soham.

Four representatives were required for good representation for practicability and for good local government.

Mr. Fuller of Wicken Parish Council supported Soham's opposition to warding and the request for 4 members. At the moment there was a good attendance at Parish Council meetings and problems could be referred immediately to the members. If the Parishes were warded this benefit would be lost.

Mr. Poole wound up the argument against the warding of Soham. He dealt with Mr. Hempstead's proposal to divide the parish of Soham laterally and confirmed what Councillor Leonard had said. Such a warding had been discarded at an early stage.

Consultation with members would be difficult if warding was undertaken. The feeling against it was very strong amongst the elected members of the District Council and the Parish Councils. They hoped that the Commission would be wise enough to take notice of this.

He drew my attention to the provision in the 11th Schedule to the Local Government Act 1972 that regard should be had to local ties. These should not be upset in Soham, nor those with Wicken. This was a classic case.

The Commission had indicated that its decision to allocate three members for Soham ward had been made in accordance with their guidelines. The Commission's guidelines did not have the

force of law and he knew of no rule of law which limited to three the number of Councillors per ward.

The Commission would obviously wish to avoid creating precedents which would make their work more difficult. The decision in relation to Soham and Wicken should be based solely upon the situation in East Cambridgeshire.

No one would be prejudiced if the wishes of the two Parish Councils and the District Council were respected.

#### 10. Ward Names

Mr. Poole said that the District Council had taken considerable care before submitting ward names. The Commission had chosen to disregard these in a number of instances. They appeared to have named the wards after the larger or largest parish in the ward.

The Commission had given no explanation for this and the Council could only assume that it was to achieve administrative tidiness. The Council believed that the selection of a single parish name would cause resentment amongst those parishes excluded from the naming. The Council accepted that where four or five parishes were grouped to form a ward it would be cumbersome to name them all.

The Commission said in its letter of the 13th May, 1974 that "the name should be one acceptable locally." He urged the Commission to reinstate the names suggested by the Council, i.e. Ashley and Cheveley, Boltisham and Lode, Haddenham and Welburton, Stretham and Thetford, Sutton and Mepal, Kritling and Woodditton and finally Soham and Wicken.

Depending on the outcome of the Commission's further consideration of the Council's views on the Little Downham and neighbouring parishes, the Council would wish the ward name in these cases to be determined on the same basis.

There had been a suggestion that the Dullingham Villages ward should be renamed the Radfield ward after the Radfield Hundred. His Council did not agree.

Moreover the old Radfield Hundred contained an area not within the East Cambridgeshire District and it was therefore inappropriate to use the name.

## 11. Inspections

In company with Mr. Poole I spent the afternoon inspecting the whole of the parishes comprising the Downham, Witchford and Soham wards proposed by the Commission.

### Assessment of the Weight of Arguments

#### 12. (i) Little Downham, Coveney, Witcham, Witchford and Wentworth

In considering the proposals for these Parishes the objection put in by Mr. Clement Freud cannot be accepted. Witchford is not a conurbation as he suggests, it is still an entity and a village with well defined limits.

I cannot accept the claim of Witcham that Witchford is a large growth village. Mr. Poole told me that it was not a growth area and that the land available for development was limited. I do not accept that the representative would undoubtedly come from Witchford.

Coveney objects to the amalgamation of parishes including Witchford. They believe that the latter is of too urban a character to live happily with the more rural parishes. I have inspected all these parishes. I cannot believe that any one is of more rural character than Wentworth which has the smallest population of the group and yet appears to be associated very happily with Witchford. Certainly no one has said anything to the contrary.

A comparison of the Council's draft Scheme, the Commission's draft Proposals and the alternatives proposed by Witcham and Coveney Parishes shows:-

Council's Draft (Council of 36)

<u>Ward</u>	<u>Number of Councillors</u>	<u>1979</u>	
		<u>Electorate</u>	<u>Entitlement</u>
Downham, Coveney and Witcham	2	1992	1.81
Wentworth and Witchford	1	980	.89

Commission's Draft (Council of 34)

<u>Ward</u>	<u>Number of Councillors</u>	<u>1979</u>	
		<u>Electorate</u>	<u>Entitlement</u>
Downham	1	1466	1.26
Witchford (Coveney, Wentworth, Witcham and Witchford)	1	1416	1.28

Alternative Proposal (Council of 35)

<u>Ward</u>	<u>Number of Councillors</u>	<u>1979</u>	
		<u>Electorate</u>	<u>Entitlement</u>
Coveney, Wentworth and Witcham	1	618	0.53
Downham	1	1466	1.29
Witchford	1	888	0.78

I do not find that the Council's Draft Scheme is superior to the proposals of the Commission and I therefore, do not propose to recommend any amendment.

I do not suggest any amendment to the ward name for the parishes collectively called Witchford by the Commission.

(ii) Soham and Wicken

The proposal by the Commission that these two parishes should only have three representatives unless Soham Parish was warded has caused much annoyance in both parishes. Under existing arrangements they have four representatives and this seems to be the minimum for the good

government of the two parishes. It is certainly the entitlement under the provisions of Schedule 11 of the Local Government Act 1972. The guidelines of the Commission prescribe a maximum of three representatives unless the most exceptional circumstances exist.

That the Soham Parish can be warded by drawing a line down the centre of the A.142 and virtually bisecting the village if not the Parish, I accept after a very thorough inspection of the two parishes. The District Council rejected this proposal by a Working Party and the two Parishes are not prepared to accept it. The District Council and the Parishes expressed in no uncertain terms their opinion of the Commission's indication that if by the time the final proposals stage was reached the Soham Parish had been warded they would consider whether additional representation would be appropriate. The District Council said that it was coercion and the Parish Council used a stranger term. These opinions do not influence me one iota.

I was told that every endeavour had been made to meet the request from the Commission that Soham Parish be warded. Whilst the District Council had been able to satisfy similar requests in two other Parishes, they had not been able to do this in Soham Parish. They had found it to be unpracticable and the Working Party proposal was unsound.

The report of the Working Party proposing the warding of Soham Parish says that it was only put forward in the event of warding being "unavoidable and being imposed upon the Council by Order of the Home Secretary." This does not indicate that they were enthusiastic about their proposal.

I have considered allocating Wicken elsewhere since it cannot stand alone but the ties which exist between the two Parishes are such that I have come to the conclusion that they should not be broken.

The suggestion of the Working Party which was adopted by the Commission with an amendment is not perfect. I doubt whether it complies with the provisions of Paragraph 4 of the 11th Schedule hereinbefore mentioned. The Commission hoped that the suggested wards could be adopted for Parish Council purposes. It seems to me that the Soham Parish Council are right when they say that it would be ~~im~~practicable or inconvenient. It does not appear that it would be desirable that any of the area of the Parish should be separately represented.

That the Commission must have guidelines goes without saying. However, it must have expected that it might receive a scheme which could not be made to conform to the pattern, otherwise the saving wards would not have been included in the Memorandum.

I have come to the conclusion that the Commission should exercise the rights which it reserved and accept the District Council Scheme for Soham ward.

(iii) Dullingham Villages

Although all the villages disliked the level of representation in 1975, only Stetchworth put in an objection to the Commission's proposal, which proposal is identical with that of the District Council.

No one appeared on behalf of Stetchworth Parish Council and I heard nothing from anyone present at the meeting to support the contention.

Brinkley, a constituent Parish, was only concerned about the name.

I do not propose to make any recommendation.

(iv) Ward Names

Like earlier inhabitants, the electorate of East Cambridgeshire District are independent and strong-minded people.

I do not think that the naming of the wards as proposed will cause any loss of identity. To make doubly certain one, Little Downham Parish

Council, has already taken action to put up a name board for one village within the Parish.

I do not propose to make any recommendation for changes of name.

13. Acknowledgments

I record my grateful thanks to the District Council and to Soham Parish Council for the excellent arrangements made for the meeting and to everyone concerned for their assistance.

14. Recommendations

I recommend that:-

- (i) The Draft Proposals for a Council of 34 members be amended to 35 members.
- (ii) Such 35 members be elected from 19 wards as proposed.
- (iii) In exercise of the rights reserved to itself the Commission allocate 4 members to Soham ward.

I am Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

  
Wilfred J. Pedley  
Assistant Commissioner.

22nd April, 1979.

REVIEW OF ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

Draft Proposals for the District of  
East Cambridgeshire

Local Meeting - 4th April, 1979.

ATTENDANCE LIST

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>REPRESENTING</u>
R. Mrs Bill (Mrs)	5. Northfield Rd Soham	Soham P. C.
Cathy Brady	76 High Street, Newmarket	Newmarket Journal
Kenneth A. Stroncher	41 High St Soham	Soham P.C. Chairman
B. J. Prole	24 G. Margate Road, Ely	East Cambs. District Council
White	76 Ely Road Little Downham	Little Downham Parish Council
Mr Kirk (Mrs)	73 Brook St. Soham	V. Chairman Soham P.C. East Cambs District Council
W. R. Richer	2 Sand St. Soham	Soham P.C. Govt Council & Council
H. J. Golding	Greenacres, Straight, Huntingdon	Little Downham Parish Council
G. L. K.	4. Main St. Ely	Little Downham P.C.
D. G. Lockwood	3, High Road	Little Downham, P.C.
R. T. Campbell	Bunny House, Main St. Ely	LT. Downham, P.C.
F. S. Fuller	Westmere Farm, Wickham	Wickham Rural Council
B. K. Hempstead	32 FORDHAM RD SOHAM	THE LABOUR PARTY
R. M. K. White	5, Turbridge Cbe, Downham	Wickham Parish Council
E. P. Howard	Wickham Farm, Downham, Soham	Soham P.C. Govt Council & P.C.
K. J. ...	Wickham, Huntingdon, Cambs.	Cambs. County Council
Jane Foyers	Chatteris, Cambs	Cambs. County Council
Archie Mayes	21 Market Place, Ely	Cambridge Evening News
J. Alleville	33. High St SOHAM	East Cambs District Council

DISTRICT OF EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE : NAMES OF PROPOSED WARDS  
AND NUMBERS OF COUNCILLORS

<u>NAME OF WARD</u>	<u>NO. OF COUNCILLORS</u>
Bottisham	2
Burwell	3
Cheveley	2
Downham	2
Dullingham Villages	1
Ely Northern	2
Ely Southern	2
Ely West	3
Fordham Villages	2
Haddenham	2
Isleham	1
Littleport	4
Soham	5
Stretham	1
Sutton	2
The Swaffhams	1
Witchford	1
Woodditton	1

EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED WARD BOUNDARIES

BOTTISHAM WARD

The parishes of Bottisham

Lode

BURWELL WARD

The parish of Burwell

CHEVELEY WARD

The parishes of Ashley

Cheveley

DOWNHAM WARD

The parishes of Coveney

Downham

Witcham

DULLINGHAM VILLAGES WARD

The parishes of Brinkley

Burrough Green

Dullingham

Stetchworth

Westley Waterless

ELY NORTHERN WARD

The Ely North Ward of the parish of Ely

ELY SOUTHERN WARD

The Ely South Ward of the parish of Ely

ELY WEST WARD

The Ely West Ward of the parish of Ely

FORDHAM VILLAGES WARD

The parishes of Chippenham

Fordham

Kennett

Snailwell

HADDENHAM WARD

The parishes of Haddenham

Wilburton

ISLEHAM WARD

The parish of Isleham

LITTLEPORT WARD

The parish of Littleport

SOHAM WARD

The parishes of Soham

Wicken

STRETHAM WARD

The parishes of Stretham

Thetford

SUTTON WARD

The parishes of Mepal

Sutton

THE SWAFFHAMS WARD

The parishes of Reach

Swaffham Bulbeck

Swaffham Prior

WITCHFORD WARD

The parishes of Wentworth

Witchford

WOODDITTON WARD

The parishes of Kirtling

Woodditton