The Boundary Committee for England is the body responsible for conducting electoral reviews of local authorities. A further electoral review of North Hertfordshire is being undertaken to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the district. It aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each district councillor is approximately the same. The Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee to undertake this review on 2 June 2004.

Current electoral arrangements
Under the existing arrangements four wards currently have electoral variances of more than 10% from the district average. The development that was anticipated in the five-year period between 1996 and 2001, which were the dates the Local Government Commission for England (LGCE) used when undertaking its review, was overestimated. However, in Graveley & Wymondley ward more development was undertaken, which has resulted in the ward having a particularly poor variance, with 72% more electors than the district average.

Every review is conducted in four stages as outlined in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Stage starts</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>3 August 2004</td>
<td>Submission of proposals to us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>30 November 2004</td>
<td>Our analysis and deliberation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>21 June 2005</td>
<td>Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>13 September 2005</td>
<td>Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Draft recommendations
During Stage One we proposed to retain the council size of 49. We made amendments to 20 of the districts ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality. We received no compelling community identity argument at Stage One and therefore made amendments to the existing warding arrangements in order to improve electoral equality.

Responses to consultation
During Stage Three we received 33 submissions in relation to our draft recommendations. The District Council put forward revised electorate forecast figures, and resubmitted its Stage One proposal with additional argument. We received 17 submissions.
specifically opposing our revised Ermine and Weston & Sandon wards.

Analysis and final recommendations

Electorate figures

The District Council initially submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2008 projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 3% from 93,999 to 96,599 over the five-year period from 2003 to 2008. At Stage Three it provided us with amended electorate forecast figures for 2008. It estimated that a further 2,399 electors would be in the district. We were concerned that this large increase was not picked up in the original forecast. After discussions with council officers and the Government Office for the East we propose accepting builds that have been granted permission, in accordance with paragraph 3.20 of the Electoral Commission guidance, an additional 936 electors. Therefore the revised electorate figure for 2008 will be 97,535.

Council size

We proposed retaining the existing council size of 49 in our draft recommendations. At Stage Three the District Council resubmitted its proposal for 50 councillors. It justified this in terms of its revised electorate figures and the best allocation of councillors across the district. However, we have not accepted all the revised figures and therefore we consider that a council size of 49 would still provide the district with the best representation.

General analysis

We are endorsing our draft recommendations as final in all but two areas. We are proposing to revert to the existing ward arrangements for Codicote, Kimpton, Weston & Sandon and Ermine wards.

What happens next?

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in the full report should be addressed to the Electoral Commission, which will not make an Order implementing them before 27 June 2006. The information in the representations will be available for public access once the Order has been made.

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

Fax: 020 7271 0667
Email: implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk

The contact details above should only be used for implementation purposes.

Further information

The full report is available to download at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk