

LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND

FINAL
RECOMMENDATIONS
ON THE FUTURE
ELECTORAL
ARRANGEMENTS FOR
THE ROYAL BOROUGH
OF KINGSTON UPON
THAMES

*Report to the Secretary of State for the
Environment, Transport and the Regions*

November 1999

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames.

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Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)

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Peter Brokenshire

Kru Desai

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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames is inserted inside the back cover of the report.



Local Government Commission for England

30 November 1999

Dear Secretary of State

On 5 January 1999 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in June 1999 and undertook an eleven-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although some modifications have been made (see paragraphs 102-103) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames.

We recommend that Kingston upon Thames Borough Council should be served by 48 councillors representing 16 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

We note that you have now set out in the White Paper *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People* (Cm 4014, HMSO), legislative proposals for a number of changes to local authority electoral arrangements. However, until such time as that new legislation is in place we are obliged to conduct our work in accordance with current legislation, and to continue our current approach to periodic electoral reviews.

I would like to thank members and officers of the Borough Council and other local people who have contributed to the review. Their co-operation and assistance have been very much appreciated by Commissioners and staff.

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames on 5 January 1999. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 29 June 1999, after which we undertook an eleven-week period of consultation.

- **This report summarises the representations we received during consultation on our draft recommendations, and offers our final recommendations to the Secretary of State.**

We found that the existing electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames:

- **in four of the 20 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough;**
- **by 2004 electoral equality shows no overall improvement, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in six wards, although no ward would vary by more than 20 per cent.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 102-103) are that:

- **Kingston upon Thames Borough Council should be served by 48 councillors, compared to 50 at present;**
- **there should be 16 wards, four fewer than at present, which would involve changes to the boundaries of all existing wards.**

These recommendations seek to ensure that the number of electors represented by each borough councillor is as nearly as possible the same, having regard to local circumstances.

- **In all 16 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This level of electoral equality is forecast to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 6 per cent from the average for the borough in 2004.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 11 January 2000:

**The Secretary of State
Department of the Environment,
Transport and the Regions
Local Government Sponsorship Division
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU**

*Figure 1:
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary*

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas (existing wards)
1 Alexandra	3	Berrylands ward (part); Tolworth East ward
2 Berrylands	3	Berrylands ward (part); Surbiton Hill ward (part); Tolworth West ward (part)
3 Beverley	3	Burlington ward (part); Cambridge ward (part); Norbiton ward (part); Norbiton Park ward (part)
4 Canbury	3	Canbury ward; Hill ward (part); Tudor ward (part)
5 Chessington North & Hook	3	Chessington North ward (part); Chessington South ward (part); Hook ward (part)
6 Chessington South	3	Chessington South ward (part)
7 Coombe Hill	3	Cambridge ward (part); Coombe ward; Hill ward (part)
8 Coombe Vale	3	Cambridge ward (part); Hill ward (part)
9 Grove	3	Grove ward (part); St Mark's ward (part)
10 Norbiton	3	Grove ward (part); Norbiton ward (part)
11 Old Malden	3	Malden Manor ward; St James ward (part)
12 St James	3	Burlington ward (part); Norbiton Park ward (part); St James ward (part)
13 St Mark's	3	St Mark's ward (part)
14 Surbiton Hill	3	Surbiton Hill ward (part); Tolworth South ward (part); Tolworth West ward (part)
15 Tolworth & Hook Rise	3	Chessington North ward (part); Hook ward (part); Tolworth South ward (part); Tolworth West ward (part)
16 Tudor	3	Tudor ward (part)

Note: Map 2 and the large map in the back of the report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.

Figure 2:

The Commission's Final Recommendations for the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Alexandra	3	6,437	2,146	1	6,559	2,186	-1
2 Berrylands	3	6,567	2,189	3	6,464	2,155	-2
3 Beverley	3	6,240	2,080	-3	6,276	2,092	-5
4 Canbury	3	6,523	2,174	2	6,940	2,313	5
5 Chessington North & Hook	3	6,346	2,115	-1	6,439	2,146	-2
6 Chessington South	3	6,405	2,135	0	6,835	2,278	4
7 Coombe Hill	3	6,542	2,181	2	6,502	2,167	-1
8 Coombe Vale	3	6,400	2,133	0	6,516	2,172	-1
9 Grove	3	6,048	2,016	-6	6,635	2,212	1
10 Norbiton	3	5,832	1,944	-9	6,491	2,164	-2
11 Old Malden	3	6,508	2,169	2	6,642	2,214	1
12 St James	3	6,275	2,092	-2	6,196	2,065	-6
13 St Mark's	3	6,560	2,187	2	6,800	2,267	3
14 Surbiton Hill	3	6,994	2,331	9	6,786	2,262	3
15 Tolworth & Hook Rise	3	6,388	2,129	0	6,597	2,199	0
16 Tudor	3	6,369	2,123	-1	6,756	2,252	3
Totals	48	102,434	—	—	105,434	—	—
Averages	—	—	2,134	—	—	2,197	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Kingston upon Thames Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Some figures differ from those published in our draft recommendations report following further clarification of figures from Kingston upon Thames Borough Council.

1. INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames.

2 In broad terms, the objective of this periodic electoral review (PER) of Kingston upon Thames is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor on the Borough Council is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the Borough Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards.

3 In undertaking these reviews, we have had regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992;
- the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements* contained in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (second edition published in March 1998), which sets out our approach to the reviews. We are not required to have regard to parliamentary constituency boundaries in developing our recommendations. Any new ward boundaries will be taken into account by the Parliamentary Boundary Commission in its reviews of parliamentary constituencies.

5 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the borough as a whole. Wherever possible we try to build on schemes which have been prepared locally on the basis of careful and effective consultation. Local interests are normally in a better position to judge what council size and ward configuration are most likely to secure effective and convenient local government in their areas, while allowing proper reflection of the identities and interests of local communities.

6 We are not prescriptive on council size but, as indicated in our *Guidance*, would expect the overall number of members on a London borough council usually to be between 40 and 80. We start from the general assumption that the existing council size already secures effective and convenient local government in that borough but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against an upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified: in particular, we do not accept that an increase in a borough's electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a borough council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other boroughs.

The London Boroughs

7 Our programme of periodic electoral reviews of all 386 local authorities in England started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004. The 1992 Act requires us to review most local authorities every 10 to 15 years. However, the Act is silent on the timing of reviews by the Commission of the London boroughs. The Commission has no power to review the electoral arrangements of the City of London.

8 Most London boroughs have not been reviewed since 1977. Following discussions with local authority interests on the appropriate timing of London borough reviews, we decided to start as soon as possible after the May 1998 London local government elections so that all reviews could be completed, and the necessary orders implementing our recommendations made by the Secretary of State, in time for the next London elections scheduled for May 2002. Our reviews of the 32 London boroughs started on a phased basis between June 1998 and February 1999.

9 We have sought to ensure that all concerned were aware of our approach to the reviews. Copies of our *Guidance* were sent to all London boroughs,

along with other major interests. In March 1998 we briefed chief executives at a meeting of the London branch of the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, and we also met with the Association of London Government. Since then we welcomed the opportunity to meet with chief officers and, on an all-party basis, members in the majority of individual authorities. This has enabled us to brief authorities about our policies and procedures, our objective of electoral equality having regard to local circumstances, and the approach taken by the Commission in previous reviews.

10 Before we started our work in London, the Government published for consultation a Green Paper, *Modernising Local Government – Local Democracy and Community Leadership* (February 1998) which, inter alia, promoted the possibility of London boroughs having annual elections with three-member wards so that one councillor in each ward would stand for election each year. In view of this, we decided that the order in which the London reviews are undertaken should be determined by the proportion of three-member wards in each borough under the current arrangements. On this basis, the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames was in the fourth phase of reviews.

11 The Government's subsequent White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, published in July 1998, set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. For all unitary councils, including London boroughs, it proposed elections by thirds. It also refers to local accountability being maximised where the whole electorate in a council's area is involved in elections each time they take place, thereby pointing to a pattern of three-member wards in London boroughs to reflect a system of elections by thirds.

12 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1998/99 PER programme, including the London boroughs, that until any direction is received from the Secretary of State, the Commission would continue to maintain the approach to PERs as set out in the March 1998 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we added that local authorities and other interested parties would no doubt wish to have regard to the Secretary of State's intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas. Our general experience has been that proposals for three-member ward patterns emerged from most areas in London.

13 Finally, it should be noted that there are no parishes in London, and in fact there is no legislative provision for the establishment of parishes in London. This differentiates the reviews of London boroughs from the majority of the other electoral reviews we are carrying out elsewhere in the country, where parishes feature highly and provide the building blocks for district or borough wards.

The Review of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames

14 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements for the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in May 1977 (Report No. 216).

15 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 5 January 1999, when we wrote to Kingston upon Thames Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified the local authority associations, the Metropolitan Police, Members of Parliament and the Member of the European Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, and the headquarters of the main political parties. At the start of the review and following publication of our draft recommendations, we placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and other publicity, and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations was initially set as 29 March 1999; however, Stage One of the review of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames was extended by two weeks to 12 April 1999 at the request of the Borough Council, to enable it to finalise consultation. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

16 Stage Three began on 29 June 1999 with the publication of our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames*, and ended on 13 September 1999. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2. CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

17 The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames lies in the south-west of London and covers 3,756 hectares with a population 133,000. There are several distinct local areas in the borough, including Berrylands, Chessington, Coombe, Hook, Kingston Hill, Kingston upon Thames, Kingston Vale, New Malden, Norbiton, Old Malden, Surbiton and Tolworth. The borough contains significant areas of public parks and open spaces, has good communication links with central London and is a commercial and shopping centre.

18 To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward (the councillor:elector ratio) varies from the borough average in percentage terms. In the text which follows, this calculation may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

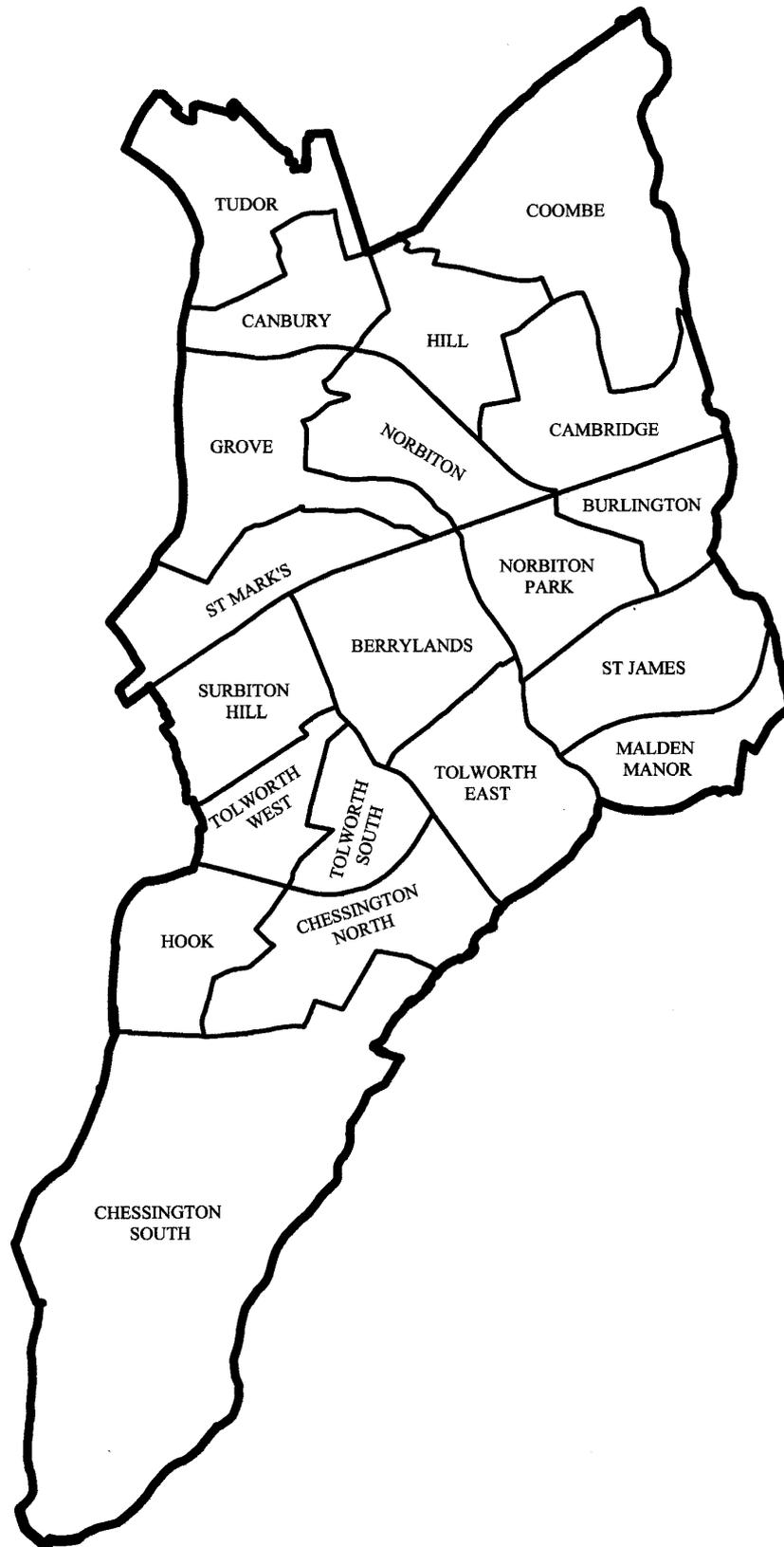
19 The electorate of the borough (February 1999) is 102,434. The Council currently has 50 councillors who are elected from 20 wards (Map 1 and Figure 3). Ten wards are each represented by three councillors while the remaining 10 wards each elect two councillors. As in all London boroughs, the whole council is elected together every four years.

20 Since the last electoral review, there has been a small decrease in electorate in the borough, with around 2 per cent fewer electors than two decades ago, although the number of electors has been increasing since 1991.

21 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,049 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,109 by the year 2004 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in four of the 20 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average. The worst imbalance is in

Chessington South ward, where each of the three councillors represents on average 15 per cent more electors than the borough average (19 per cent more by 2004).

Map 1:
Existing Wards in the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames



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Figure 3:
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Berrylands	3	6,642	2,214	8	6,504	2,168	3
2 Burlington	2	4,058	2,029	-1	4,066	2,033	-4
3 Cambridge	3	5,802	1,934	-6	5,936	1,979	-6
4 Canbury	3	5,637	1,879	-8	6,021	2,007	-5
5 Chessington North	2	3,738	1,869	-9	3,888	1,944	-8
6 Chessington South	3	7,058	2,353	15	7,500	2,500	19
7 Coombe	2	4,138	2,069	1	4,093	2,047	-3
8 Grove	3	6,482	2,161	5	7,091	2,364	12
9 Hill	2	4,101	2,051	0	4,112	2,056	-3
10 Hook	2	3,800	1,900	-7	3,824	1,912	-9
11 Malden Manor	2	3,983	1,992	-3	4,167	2,084	-1
12 Norbiton	3	5,589	1,863	-9	6,223	2,074	-2
13 Norbiton Park	2	4,368	2,184	7	4,310	2,155	2
14 St James	3	5,279	1,760	-14	5,163	1,721	-18
15 St Mark's	3	6,972	2,324	13	7,264	2,421	15
16 Surbiton Hill	3	5,812	1,937	-5	5,482	1,827	-13
17 Tolworth East	2	4,126	2,063	1	4,295	2,148	2
18 Tolworth South	2	3,783	1,892	-8	3,860	1,930	-8
19 Tolworth West	2	4,177	2,089	2	4,327	2,164	3
20 Tudor	3	6,889	2,296	12	7,308	2,436	16
Totals	50	102,434	—	—	105,434	—	—
Averages	—	—	2,049	—	—	2,109	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Kingston upon Thames Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1999, electors in St James ward are relatively over-represented by 14 per cent, while electors in Chessington South ward are relatively under-represented by 15 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

²² During Stage One we received representations from the Kingston & Surbiton and Richmond Park Conservative Associations, the Kingston Borough Liberal Democrats and the Kingston upon Thames Borough Council Labour Group, all of whom submitted borough-wide schemes. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames*.

²³ Our draft recommendations were generally based on the Labour Group's scheme, which achieved improved electoral equality, provided good boundaries while having regard to the statutory criteria and proposed a pattern of entirely three-member wards. However, we also incorporated some of the proposals from other respondents and made a number of other modifications. We proposed that:

- (a) Kingston upon Thames Borough Council should be served by 48 councillors;
- (b) there should be 16 wards, involving changes to the boundaries of all existing wards.

Draft Recommendation

The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames should comprise 48 councillors serving 16 wards.

²⁴ During Stage Three we received revised electorate figures from the Council, affecting the draft recommendations for both 1999 and 2004. The figures given for the current arrangements in both 1999 and 2004 would remain unchanged. Given the updated figures, our draft recommendations would result in the number of electors per councillor in all 16 wards varying by no more than 9 per cent from the borough average. However, under the revised figures one ward, St James, would vary by 11 per cent from the borough average in 2004.

4. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

²⁵ During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, nine representations were received. A list of respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Kingston upon Thames Borough Council and the Commission.

Kingston upon Thames Borough Council

²⁶ The Borough Council did not make any specific comments on our draft recommendations but attached updated electorate figures based on our proposed wards, following discussions with the Borough Council Labour Group.

Kingston upon Thames Borough Council Conservative Group

²⁷ The Conservative Group accepted the proposals for Kingston upon Thames to be represented by 16 three-member wards and made constructive comments on our draft recommendations.

²⁸ The Group proposed a minor boundary amendment between the proposed Tudor and Canbury wards. It also proposed an alternative boundary between the wards of Beverley and St James, in the light of revised electorate figures, and that the proposed Beverley ward should be renamed Fountain. The Group also proposed that the boundary between the proposed Grove and St Mark's wards be realigned to retain the "river roads" in St Mark's ward. It stated that this area is considered to be part of Surbiton rather than Kingston. As a second option, it proposed that Grove ward be renamed River ward in order to reflect the communities covered.

²⁹ The Conservative Group further proposed a number of transfers between the wards of Alexandra, Berrylands and Surbiton Hill. Finally it expressed opposition to our proposal to include the area between Douglas Road and Red Lion Road in Surbiton Hill, arguing that this area is considered part of Tolworth.

Kingston upon Thames Borough Council Liberal Democrat Group

³⁰ The Liberal Democrat Group generally supported our draft recommendations, however it proposed two minor boundary modifications. Firstly, it proposed that the boundary between Tolworth & Hook Rise and Chessington North & Hook wards should be realigned to include the area around King George's Trading Estate in Tolworth & Hook Rise ward. Secondly, it proposed that the boundary between Grove and Norbiton wards be realigned to provide a clearer boundary and to improve electoral equality.

³¹ The Group also put forward alternative ward names, proposing that St James ward be renamed Malden Park and that Coombe Vale ward be renamed either Clarence or Dickeringe.

Kingston upon Thames Borough Council Labour Group

³² The Labour Group on the Borough Council generally supported the draft recommendations, but made revisions to the electorate figures outlined in our draft recommendations report. It put forward modifications to the boundaries of the proposed Grove, Norbiton and St Mark's wards which it stated would better reflect community ties. In the light of the revised figures the Group also proposed realigning the boundary between the proposed Beverley and St James wards. Finally the Labour Group proposed modifications to the wards covering Chessington, Surbiton and Tolworth, stating that "community identity has suffered at the expense of electoral equality".

Other Representations

³³ A further five representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from two residents' associations and three local residents. The Surbiton Central Area Residents' Association

objected to the proposals to include the “river roads” in Grove ward, arguing that the area is considered to be part of Surbiton in community terms, and that including the area in Grove ward would “isolate the roads/residents from the community they are most closely associated with”. Chessington District Residents’ Association opposed the draft recommendation for a proposed Tolworth & Hook Rise ward, which would cross the A3, on the grounds that “using a strict mathematical formula to determine the electoral boundaries of this area would be detrimental to the interests of the residents of Chessington and Hook”. It stated that the A3 should be used as a boundary, allocating seven councillors to the area south of this road.

³⁴ We received three further submissions from local residents; one supporting our draft recommendations for the proposed Old Malden ward; one opposing our draft recommendation to include the “river roads” in Grove ward; and one proposing alternative electoral arrangements for the Tolworth area.

5. ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

35 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to the statutory criteria set out in the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the interests and identities of local communities – and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

36 In relation to Schedule 11, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on assumptions as to changes in the number and distribution of local government electors likely to take place within the ensuing five years. We must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken.

37 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which provides for exactly the same number of electors per councillor in every ward of an authority. There must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach, in the context of the statutory criteria, is that such flexibility must be kept to a minimum.

38 Our *Guidance* states that, while we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, the objective of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of electoral equality, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates. We will require particular justification for schemes which result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance over 10

per cent in any ward. In reviews of predominantly urban areas such as the London boroughs, our experience suggests that we would expect to achieve a high degree of electoral equality in all wards.

Electorate Forecasts

39 At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of around 3 per cent from 102,434 to 105,434 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expected most of the growth to be in Canbury, Chessington South, Grove, Norbiton and Tudor wards. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to the unitary development plan for the borough, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries was obtained.

40 In our draft recommendations report we accepted that forecasting electorate is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

41 During Stage Three, we received revised figures for our proposed warding arrangements. We also received comments on the electorate forecasts, based on the existing warding pattern, from the Labour Group, which queried the forecast electorate for Tudor ward. We have sought the views of the Borough Council on these comments and remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates presently available.

Council Size

42 We indicated in our *Guidance* that we would normally expect the number of councillors serving a London borough to be in the range of 40 to 80. As already explained, the Commission's starting

point is to assume that the current council size facilitates convenient and effective local government.

43 Kingston upon Thames Borough Council currently has 50 members. At Stage One the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrat Group on the Borough Council both proposed a council size of 48, while the Conservative Group on the Council proposed a council of 45 members. All three proposals were based on a uniform pattern of three-member wards.

44 In our draft recommendations report we considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received. We concluded that the statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would best be met by a council of 48 members.

45 At Stage Three, the Conservative Group accepted the arguments for a council size of 48. In view of the general support for a council of 48 members, which would provide a good electoral scheme, we are confirming our draft recommendation for a council size of 48 as final.

Ward Names

46 During Stage Three we received a number of proposals for alternative ward names, although there did not seem to be local consensus on what those names should be. This issue is described more fully in the later paragraphs concerning specific wards.

Electoral Arrangements

47 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered the representations received at Stage One from the Conservative Group, the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council. We expressed gratitude for the positive approach taken by respondents who had each submitted detailed borough-wide proposals for change to the present electoral arrangements. From these representations some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations.

48 First, there was consensus among the majority of members of the Council for a small reduction in council size, either to 48 or to 45 members.

49 Second, all three schemes received during Stage One were based on a pattern of entirely three-member wards for the borough; the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrat Group each proposed 16 wards, while the Conservative Group proposed 15 wards.

50 Third, there was general consensus among the submissions on the proposed boundaries in the north and the south-west of the borough and a general recognition that specific features would provide identifiable boundaries, such as the A3 and the various railway lines which cross the borough.

51 Fourth, we noted the arguments put to us about community identities in the borough. We tried to reflect such considerations in our draft recommendations where it would be consistent with our objective of electoral equality, although we noted that there was not consensus locally on the precise boundaries of such communities.

52 In our draft recommendations we sought to build on proposals received in order to put forward electoral arrangements which would achieve good electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. Where it existed, we tried to reflect the consensus between the schemes for warding arrangements in particular parts of the borough. However, we made further modifications in order to put forward electoral arrangements which would achieve yet further improvements in electoral equality, while also seeking to reflect the statutory criteria. Inevitably, we could not reflect the preferences of all respondents in our draft recommendations.

53 In view of the level of electoral equality which would result, the configuration of wards and the boundaries utilised, we concluded that we should base our draft recommendations on the Labour Group's scheme; however we based our draft recommendations for the wards of Berrylands, St Mark's and Surbiton Hill on the proposals received from the Conservative and Liberal Democrat groups.

54 In response to our draft recommendations report, a number of respondents expressed general support for our recommendations, but put forward alternative boundary alignments for specific areas. We are most grateful to all respondents for their constructive contribution to the review.

55 We have reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three, and judge that modifications should be made to a number of our proposed boundaries. The following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Cambridge, Canbury, Coombe, Hill and Tudor wards;
- (b) Grove, Norbiton and St Mark's wards;
- (c) Burlington, Malden Manor, Norbiton Park and St James wards;
- (d) Berrylands, Surbiton Hill, Tolworth East, Tolworth South and Tolworth West wards;
- (e) Chessington North, Chessington South and Hook wards.

56 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large map inside the back cover of the report.

Cambridge, Canbury, Coombe, Hill and Tudor wards

57 The north of the borough is covered by the three-member wards of Cambridge, Canbury and Tudor, and the two-member wards of Coombe and Hill. The number of electors per councillor in Cambridge ward is 6 per cent below the average, 8 per cent below in Canbury, 1 per cent above in Coombe, equal to the average in Hill and 12 per cent above in Tudor (6 per cent below, 5 per cent below, 3 per cent below, 3 per cent below and 16 per cent above respectively in 2004).

58 As part of our draft recommendations we adopted the Labour Group's scheme for this area, although we made one minor boundary modification between the wards of Coombe Hill and Beverley to include Beverley Way and Ely Close in Coombe Hill ward. We proposed modifying all five wards in order to improve electoral equality, resulting in the area being represented by four three-member wards. We proposed that the boundary between Canbury and Tudor wards should be amended to include the area generally to the south of Latchmere Road and east of Burton Road in Canbury ward. We also proposed that Hill ward west of Wolverton Avenue should form part of a modified Canbury ward, Hill ward east of Gloucester Road and south of

Coombe Lane West should form part of a new Coombe Vale ward, together with that part of Cambridge ward west of Coombe Road, and that the remainder of Hill ward should join with Coombe ward to form a new Coombe Hill ward. Finally in this area, we proposed that Cambridge ward east of Coombe Road and the High Street, excluding Beverley Way and Ely Close should join with part of Burlington ward to form a new Beverley ward straddling the parliamentary constituency boundary.

59 During Stage Three, we received revised electorate figures, which would result in the number of electors per councillor being 2 per cent above the average in Canbury ward (6 per cent above in 2004), 2 per cent above the average in Coombe Hill ward (1 per cent below the average in 2004), equal to the average in Coombe Vale ward (1 per cent below in 2004) and 1 per cent below the average in Tudor ward (2 per cent above in 2004).

60 During Stage Three we received comments relating specifically to the proposed boundaries in this area from the Conservative Group, which proposed realigning the boundary between the wards of Tudor and Canbury, including those electors in Latchmere Road, west of Studland Road/Earle Gardens, in Tudor ward, in order to provide a more identifiable boundary. The Liberal Democrat Group stated that the proposed Coombe Vale ward should be renamed either Clarence or Dickerage.

61 The Conservative Group's proposal would result in very similar levels of electoral equality to our draft recommendations; under the revised figures the number of electors per councillor in the wards of Canbury and Tudor would be 2 per cent above the borough average (5 per cent above in 2004) and 1 per cent below the average (3 per cent above) respectively. We concur with the view that the alternative boundary would be more identifiable and locally recognisable and therefore propose adopting it as part of our final recommendations. Although we note the Liberal Democrat Group's comments concerning the naming of wards in this area, given the lack of evidence of any local opposition to our proposed names we confirm our draft recommendations for ward names in the area as final. Details of our proposed boundaries in this area are detailed on the large map at the back of this report.

Grove, Norbiton and St Mark's wards

62 The three-member wards of Grove, Norbiton and St Mark's cover the area north of the Waterloo to Surbiton railway line and to the south of the Waterloo to Kingston railway line. The number of electors per councillor in Grove ward is 5 per cent above the average, 9 per cent below in Norbiton ward and 13 per cent above in St Mark's ward (12 per cent above, 2 per cent below and 15 per cent above respectively in 2004).

63 At Stage One, the Conservative Associations proposed that Rayleigh Court and the area to its north and west, in the north-west of Norbiton ward, should form part of Grove ward, together with the south side of Lingfield Avenue, currently in St Mark's ward. They also proposed that an area generally to the north of Green Lane and Albemarle Gardens in the north of Norbiton Park ward should form part of a modified Norbiton ward, together with Burlington ward west of Penrith Road.

64 In this area the Liberal Democrat Group proposed that Grove ward east of London Road, Albert Road and Villiers Road should form part of a new Villiers ward, together with St Mark's ward east of Villiers Avenue and north of Eversley Road and Norbiton ward west of Willow Road and Dickerage Lane. It considered that this would form a "socially homogenous" ward.

65 It proposed that the south-east of Norbiton ward, east of Willow Road and Dickerage Lane should form part of a new Fountain ward. The Liberal Democrats also proposed that the north side of Cadogan Road should be transferred from St Mark's ward to Grove ward, that Grove ward be renamed Kingston Town, and that Surbiton Hill ward north of Lovelace Road and west of Upper Brighton Road, should form part of the modified St Mark's ward. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent below the average in Kingston Town ward (5 per cent above in 2004), 1 per cent above the average in St Mark's ward (3 per cent above in 2004) and 2 per cent below the average in Villiers ward (6 per cent above in 2004).

66 The Labour Group proposed that an area in the north-east of the current Grove ward, north of Fairfield Road and east of Wheatfield Way and Clarence Street, should form part of a modified

Norbiton ward. It also proposed that Norbiton ward south of and including California Road and St John's Road, should form part of a new Beverley ward and that St Mark's ward north of and including The Mall and west of Maple Road should form part of a modified Grove ward, together with Villiers Close, Addison Gardens and the south side of Lower Marsh Lane. For the remainder of St Mark's ward, it proposed that the area west of Surbiton Hill Road should form part of a new Victoria ward, while the area east of Surbiton Hill Road should form part of a proposed Surbiton Park ward.

67 We noted that the Labour Group's scheme for the wards of Grove and Norbiton would provide for a similar level of electoral equality to the Conservative Associations' and a slightly improved level of electoral equality over the Liberal Democrat Group's proposals for the wards of Kingston Town and Villiers, which would cover a comparable area. We did not consider that the Liberal Democrat Group's proposed Villiers ward would reflect community identity in this area, linking the area of Norbiton with a separate community area to the south of the Hogsmill river, currently in the east of St Mark's ward. Furthermore, we did not propose adopting the Labour Group's proposal to abolish St Mark's ward as we considered that a good level of electoral equality could be achieved by modifying the existing ward, which utilises clear boundaries (including the Waterloo to Surbiton railway line) and which we consider reflects existing community identities in the area.

68 Having considered all three schemes, we adopted the Labour Group's proposals for the wards of Grove and Norbiton as part of our draft recommendations but we also proposed retaining St Mark's ward, less the area north of Maple Road and north of and including The Mall, which would form part of a modified Grove ward (as proposed by the Labour Group). However, in order to improve electoral equality we proposed that Addison Gardens and Villiers Close should remain in a modified St Mark's ward.

69 Under the revised figures provided at Stage Three these proposals would result in the number of electors per councillor being 5 per cent below the average in Grove ward (1 per cent above in 2004), 2 per cent below the average in Norbiton ward (5 per cent above in 2004), and 5 per cent below the average in St Mark's ward (4 per cent below in 2004).

70 At Stage Three we received a number of representations concerning this area. The Labour Group, the Conservative Group, the Surbiton Central Area Residents' Association and a local resident objected to proposals to include the "river roads" south of Grove Road in Grove ward. A number of these respondents stated that the area has a greater affinity with Surbiton than with Kingston. We also received comments concerning our proposed boundary between the wards of Norbiton and Grove, with some respondents proposing that the area east of Villiers Avenue and south of the Hogsmill river be included in Norbiton ward as this would better reflect communities and provide for a better balance of representation in the area. During the consultation stage the Conservative Group supported our draft recommendation for Norbiton ward, stating that the Norbiton community would be "enhanced by the addition of the area north of the Fairfield [Road] from the existing Grove ward". However, the Liberal Democrat Group proposed realigning the boundary in this area, so that "responsibility over the leading role in developing integrated plans for the town centre" would remain in Grove ward. Given the lack of consensus between representations received, officers from the Commission visited the area.

71 Our draft recommendations would divide the centre of Kingston town between the wards of Grove and Norbiton, placing the majority of the town in Grove ward. Although the centre of the communities of Kingston and Norbiton can be identified, the extent of each of the communities is not as clearly defined and there is no apparent consensus on the exact extent of the communities. On reflection, we consider that the boundary between the two wards should be realigned slightly in this area to unite the town centre in a single ward. We do not consider that this would have a detrimental effect on communities in the area given this lack of a clear delineation between the two communities. We therefore propose that the boundary be realigned to run along the centre of Queen Elizabeth Road and then along the boundary of Kingston Grammar School, including it in Grove ward, affecting around 450 electors.

72 In the light of the comments received from local interests and residents, we also propose realigning the boundary between the wards of Grove and St Mark's so that it runs along the centre of St Leonard's Road until it meets Maple Road,

retaining The Mall, Westfield Road, Cleaveland Road and the electors in St Leonard's Road in St Mark's ward. We consider that this would more closely reflect community links in the area and, in conjunction with the proposed modification to the boundary between the wards of Grove and Norbiton, would provide for slightly better levels of electoral equality than under our draft recommendations, given the revised electorate figures. The number of electors per councillor in Norbiton ward would initially be 9 per cent below the average, although by 2004 this figure would have improved to 1 per cent fewer than the borough average. In Grove ward the number of electors would be 6 per cent below the average (1 per cent above the average in 2004) and in St Mark's ward this figure would be 2 per cent above the average (3 per cent above in 2004). Details of our proposed boundaries in this area are detailed on the large map at the back of this report.

Burlington, Malden Manor, Norbiton Park and St James wards

73 The two-member wards of Burlington, Malden Manor and Norbiton Park and the three-member ward of St James cover the area south of the Surbiton to Waterloo railway line and east of the Hogsmill river. The number of electors per councillor in Burlington ward is 1 per cent below the average, 3 per cent below the average in Malden Manor ward, 7 per cent above the average in Norbiton Park ward and 14 per cent below the average in St James ward (4 per cent below, 1 per cent below, 2 per cent above and 18 per cent below respectively in 2004).

74 At Stage One, the Conservative Associations proposed modifying all four of these wards. As stated earlier, they proposed that an area to the north of Green Lane and Albemarle Gardens in the north of Norbiton Park ward should form part of a modified Norbiton ward, together with Burlington ward west of Penrith Road. They proposed combining the remainder of Burlington and Norbiton Park wards to form a new Fountain ward, and that part of St James ward, east of Ambleswood Rise and Malden Road, be joined with Malden Manor ward to form a new Beverley ward. The western part of St James ward would form part of a new Hogsmill ward.

75 At this stage, the Liberal Democrats proposed a new Fountain ward, comprising Burlington ward

north of Burlington Road, Norbiton Park ward north of Cotsford Avenue, Lynton Road and Sandal Road, and the south-east of Norbiton ward, east of Willow Road and Dickerage Lane. They considered that this would “clearly define central New Malden for the first time” and “provide a better social definition of the communities in New Malden”. They proposed that the remainder of Norbiton Park ward should join with the remainder of Burlington ward and the eastern part of St James ward, east of South Lane, Amberwood Rise, Wilverley Crescent, Lyndhurst Drive and Malden Road, to form a modified St James ward. The western part of the current St James ward would join with Malden Manor ward to form a proposed Old Malden ward.

76 The Labour Group proposed creating a new Beverley ward, covering the same area as the Liberal Democrats’ proposed Fountain ward, together with the south-eastern part of Cambridge ward, as outlined earlier. It also proposed a new Malden South ward, similar to the Liberal Democrats’ proposed St James ward and a new Malden Green ward similar to the Liberal Democrats’ proposed Old Malden ward.

77 Having considered all the evidence available to us, we adopted the Labour Group’s proposals for these wards as part of our draft recommendations, subject to two name changes. We proposed that this area should be divided into three borough wards, Beverley, St James and Old Malden. Beverley ward would cover that part of the current Burlington ward north of Burlington Road, plus that part of Norbiton Park ward generally north of Cotsford Avenue and Lynton Road and that part of Norbiton ward, generally south of St John’s Road. St James ward would cover the remainder of Norbiton Park and Burlington wards plus that part of St James ward north of Amberwood Drive and east of Malden Road. The western part of the current St James ward would join with the current Malden Manor ward to form a proposed Old Malden ward. Given the revised electorate figures provided during Stage Three, the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the average in Beverley ward (equal to the average in 2004), 2 per cent above the average in Old Malden ward (1 per cent above in 2004) and 7 per cent below the average in St James ward (11 per cent below in 2004).

78 At Stage Three, we received comments on these proposals from all three political groups and a local

resident. The Conservative Group proposed realigning the boundary between Beverley and St James wards so that it would run along Green Lane, Groveland Way, Selwyn Road and Westbury Road before rejoining the proposed boundary, reducing the over-representation in the proposed St James ward. It also proposed that Beverley ward be renamed Fountain. The Liberal Democrat Group proposed that St James ward be renamed Malden Park. The Labour Group proposed a similar boundary modification to the Conservative Group. We also received a submission from a local resident generally supporting our proposal for Old Malden ward, but stating that the ward should additionally include the Motspur Park area south of Motspur Park.

79 We have carefully considered all the evidence received during Stage Three and in the light of the revised electorate figures we propose realigning the boundary between the proposed Beverley and St James wards in a similar way to that proposed by the Conservative and Labour groups. We propose that the boundary run along the centre of Green Lane and South Lane until it rejoins the proposed boundary at Lynton Road. This would result in the number of electors per councillor in the wards of Beverley, St James and Old Malden being 2 per cent below the average (5 per cent below in 2004), 3 per cent below (6 per cent below in 2004) and 2 per cent above (1 per cent above in 2004). Given the lack of local consensus we do not propose changes to the ward names put forward in our draft recommendations report. Details of our proposed boundaries in this area are detailed on the large map at the back of this report.

Berrylands, Surbiton Hill, Tolworth East, Tolworth South and Tolworth West wards

80 The area south of the Surbiton to Waterloo railway line and west of the Hogsmill river is covered by the three-member wards of Berrylands and Surbiton Hill and the two-member wards of Tolworth East, Tolworth South and Tolworth West. The number of electors per councillor in Berrylands ward is 8 per cent above the borough average, 5 per cent below in Surbiton Hill ward, 1 per cent above in Tolworth East ward, 8 per cent below in Tolworth South ward and 2 per cent above in Tolworth West ward (3 per cent above, 13 per cent below, 2 per cent above, 8 per cent below and 3 per cent above respectively in 2004).

81 At Stage One, the Conservative Group proposed modifying all five of these wards. It proposed that the western part of St James ward should form part of a new Hogsmill ward, together with Tolworth East ward and the south-east of Berrylands ward. Under its proposals the north-east of Surbiton Hill ward together with Tolworth South and Tolworth West wards north of Ewell Road, would form part of a modified Berrylands ward. The Conservative Group also proposed that Tolworth West ward west of Hook Road, Thornhill Road, Cotterill Road, Dennan Road and Ellerton Road, should form part of an enlarged Surbiton Hill ward. The remainder of Tolworth West ward would join with the remainder of Tolworth South ward and the north-east of Hook ward to form a new Hook & Tolworth ward.

82 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed changes to all these wards except Berrylands. It proposed that the area in the north-west of Surbiton Hill ward, north of Lovelace Road and west of Upper Brighton Road, should form part of a revised St Mark's ward. It proposed that Tolworth West ward, north and west of Herne Road, Hook Road, Thornhill Road, Ellerton Road and Ewell Road, should form part of Surbiton Hill ward, while Tolworth West ward south of Herne Road, Hook Road, Thornhill Road and Fullers Avenue, should form part of a modified Hook ward. The remainder of Tolworth West ward should form part of a new Tolworth ward together with Tolworth South ward and that part of Tolworth East ward north of the A3. Tolworth East ward south of the A3 would then form part of a new Jubilee ward.

83 The Labour Group proposed that the current Tolworth East ward should join with Berrylands ward south of Alexandra Drive and Raeburn Avenue to form a new Alexandra ward. The remainder of Berrylands ward would join with St Mark's ward east of Surbiton Hill Road, and Surbiton Hill ward east of Surbiton Hill Road and north of Berrylands Road, to form a new Surbiton Park ward. The Labour Group also proposed that Surbiton Hill ward north of Langley Avenue, Upper Brighton Road, Oak Hill and Ewell Road should join with the western part of St Mark's ward to form a new Victoria ward, "focused on the centre of Surbiton", while the remainder of Surbiton Hill ward would form part of a new Fishponds ward, together with that part of Tolworth West ward north of Herne Road, Hook Road and Thornhill Road, and that part of

Tolworth South ward west of Red Lion Road. The remainder of Tolworth South and Tolworth West wards would form part of a new Tolworth & Hook Rise ward, together with that part of Hook ward north of Hunters Road and Hook Road and including Kelvin Grove, and that part of Chessington North ward north of Cox Lane and the railway line.

84 We noted the similarities between the Labour Group's proposed Surbiton Park ward and the Liberal Democrat Group's proposed Berrylands ward, and between the Liberal Democrat Group's and the Conservatives Group's proposals for the area covered by the existing Berrylands, St Mark's and Surbiton Hill wards.

85 We considered that the Labour Group's proposed wards of Alexandra and Tolworth & Hook Rise would better reflect communities, cover generally coherent community areas, use clearly identifiable boundaries and achieve a good level of electoral equality. We therefore adopted them as part of our draft recommendations. However, we considered that the Conservative Group's and Liberal Democrat Group's proposals for the remainder of this area, involving modifications to Berrylands, St Mark's and Surbiton Hill wards, would better reflect local community identities. Furthermore, these proposals would utilise good boundaries and achieve a good level of electoral equality.

86 However, in order to secure electoral equality in the modified Berrylands and Surbiton Hill wards, we proposed that Surbiton Hill ward, east of Ewell Road and north of South Bank, should form part of a modified Berrylands ward, together with that part of Berrylands ward north of Alexandra Drive and Raeburn Avenue and that part of Tolworth West ward north of Broomfield Road and east of Ewell Road. The remainder of Surbiton Hill ward would then join with those parts of Tolworth South and Tolworth West wards which the Labour Group proposed should form part of Fishponds ward, to form a modified Surbiton Hill ward. Given the revised electorate figures, the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent above the average in Alexandra ward (1 per cent below the average in 2004), 3 per cent above the average in Berrylands ward (2 per cent below in 2004), 9 per cent above the average in Surbiton Hill ward (3 per cent above in 2004) and equal to the average in Tolworth & Hook Rise ward (unchanged in 2004).

87 During Stage Three the Conservative Group proposed realigning the boundary between Berrylands and Alexandra ward to follow the tributary of the Hogsmill river. It further proposed that the boundary between Surbiton Hill and Berrylands wards should follow Ewell Road north of South Bank. Finally in this area it proposed that the area east of Ewell Road and south of Broomfield Road should form part of Alexandra ward rather than Surbiton Hill ward. It also stated that the area between Douglas Road and Red Lion Road was considered to be part of Tolworth, but recognised that “electoral equality means it is impossible to put all of these roads into a Tolworth ward without radically altering the draft recommendations”.

88 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed a minor modification to the southern boundary of the proposed Tolworth & Hook Rise ward, to include the King George’s Trading Estate and King George’s Field in this ward, rather than in Chessington North & Hook ward.

89 The Labour Group proposed that the area to the west of Ewell Road and north of South Bank be included in the Surbiton Hill ward, as proposed by the Conservative Group. It also proposed that the boundary between the proposed Tolworth & Hook Rise and Chessington North & Hook wards follow the A3 west of Fullers Way South. Finally in this area it proposed that the boundary between the proposed Tolworth & Hook Rise and Surbiton Hill wards follow a tributary of the Hogsmill river, running between Ellerton Road and Cotterill Road.

90 The Chessington District Residents’ Association expressed opposition to our draft recommendation for the Tolworth & Hook Rise ward, stating that it would “be firmly divided into two separate camps”, given that the ward would cross the A3. It argued that the A3 should be retained as the boundary and that the area south of it should be represented by seven councillors.

91 We also received a representation from a resident of Tolworth proposing modifications to our draft recommendations. These proposals would involve the creation of a new Tolworth North East ward, similar to our Alexandra ward but comprising the area south of the Hogsmill tributary and east of Ewell Road, and a new Tolworth South West ward comprising the area generally east of Douglas Road and Thornhill Avenue and north of Cox Lane. The boundary

between this ward and Chessington North & Hook ward would follow the A3 east to Fullers Way South.

92 We have considered all the representations received during Stage Three and in view of the absence of apparent consensus between them, officers from the Commission have visited the area. However, we have not been persuaded to move away from our draft recommendations. While we consider that the Hogsmill tributary would make an identifiable boundary, in the absence of a groundswell of local opposition to our draft recommendations and the available access between areas in Alexandra ward we are not persuaded that these changes would give significant improvement. We further consider that the Conservative Group’s proposal to include the area east of Ewell Road and south of Douglas Road would not better reflect communities or provide for a more coherent ward than under our proposals. We are also content that King Charles Road provides for a clearly identifiable boundary in this area.

93 We have also noted the comments concerning our proposed Tolworth & Hook Rise ward. We have considered the proposals to retain the area east of Douglas Road in Tolworth & Hook Rise ward, however in the absence of any groundswell of local opposition and having visited the area, we are content that our draft recommendations provide an appropriate balance between the need to secure electoral equality and the statutory criteria, given that the area is very diverse and there is no clear distinction between the communities of Surbiton and Tolworth. We have also noted the opposition to our proposed Tolworth & Hook Rise ward on the grounds that it would cross the A3. While we would concur that the A3 is an identifiable boundary, we note that it is crossed by other wards elsewhere, both currently and under our proposals. During the review there has been general support expressed for a uniform pattern of three-member wards, which would be precluded under the proposals from the Chessington District Residents’ Association for seven councillors south of the A3. However, we propose realigning the boundary between the proposed Tolworth & Hook Rise ward and Chessington North & Hook ward, as proposed by the Liberal Democrat Group, to include the area east of Cox Lane in the proposed Tolworth & Hook Rise ward. This would have a negligible effect on electoral equality in both wards, but would place the industrial estate with those areas on which it has the greatest impact.

94 Having weighed up all the differing factors we remain of the opinion that our draft recommendations for these wards secure improved levels of electoral equality while reflecting the statutory criteria. We therefore confirm them as final, with one minor boundary modification. Details of our proposed boundaries in this area are detailed on the large map at the back of this report.

Chessington North, Chessington South and Hook wards

95 The south-west of the borough is covered by the two-member wards of Chessington North and Hook, and the three-member ward of Chessington South. The number of electors per councillor in Chessington North ward is 9 per cent below the average, 15 per cent above the average in Chessington South ward and 7 per cent below the average in Hook ward (8 per cent below, 19 per cent above and 9 per cent below respectively in 2004).

96 At Stage One, the Conservative Associations proposed modifying all three of these wards. They proposed that the north-east of Hook ward should form part of a new Hook & Tolworth ward. The remainder of Hook ward would then join with that part of Chessington South ward west of Chantry Road and the current Chessington North ward to form a modified Chessington North ward. The remainder of Chessington South ward would continue to form a ward of the same name.

97 The Liberal Democrats proposed that Tolworth West ward south of Herne Road, Hook Road, Thornhill Road and Fullers Avenue should form part of a modified Hook ward. They also proposed that this ward should include the north-west of Chessington South ward, west of and including Court Crescent, Sussex Gardens and Coppard Gardens. Tolworth East ward south of the A3 would, together with Chessington North ward, form a new Jubilee ward.

98 The Labour Group proposed that part of Hook ward north of Hunters Road and Hook Road, and part of Chessington North ward north of Cox Lane and the railway line should form part of a new Tolworth & Hook Rise ward. The remainder of Hook and Chessington North wards would form a new Chessington North & Hook ward, together with that part of Chessington South ward which lies to the north of (and including) Chantry Road and Wolsey Way. It did not propose any further changes to Chessington South ward.

99 In view of the degree of consensus in this area between the Labour Group and the Conservative Associations, the improved level of electoral equality which would result, and the good boundaries which would be utilised, we adopted the Labour Group's proposals for the wards in this area as part of our draft recommendations. This would involve a modified Chessington South ward, comprising the existing ward less the area north of Chantry Road and Angus Close. This area, together with those parts of Hook and Chessington North wards south of Hunters Road, Cox Road and the Waterloo to Tolworth railway line would be included in a new Chessington North & Hook ward. Given the revised electorate figures, the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent below the average in Chessington North & Hook ward (2 per cent below in 2004) and equal to the average in Chessington South ward (4 per cent above in 2004).

100 During Stage Three the Conservative Group supported our draft recommendations for these two wards, while the Labour Group and the Chessington District Residents' Association proposed that the northern boundary of Chessington North & Hook ward should follow the A3 west of Fullers Way South as discussed earlier in paragraph 90. No other comments were received.

101 Having confirmed our draft recommendations for the proposed Tolworth & Hook Rise ward as final, we are also confirming our draft recommendations for Chessington North & Hook and Chessington South as final subject to the minor boundary modification described in paragraph 93, in the absence of any further comments.

Conclusions

102 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided substantially to endorse our draft recommendations, subject to the following amendments:

- (a) realigning the boundary between the wards of Canbury and Tudor;
- (b) realigning the boundary between the wards of Grove and Norbiton;
- (c) realigning the boundary between the wards of Grove and St Mark's;

- (d) realigning the boundary between the wards of Beverley and St James;
- (e) realigning the boundary between the wards of Chessington North & Hook and Tolworth & Hook Rise.

103 We conclude that, in the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames:

- (a) there should be a reduction in council size from 50 to 48;
- (b) there should be 16 wards, four less than at present, which would involve changes to the boundaries of all existing wards.

104 Figure 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1999 and 2004 electorate figures.

105 As shown in Figure 4, our final recommendations for the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames would result in a reduction in the number of wards where the number of electors per councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from four to none. This improved balance of representation is expected to continue with all wards expected to vary by less than 10 per cent in 2004, in fact varying by less than 7 per cent. Our final

recommendations are set out in more detail in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of this report.

Final Recommendation

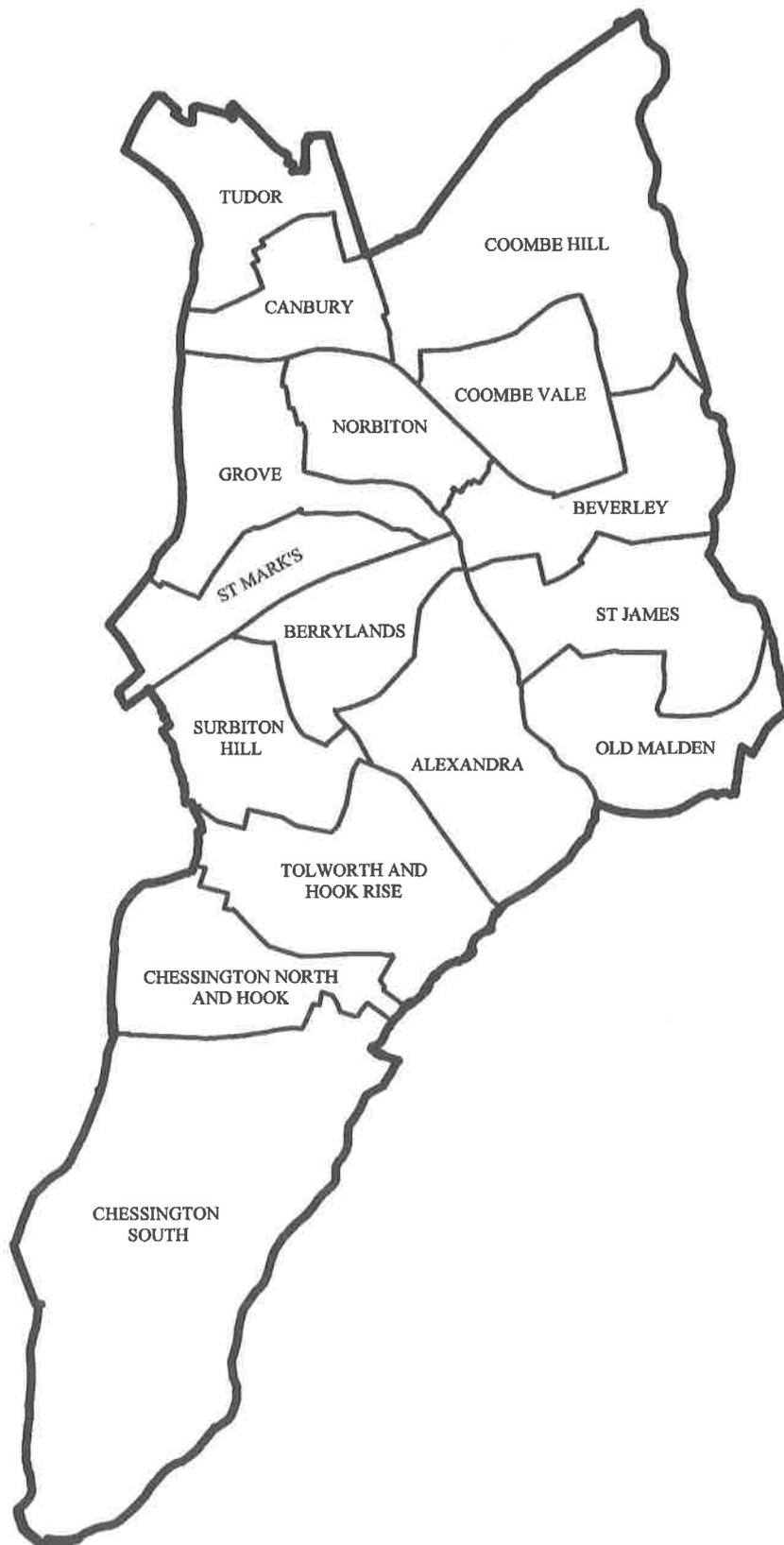
The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames should comprise 48 councillors serving 16 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map in the back of the report.

*Figure 4 :
Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements*

	1999 electorate		2004 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	50	48	50	48
Number of wards	20	16	20	16
Average number of electors per councillor	2,049	2,134	2,109	2,197
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	4	0	6	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	0	0	0	0

Map 2:

The Commission's Final Recommendations for the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames



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6. NEXT STEPS

106 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames and submitted our final recommendations to the Secretary of State, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992.

107 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an order. Such an order will not be made earlier than six weeks from the date that our recommendations are submitted to the Secretary of State.

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

The Secretary of State
Department of the Environment,
Transport and the Regions
Local Government Sponsorship Division
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

APPENDIX A

Draft Recommendations for the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of seven wards where our draft proposals are set out below.

Figure B1:

The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Canbury	3	6,562	2,187	2	6,980	2,327	6
Chessington North & Hook	3	6,346	2,115	-1	6,439	2,146	-2
Beverley	3	6,578	2,193	3	6,614	2,205	0
Grove	3	6,094	2,031	-5	6,655	2,218	1
Norbiton	3	6,268	2,089	-2	6,931	2,310	5
St James	3	5,937	1,979	-7	5,858	1,953	-11
St Mark's	3	6,078	2,026	-5	6,340	2,113	-4
Tolworth & Hook Rise	3	6,388	2,129	0	6,597	2,199	0
Tudor	3	6,330	2,110	-1	6,756	2,252	2

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Kingston upon Thames Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

