

Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Uttlesford District Council

Electoral review

April 2013

Translations and other formats

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Summary

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent body which conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. The broad purpose of an electoral review is to decide on the appropriate electoral arrangements – the number of councillors, and the names, number and boundaries of wards or divisions – for a specific local authority. We are conducting an electoral review of Uttlesford District Council ('the Council') to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the authority.

The review aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same. The Commission commenced the review in July 2012.

This review is being conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
24 July 2012	Consultation on council size begins
23 October 2012	Submission of proposals for ward patterns to the LGBCE
15 January 2013	LGBCE's analysis and formulation of draft recommendations
16 April 2013	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
9 July 2013	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Submissions received

During the preliminary stage of this review we received submissions on council size from the Council and the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council. During consultation on ward boundaries we received 54 submissions, including one from the Council. All submissions can be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Analysis and draft recommendations

Electorate figures

The Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2018, a date five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2013. This is prescribed in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 ('the 2009 Act'). The Council initially projected a high electorate growth of 18%.

We had reservations about whether this high level of growth would be realised and asked the Council to review its forecasts. The Council's revised forecasts projected an electorate growth of 11%. While still high, we are content that these revised forecasts are the most accurate figures available at the present time and have used them as the basis of our draft recommendations.

Council size

The Council currently has 44 councillors. During preliminary discussions on council size, the Council proposed a council size of between 38 and 40 members. The Liberal Democrat Group on the Council argued for a 35-member council, rejecting the Council's proposal for between 38 to 40 members. We considered that the Council put forward strong evidence for a council size of between 38 and 40 members and therefore agreed to consult on a council size of 39.

In response to the consultation the Council and the Liberal Democrat Group restated their original positions. We also received a mixture of support and objections from parish councils and local residents. We do not consider that sufficient evidence was received to support an alternative council size. We have therefore adopted the council size of 39 as the basis of consultation on warding arrangements.

General analysis

The Council's proposals resulted in good levels of electoral equality across the district and generally used clearly identifiable boundaries. We are therefore basing our draft recommendations on its proposals subject to a number of amendments to reflect the evidence received and to secure stronger boundaries.

We note that its Stort Valley ward included Ugley parish which has no direct road links into the proposed ward. In addition, Ugley Parish Council outlined its links to the Stansted North area. We therefore propose the creation of a three-member Stansted North ward to address these. We also note that the Council's Stebbing ward includes the south-east area of Felsted parish, which has no direct road links within the ward to Stebbing parish. We are therefore proposing a single-member Little Dunmow & Flitch Green ward and a two-member Felsted & Stebbing ward. We also propose the creation of a two-member Chesterford & Elmdon ward to address the Council's proposal to split Littlebury parish between two wards. Finally, we propose a minor amendment between Saffron Walden Castle and Saffron Walden Shire wards to provide for a stronger ward boundary.

Our draft recommendations are for seven single-member, 10 two-member and four three-member wards. We consider that our draft recommendations provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we have received such evidence during consultation.

What happens next?

There will now be a consultation period, during which we encourage comment on the draft recommendations on the proposed electoral arrangements for Uttlesford District Council contained in the report. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.** We will take into account all submissions received by 8 July 2013. Any received after this date may not be taken into account.

We would particularly welcome local views backed up by demonstrable evidence. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations. Express your views by writing directly to us at:

**Review Officer
Uttlesford Review
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
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London EC1M 5LG
reviews@lgbce.org.uk**

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

You can also view our draft recommendations for Uttlesford District Council on our interactive maps at <http://consultation.lgbce.org.uk>

Introduction

1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body which conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. This electoral review is being conducted following our decision to review Uttlesford District Council's electoral arrangements to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the authority.

2 We wrote to the Council as well as other interested parties, inviting the submission of proposals first on council size and then on warding arrangements for the Council. The submissions received during these stages of the review have informed our draft recommendations.

3 We are now conducting a full public consultation on the draft recommendations. Following this period of consultation, we will consider the evidence received and will publish our final recommendations for the new electoral arrangements for Uttlesford District Council in autumn 2013.

What is an electoral review?

4 The main aim of an electoral review is to try to ensure 'electoral equality', which means that all councillors in a single authority represent approximately the same number of electors. Our objective is to make recommendations that will improve electoral equality, while also trying to reflect communities in the area and provide for effective and convenient local government.

5 Our three main considerations – equalising the number of electors each councillor represents; reflecting community identity; and providing for effective and convenient local government – are set out in legislation¹ and our task is to strike the best balance between them when making our recommendations. Our powers, as well as the guidance we have provided for electoral reviews and further information on the review process, can be found on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Why are we conducting a review in Uttlesford?

6 We decided to conduct this review because, based on the December 2010 electorate figures, 33% of the existing wards have 10% more or fewer electors per councillor than the district average. In addition, Felsted ward had 43% more electors than the district average.

How will the recommendations affect you?

7 The recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve on the Council. They will also decide which ward you vote in, which other communities are in that ward and, in some instances, which parish council wards you vote in. Your ward name may also change, as may the names of parish or town council wards in the area. The names or boundaries of parishes will not change as a result of our recommendations.

¹ Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

8 It is therefore important that you let us have your comments and views on the draft recommendations. We encourage comments from everyone in the community, regardless of whether you agree with the draft recommendations or not. The draft recommendations are evidence based and we would therefore like to stress the importance of providing evidence in any comments on our recommendations, rather than relying on assertion. We will be accepting comments and views until 8 July 2013. After this point, we will be formulating our final recommendations which we are due to publish in autumn 2013. Details on how to submit proposals can be found on page 19 and more information can be found on our website, www.lgbce.org.uk

What is the Local Government Boundary Commission for England?

9 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Members of the Commission are:

Max Caller CBE (Chair)
Professor Colin Mellors (Deputy Chair)
Dr Peter Knight CBE DL
Sir Tony Redmond
Dr Colin Sinclair CBE
Professor Paul Wiles CB

Chief Executive: Alan Cogbill
Director of Reviews: Archie Gall

1 Analysis and draft recommendations

10 Before finalising our recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Uttlesford District Council we invite views on these draft recommendations. We welcome comments relating to the proposed ward boundaries and ward names. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

11 As described earlier, our prime aim when recommending new electoral arrangements for Uttlesford is to achieve a level of electoral fairness – that is, each elector’s vote being worth the same as another’s. In doing so we must have regard to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009,² with the need to:

- secure effective and convenient local government
- provide for equality of representation
- reflect the identities and interests of local communities, in particular
 - the desirability of arriving at boundaries that are easily identifiable
 - the desirability of fixing boundaries so as not to break any local ties

12 Legislation also states that our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on the existing number of electors in an area, but also on estimated changes in the number and distribution of electors likely to take place over a five-year period from the date of our final recommendations. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for the wards we put forward at the end of the review.

13 In reality, the achievement of absolute electoral fairness is unlikely to be attainable and there must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach is to keep variances in the number of electors each councillor represents to a minimum. We therefore recommend strongly that in formulating proposals for us to consider, local authorities and other interested parties should also try to keep variances to a minimum, making adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. As mentioned above, we aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral fairness over a five-year period.

14 Additionally, in circumstances where we propose to divide a parish between district wards or county divisions, we are required to divide it into parish wards so that each parish ward is wholly contained within a single district ward or county division. We cannot make amendments to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

15 These recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of Uttlesford District Council or result in changes to postcodes. Nor is there any evidence that the recommendations will have an adverse effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. The proposals do not take account of parliamentary constituency boundaries, and we are not, therefore, able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

² Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Submissions received

16 Prior to, and during, the initial stage of the review, we visited Uttlesford District Council ('the Council') and met with members, parish council representatives and officers. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received two submissions on council size, one from the Council and another from the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council. During consultation on ward boundaries we received 54 submissions, including one from the Council. All submissions may be inspected at our offices and those of the Council. All representations received can also be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Electorate figures

17 As part of this review, the Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2018. The Council initially forecast an increase of 18% in electorate over the period 2012 to 2018. While we acknowledge that Uttlesford is subject to considerable growth, we were concerned that this level of growth was unrealistic based on the evidence received and was unlikely to be met during the forecast period. We therefore asked the Council to revisit its methodology. As a result, the Council revised down its forecast to 11% (increasing from 62,335 to 69,196 by 2018).

18 Although we consider this figure to still be high, we note that it is broadly in line with Office of National Statistic forecasts for population. In addition, the Council provided evidence of development sites. Having considered the information provided by the Council, we are satisfied that the projected figures are the best available at the present time and these figures form the basis of our draft recommendations.

Council size

19 The Council currently has 44 councillors elected from 27 district wards, comprising 14 single-member, nine two-member and four three-member wards. During preliminary discussions on council size, the Council proposed a council size of between 38 and 40 members. It provided evidence on its governance and management structure, overview and scrutiny functions, regulatory functions and its standards committee. It also provided evidence on elector engagement and working in the community. Finally, it considered member involvement in external bodies as well as member time commitment and partnership working.

20 The Council concluded that fewer members are involved directly in day-to-day decision making, but that it must retain sufficient councillor capacity to perform the regulatory, overview and scrutiny functions.

21 The Liberal Democrat Group on the Council argued for a 35-member council, rejecting the Council's proposal for between 38 to 40 members. It argued that 35 members would give the Council a councillor to elector ratio 'in line' with the average for England and also reflect the officer rationale that the Council could effectively function with between 34 to 36 members.

22 We considered that the Council put forward strong evidence for a council size of between 38 and 40 members. Taking all the evidence into account, we were minded

to adopt a council size of 39 members for the Council and agreed to proceed to consultation on this number.

23 In response to the consultation the Council and the Liberal Democrat Group restated their original position. We also received a mixture of support and objections from parish councils and local residents. We do not consider that sufficient evidence was received to support an alternative council size. We have therefore adopted the Council's proposed council size as the basis of consultation on warding arrangements.

Electoral fairness

24 As discussed in the introduction to this report, the prime aim of an electoral review is to achieve electoral fairness within a local authority.

25 Electoral fairness, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a vote of equal weight when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. It is expected that our recommendations will provide for electoral fairness, reflect communities in the area, and provide for effective and convenient local government.

26 In seeking to achieve electoral fairness, we work out the average number of electors per councillor. The district average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the district (62,335 in 2012 and 69,196 by 2018) by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, 39 under our draft recommendations. Therefore, the average number of electors per councillor under our draft recommendations is 1,598 in 2012 and 1,774 by 2018.

27 Under our draft recommendations, all of our proposed wards will have electoral variances 10% or less from the average for the district by 2018. We are therefore satisfied that we have achieved good levels of electoral fairness for Uttlesford.

General analysis

28 During consultation, we received 54 submissions on warding arrangements for Uttlesford, including a district-wide scheme from the Council. The Council submitted proposals for 10 single-member wards, 10 two-member wards and three three-member wards. A large number of the remaining submissions expressed concerns about proposals for the Wicken Bonhunt and Debden areas.

29 The Council's proposals resulted in good levels of electoral equality across the district and generally used clearly identifiable boundaries. We are therefore basing our draft recommendations on its proposals subject to a number of amendments to reflect the evidence received and to secure stronger boundaries.

30 We note that its Stort Valley ward included Ugley parish which has no direct road links into the proposed ward. In addition, Ugley Parish Council outlined its links to the Stansted North area. We therefore propose amendments to this area to address the issue of access for Ugley parish. We also note that the Council's Stebbing ward includes the south-east area of Felsted parish, but that this area has

no direct road links within the ward to Stebbing parish. We therefore propose amendments in this area.

31 We also note the Council's proposal to include a small area of Little Easton parish in its Great Dunmow North ward to reflect the fact that it falls within the Woodland Park development. However, we note that this area does not currently contain any electors and would therefore be an unviable parish ward. Therefore we will not be adopting this small element of the Council's Great Dunmow North ward. We consider this issue is best addressed by way of a Community Governance Review once this review is complete and the new electors are in place.

32 In the Saffron Walden area we propose a minor amendment to the Council's proposals to use stronger boundaries. Finally, we propose amendments in the north-west area around Littlebury parish to address relatively high opposing variances between the Council's proposed Chesterford & Littlebury and Elmdon & Wenden wards and to address the division of Littlebury parish between two wards.

33 In the remainder of the district we are broadly content to adopt the Council's proposed wards, subject to a minor amendment between Saffron Walden Castle and Saffron Walden Shire wards to provide for a stronger ward boundary.

34 Our draft recommendations are for seven single-member, 10 two-member and four three-member wards. We consider that our draft recommendations provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we have received such evidence during consultation.

35 A summary of our proposed electoral arrangements is set out in Table A1 (on pages 22 – 23) and the large map accompanying this report.

36 We welcome all comments on these draft recommendations. We also welcome comments on the ward names we have proposed as part of the draft recommendations.

Electoral arrangements

37 This section of the report details the submissions we have received, our consideration of them, and our draft recommendations for each area of Uttlesford. The following areas of the authority are considered in turn:

- Saffron Walden and the north west area (pages 11-12)
- Stansted and the west area (pages 12-13)
- Hatfield, the Rodings and the Dunmow s (pages 14-15)
- Elsenham, the Hallingburys, the Eastons, Thaxted and Talkey (pages 15-16)

38 Details of our draft recommendations are set out in Table A1 on pages 22 – 23 and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Saffron Walden and the north-west area

39 Saffron Walden is in the north of Uttlesford and surrounded by rural parishes to its north and west. The Council proposed two-member wards of Saffron Walden Audley and Saffron Walden Castle and a three-member Saffron Walden Shire ward with 2% more, 1% fewer and an equal number of electors per councillor to the district average by 2018, respectively. It also proposed the single-member wards of Ashdon, Debden & Wimbish and The Sampfords with 5% fewer, 6% more and 6% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively.

40 The Council noted that under a council size of 39 members, Saffron Walden was entitled to seven councillors. It therefore proposed a redrawing of the existing wards. It also proposed transferring the Little Walden area of Saffron Walden parish to its proposed Ashdon ward. This transfer was necessary to secure good electoral equality in Ashdon ward. Saffron Walden Town Council objected to the Council's proposal to transfer the Little Walden area to Ashdon, arguing that the area remains part of Saffron Walden and has no links to Ashdon.

41 We also received a large number of objections opposing a split of the Debden and Debden Green areas of Debden parish.

42 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note Saffron Walden Town Council's objections to the proposal to transfer the Little Walden area to the proposed Ashdon ward. While we acknowledge this concern, we note that Ashdon ward would have a high electoral variance of 16% fewer electors than the district average by 2018 without the inclusion of this area. On balance, although this proposal requires a small area of Saffron Walden parish to be transferred to the adjoining district ward, we note that this area is rural in nature and has road links to Hadstock parish within the Ashdon ward. Given this, we have decided to adopt it as part of our draft recommendations.

43 In the Saffron Walden town area we are generally content with the Council's proposals. However, our tour of the area confirmed that the boundary between the proposed Saffron Walden Castle and Saffron Walden Shire wards could be strengthened by transferring a small area to the south of Ashdon Road from Saffron Walden Castle ward to Saffron Walden Shire ward. While this would slightly worsen electoral equality in these wards to 6% fewer and 3% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively, on balance we consider this acceptable given the stronger boundary.

44 We note the concerns expressed in some submissions over the Debden and Debden Green areas, but also note that the Council's proposal reflected these concerns and that they were based on an earlier draft proposal. We are therefore adopting the Council's proposed Debden & Wimbish ward without amendment as part of our draft recommendations. We are also adopting the Council's proposed The Sampfords ward without amendment.

45 Our draft recommendations for this area can be seen on Table A1 (on pages 22 – 23) and on Map 1 accompanying this report.

46 Our single-member Ashdon, Debden & Wimbish and The Sampfords wards would have 5% fewer, 6% more and 6% more electors per councillor than the district

average by 2018, respectively. Our two-member Saffron Walden Audley and Saffron Walden Castle wards would have 2% more and 6% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively. Finally, our three-member Saffron Walden Shire ward would have 3% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018.

Stansted and the west area

47 Stansted lies to the south-east of the district. To the north-west are a number of rural parishes. The Council proposed the single-member wards of Chesterford & Littlebury, Clavering, Elmdon & Wenden and Stort Valley. These wards would have 9% more, 7% fewer, 8% fewer and 7% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively. It also proposed the two-member wards of Newport, Stansted North and Stansted South. These wards would have 3% fewer, 1% fewer and 3% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively.

48 The Council acknowledged that its proposed Chesterford & Littlebury and Elmdon & Wenden wards required Littlebury parish to be split between these wards to secure good levels of electoral equality. However, it argued that its proposals used logical boundaries, transferring Littlebury into Chesterford & Littlebury ward and Littlebury Green and Catmere End into Elmdon & Wenden ward. Littlebury Parish Council objected to the Council's proposal to divide it between wards, arguing that Littlebury would be dominated by Chesterford and that the remaining area has few links with Elmdon and Wenden parishes.

49 The Council stated that it modified the existing Clavering ward to address the high electoral variances in the existing ward. It also proposed transferring Wicken Bonhunt parish to its proposed Newport ward to improve electoral equality from 9% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018 to 3% fewer. We received a large number of submissions, including one from Wicken Bonhunt Parish Council, objecting to the inclusion of Wicken Bonhunt in the proposed Newport ward. Respondents argued that the parish is rural in nature and has no links to Newport and should therefore be placed in a ward with its neighbouring rural parishes.

50 The Council acknowledged that Ugley parish does not have any direct road links into its proposed Stort Valley ward. Ugley Parish Council requested that it remain part of Stansted North ward.

51 In Stansted the Council proposed two, two-member wards, making an adjustment between the existing wards and transferring Birchanger parish into its proposed Stansted South ward. It stated that there are some links between Birchanger and Forest Hall Park in Stansted Mountfitchet parish. Councillor Godwin objected to any proposal to transfer Birchanger parish into a Stansted ward, requesting that the parish be transferred into a ward with Farnham and Manuden, although she acknowledged that this would effectively create a detached ward.

52 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note the Council's proposals for Chesterford & Littlebury and Elmdon & Wenden wards. We have concerns that these wards result in relatively high opposing variances and also require the division of Littlebury parish. We note Littlebury Parish Council's objections to being split between district wards. We have therefore considered combining the proposed wards to create a two-member Chesterford & Elmdon ward. This ward

would have 1% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018. We acknowledge that this requires the creation of a two-member ward, but our tour of the area confirms that both parts of Littlebury have good road access across the M11 and we therefore consider that a two-member ward can be justified given the improvement in electoral equality. We are therefore recommending a two-member Chesterford & Elmdon ward as part of our draft recommendations.

53 To the south of this area we note Councillor Godwin's proposal to transfer Birchanger parish into a ward with the Clavering area. However, as she observes herself, this would lead to the creation of a detached ward, something which we regard as inappropriate in all but exceptional circumstances. Therefore, we are not adopting this proposal, but are adopting the Council's proposed Stansted South ward as part of our draft recommendations.

54 We also note the concerns raised about the Wicken Bonhunt and Ugley areas. We do not consider the inclusion of Ugley parish in the Council's Stort Valley ward to be appropriate since it has no direct road links to other communities in the proposed ward. We have therefore looked for alternatives in this area. As this area lies at the edge of the district, the alternatives for Stort Valley are limited. We considered including Ugley parish in Stansted North ward, while creating a two-member ward comprising Clavering and Stort Valley wards and Wicken Bonhunt parish. While this reunites Wicken Bonhunt with its neighbouring parishes, the resulting ward would have 13% fewer electors than the district average by 2018. The proposed Newport ward would have 9% fewer electors. While we consider there sufficient evidence to accept a 9% variance in Newport ward, we do not consider there sufficient evidence to support a ward with 13% fewer electors.

55 We have therefore considered the creation of a three-member ward combining the Council's proposed Stort Valley and Stansted North wards. Although this would combine the more urban Stansted area with the neighbouring rural wards, it would reunite Ugley parish with the town, as favoured by Ugley Parish Council. The resulting three-member Stansted North ward would secure good electoral equality with 3% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018. We are therefore adopting this as part of our draft recommendations.

56 To the north of this, we note that transferring Wicken Bonhunt from Newport ward to Clavering ward worsens electoral equality in Newport from 3% fewer to 9% fewer electors, while improving it in Clavering from 7% fewer to 4% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018. On balance, we consider this provides a better reflection between our statutory criteria and have therefore decided to adopt this amendment as part of our draft recommendations.

57 Our single-member Clavering ward would have 4% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018. Our two-member Chesterford & Elmdon, Newport and Stansted South wards would have 1% more, 9% fewer and 3% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively. Finally, our three-member Stansted North ward would have 3% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018.

58 Our draft recommendations for this area can be seen on Table A1 (on pages 22 – 23) and on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Hatfield, the Rodings and The Dunmows

59 This area lies to the south of the district. The Council proposed the single-member wards of Hatfield Heath, High Easter & the Rodings and Stebbing which would have 3% more, 5% more and 8% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively. It also proposed two-member Felsted & Fitch Green ward and Great Dunmow North wards with 3% fewer and 7% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively. Finally, it proposed a three-member Great Dunmow South ward with 6% more electors per councillor than the district average.

60 The Council stated that it transferred White Roothing parish to its proposed Hatfield Heath ward to secure good electoral equality, citing the road links between the areas. It also stated that the reconfiguration of the Dunmows requires High Easter parish to be transferred to a ward which includes the Roding parishes. It stated that it had transferred Barnston parish to its proposed Great Dunmow South ward to create a three-member ward, while its Great Dunmow North ward includes the whole of the Woodlands Park development, including a small area of Little Easton parish, which currently contains no electors.

61 Finally, the Council stated that there were too many electors in Flitch Green and Felsted parishes to create a two-member ward. It therefore proposed a Felsted & Flitch Green ward comprising Flitch Green and the western part of Felsted parish. The remainder of Felsted parish would be transferred to its proposed Stebbing ward which would also include the parishes of Stebbing and Little Dunmow.

62 Felsted Parish Council objected to the Council's proposal arguing that Felsted and Little Dunmow parishes are similar in nature, while Flitch Green is highly urbanised. It proposed a two-member Felsted & Little Dunmow ward and a single-member Flitch Green ward, arguing these would better reflect communities.

63 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note that the Council's Hatfield Heath and High Easter & the Rodings wards secure good electoral equality and use strong boundaries. We are therefore adopting them as part of our draft recommendations.

64 We also note that the Council's proposed Great Dunmow North and Great Dunmow South wards secure reasonable electoral equality. We are generally content with the proposed boundaries, but cannot support the proposal to transfer a small area of Little Easton parish (currently with no electors) to Great Dunmow ward. We acknowledge that the Council has done this because this area will fall within the Woodlands Park development. However, at present it contains no electors and would therefore not provide for a viable parish ward. This issue is best addressed by a Community Governance Review once this electoral review is complete and the new electors are in place. We are therefore adopting the Council's proposed Great Dunmow North ward subject to retaining the whole of Little Easton in the proposed Thaxted & the Eastons ward. We are adopting the Council's proposed Great Dunmow South ward without amendment.

65 In respect of the Council's proposed Felsted & Flitch Green and Stebbing wards we have strong concerns that Stebbing ward would combine part of Felsted parish in a ward with Little Dunmow and Stebbing parishes which have no direct road links.

Therefore, we do not consider this ward viable, and we have therefore had to explore alternative options.

66 We note Felsted Parish Council's objections to the Council's proposals, but are unable to adopt its alternative proposals. While we note its comments that Little Dunmow and Felsted have more in common with each other while Flitch Green should be a separate ward, we note that its proposed two-member Felsted & Little Dunmow ward and single-member Flitch Green ward would have 22% fewer and 21% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively. Therefore we do not propose adopting them as part of our draft recommendations.

67 We propose creating a single-member Little Dunmow & Flitch Green ward with 6% fewer electors than the district average by 2018 and a two-member Felsted & Stebbing ward with 4% more electors per councillor by 2018. We acknowledge that this does not reflect Felsted Parish Council's request, but note that the Little Dunmow & Flitch Green ward is compact and that Flitch Green was formerly part of Little Dunmow parish. In addition, we note that there are good road links within our proposed Felsted & Stebbing ward.

68 Our proposed single-member Hatfield Heath, High Easter & the Rodings and Little Dunmow & Flitch Green wards would have 3% more, 5% more and 6% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018. Our proposed two-member Great Dunmow North and Felsted & Stebbing wards would have 7% more and 4% more electors per councillor the district average by 2018, respectively. Finally, our three-member Great Dunmow South ward would have 6% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018.

69 Our draft recommendations for this area can be seen on Table A1 (on pages 22 – 23) and on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Elsenham, the Hallingburys, the Eastons, Thaxted and Takeley

70 This area lies in the centre of the district. The Council put forward proposals for the two-member wards of Broad Oak & the Hallingburys, Elsenham & Henham, and Thaxted & the Eastons with 6% fewer, 1% more and 8% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively. It also proposed a three-member Takeley ward with 10% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018.

71 The Council acknowledged that its Broad Oak & the Hallingburys ward requires part of Hatfield Broad Oak parish to be transferred to its proposed Takeley ward. However, it argued that this area has good links into Takeley. Little Hallingbury Parish Council supported its inclusion in a ward with Great Hallingbury, Hatfield Broad Oak and Great Canfield parishes. Great Hallingbury Parish Council also supported its inclusion in a ward with Little Hallingbury, Hatfield Broad Oak and Great Canfield parishes. It cited links to Hatfield Forest in Hatfield Broad Oak parish. Great Canfield Parish Council supported its inclusion in a ward either with Hatfield Broad Oak parish or the Rodings parishes.

72 The Council stated that it had not initially considered a three-member rural ward, but that the configuration of parishes in the Takeley and surrounding area forced it to consider this option. It argued that Takeley and Little Canfield parishes

should be in the same ward, as Little Canfield contains the Priors Green overspill development of Takeley. It also stated that the Bush End area of Hatfield Broad Oak needed to be included in the proposed ward to ensure good electoral equality, highlighting that the area has good links into Takeley. It also included Broxted and Chickney parishes in its Takeley ward. Takeley Parish Council supported its inclusion in a ward with Little Canfield and Broxted. Although stating that it was a separate community from Little Canfield, it acknowledged that the parishes had worked together on issues with Priors Green.

73 The Council stated that it had removed Chickney from its proposed Elsenham & Henham ward, arguing that electors look to Henham and Broxted, so retaining it a ward with Broxted was acceptable. The Council said its Thaxted & the Eastons ward comprises the existing Thaxton and the Eastons ward, with the addition of Lindsell parish to create an effective ward. Tilty Parish Meeting supported its inclusion in the Thaxted & the Eastons ward, highlighting that it is currently grouped with Great Easton parish.

74 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note the Council's proposals for this area and had some initial concerns. We were concerned about its proposal to divide Hatfield Broad Oak parish as this may not reflect community identities and noted the relatively poor level of electoral equality in its Takeley ward. We have considered an option to retain the whole of Hatfield Broad Oak in the Broad Oak & the Hallingburys ward. However, this would require the transfer of additional electors to Takeley ward, otherwise its electoral equality would worsen beyond 10%. The only area we identified as possible to transfer to Takeley ward was Tilty parish. However, we note that Tilty is a grouped parish with Great Easton parish and our tour of the area confirmed the links between the two. Therefore, we do not propose transferring Tilty parish to Takeley ward. As a result we have decided, on balance, to adopt the Council's proposed Broad Oak & the Hallingburys, Thaxted & the Eastons and Takeley wards as part of our draft recommendations. We also support its Elsenham & Henham ward and are adopting this as part of our draft recommendations.

75 Our two-member Broad Oak & the Hallingburys, Elsenham & Henham, and Thaxted & the Eastons wards would have 6% fewer, 1% more and 8% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively. Our proposed three-member Takeley ward would have 10% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018.

76 Our draft recommendations for this area can be seen on Table A1 (on pages 22 – 23) and on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Conclusions

77 Table 1 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, based on 2012 and 2018 electorate figures.

Table 1: Summary of electoral arrangements

	Draft recommendations	
	2012	2018
Number of councillors	39	39
Number of electoral wards	21	21
Average number of electors per councillor	1,598	1,774
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	6	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

Draft recommendation

Uttlesford District Council should comprise 39 councillors serving 21 wards, as detailed and named in Table A1 and illustrated on the large map accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

78 As part of an electoral review, we are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

79 Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make changes to parish electoral arrangements where these are as a direct consequence of our recommendations for principal authority warding arrangements. However, Uttlesford District Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements.

80 To meet our obligations under the 2009 Act, we propose consequential parish warding arrangements for the parishes of Hatfield Broad Oak, Great Dunmow, Saffron Walden and Stansted Mountfitchet.

81 Hatfield Broad Oak Parish Council is currently represented by nine parish councillors representing two parish wards. As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Hatfield Broad Oak parish.

Draft recommendations

Hatfield Broad Oak Parish Council should return nine parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Bush End (returning one member) and Village (returning eight members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

82 Great Dunmow Parish Council is currently represented by 16 parish councillors representing two parish wards. As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Great Dunmow parish.

Draft recommendations

Great Dunmow Parish Council should return 16 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: North (returning six members) and South (returning 10 members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

83 Saffron Walden Town Council is currently represented by 16 parish councillors, representing three parish wards. As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Saffron Walden parish.

Draft recommendations

Saffron Walden Town Council should return 16 parish councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Audley (returning four members); Castle (returning four members); Little Walden (returning one member) and Shire (returning seven members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

84 Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council is currently represented by 15 members, representing two parish wards. As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Stansted Mountfitchet parish.

Draft recommendations

Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council should return 15 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: North (returning eight members) and South (returning seven members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

2 What happens next?

85 There will now be a consultation period of 12 weeks, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Uttlesford District Council contained in this report. We will take into account fully all submissions received by 8 July 2013. Any received after this date may not be taken into account.

86 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Uttlesford and welcome comments from interested parties relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, ward names and parish electoral arrangements. We would welcome alternative proposals backed up by demonstrable evidence during this consultation period. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

87 Express your views by writing directly to:

Review Officer
Uttlesford Review
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
76–86 Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG

Submissions can also be made by using the consultation section of our website, <http://consultation.lgbce.org.uk> or by emailing reviews@lgbce.org.uk

88 Please note that the consultation stages of an electoral review are public consultations. In the interests of openness and transparency, we make available for public inspection full copies of all representations the Commission takes into account as part of a review. Accordingly, copies of all Stage Three representations will be placed on deposit locally at the offices of Uttlesford District Council and at our offices in Layden House (London) and on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

89 If you are a member of the public and not writing on behalf of a council or organisation we will remove any personal identifiers, such as postal or email addresses, signatures or phone numbers from your submission before it is made public. We will remove signatures from all letters, no matter who they are from.

90 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations and consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, **whether or not** they agree with the draft recommendations. We will then publish our final recommendations.

91 After the publication of our final recommendations, the changes we have proposed must be approved by Parliament. An Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in draft in Parliament. The draft

Order will provide for new electoral arrangements to be implemented at the next elections for Uttlesford District Council in 2015.

Equalities

92 This report has been screened for impact on equalities; with due regard being given to the general equalities duties as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. As no potential negative impacts were identified, a full equality impact analysis is not required.

3 Mapping

Draft recommendations for Uttlesford

93 The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for Uttlesford District Council:

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for Uttlesford District Council.

You can also view our draft recommendations for Uttlesford District Council on our interactive maps at <http://consultation.lgbce.org.uk>

Appendix A

Table A1: Draft recommendations for Uttlesford District Council

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2012)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2018)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Ashdon	1	1,552	1,552	-3%	1,689	1,689	-5%
2 Broad Oak & the Hallingburys	2	3,067	1,534	-4%	3,324	1,662	-6%
3 Chesterford & Elmdon	2	3,332	1,666	4%	3,574	1,787	1%
4 Clavering	1	1,799	1,799	13%	1,844	1,844	4%
5 Debden & Wimbish	1	1,730	1,730	8%	1,883	1,883	6%
6 Elsenham & Henham	2	2,834	1,417	-11%	3,595	1,798	1%
7 Felsted & Stebbing	2	3,481	1,741	9%	3,684	1,842	4%
8 Great Dunmow North	2	2,974	1,487	-7%	3,813	1,907	7%
9 Great Dunmow South	3	4,792	1,597	0%	5,664	1,888	6%
10 Hatfield Heath	1	1,699	1,699	6%	1,833	1,833	3%
11 High Easter & the Rodings	1	1,761	1,761	10%	1,860	1,860	5%
12 Little Dunmow & Fritch Green	1	1,618	1,618	1%	1,665	1,665	-6%
13 Newport	2	2,753	1,377	-14%	3,240	1,620	-9%

Table A1 (cont): Draft recommendations for Uttlesford District Council

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2012)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2018)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
14 Saffron Walden Audley	2	3,535	1,768	11%	3,627	1,814	2%
15 Saffron Walden Castle	2	3,056	1,528	-4%	3,328	1,664	-6%
16 Saffron Walden Shire	3	5,163	1,721	8%	5,483	1,828	3%
17 Stansted North	3	4,945	1,648	3%	5,151	1,717	-3%
18 Stansted South	2	2,887	1,444	-10%	3,440	1,720	-3%
19 Takeley	3	4,002	1,334	-17%	4,796	1,599	-10%
20 Thaxted & the Eastons	2	3,617	1,809	13%	3,818	1,909	8%
21 The Sampfords	1	1,738	1,738	9%	1,885	1,885	6%
Totals	39	62,335	-	-	69,196	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,598	-	-	1,774	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Uttlesford District Council.

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

Appendix B

Glossary and abbreviations

AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)	A landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it
Constituent areas	The geographical areas that make up any one ward, expressed in parishes or existing wards, or parts of either
Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve on a council
Electoral Change Order (or Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Division	A specific area of a county, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever division they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the county council
Electoral fairness	When one elector's vote is worth the same as another's
Electoral imbalance	Where there is a difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the local authority
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in elections. For the purposes of this report, we refer specifically to the electorate for local government elections

Local Government Boundary Commission for England or LGBCE	The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is responsible for undertaking electoral reviews. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England assumed the functions of the Boundary Committee for England in April 2010
Multi-member ward or division	A ward or division represented by more than one councillor and usually not more than three councillors
National Park	The 13 National Parks in England and Wales were designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 and can be found at www.nationalparks.gov.uk
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors
Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single local authority enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents
Parish council	A body elected by electors in the parish which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries. See also 'Town council'
Parish (or Town) council electoral arrangements	The total number of councillors on any one parish or town council; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward

Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever parish ward they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
PER (or periodic electoral review)	A review of the electoral arrangements of all local authorities in England, undertaken periodically. The last programme of PERs was undertaken between 1996 and 2004 by the Boundary Commission for England and its predecessor, the now-defunct Local Government Commission for England
Political management arrangements	The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enabled local authorities in England to modernise their decision making process. Councils could choose from two broad categories; a directly elected mayor and cabinet or a cabinet with a leader
Town council	A parish council which has been given ceremonial 'town' status. More information on achieving such status can be found at www.nalc.gov.uk
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward or division varies in percentage terms from the average

Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district or borough council
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