

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Huntingdonshire in Cambridgeshire

Report to the Electoral Commission

April 2002

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A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for Huntingdon and St Ives is inserted inside the back cover of this report.

WHAT IS THE BOUNDARY COMMITTEE FOR ENGLAND?

The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. The functions of the Local Government Commission for England were transferred to the Electoral Commission and its Boundary Committee on 1 April 2002 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001 (SI 2001 No. 3692). The Order also transferred to the Electoral Commission the functions of the Secretary of State in relation to taking decisions on recommendations for changes to local authority electoral arrangements and implementing them.

Members of the Committee are:

Pamela Gordon (Chair)
Professor Michael Clarke CBE
Kru Desai
Robin Gray
Joan Jones
Ann M Kelly
Professor Colin Mellors

Archie Gall (Director)

We are required by law to review the electoral arrangements of every principal local authority in England. Our aim is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, the number of councillors and ward names. We can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils.

This report sets out our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Huntingdonshire in Cambridgeshire.

SUMMARY

The Local Government Commission for England (LGCE) began a review of Huntingdonshire's electoral arrangements on 17 April 2001. It published its draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 27 November 2001, after which it undertook a nine-week period of consultation. As a consequence of the transfer of functions referred to earlier, it falls to us, the Boundary Committee for England, to complete the work of the LGCE and submit final recommendations to the Electoral Commission.

- **This report summarises the representations received by the LGCE during consultation on its draft recommendations, and contains our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission.**

We found that the existing arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Huntingdonshire:

- **in 20 of the 34 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district, and 15 wards vary by more than 20 per cent;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 22 wards. The number of wards in which the variance is more than 20 per cent will remain at 15.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 173 – 174) are that:

- **Huntingdonshire District Council should have 52 councillors, one less than at present;**
- **there should be 29 wards, instead of 34 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 31 of the 34 existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of five wards.**

The purpose of these proposals is to ensure that, in future, each district councillor represents approximately the same number of electors, bearing in mind local circumstances.

- **In 23 of the proposed 29 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in only one ward expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2006.**

Recommendations are also made for changes to parish and town council electoral arrangements which provide for:

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Eynesbury Hardwicke, Houghton & Wyton, Huntingdon, St Ives, St Neots and The Stukeleys.**

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Electoral Commission, which will not make an Order implementing them before 4 June 2002:

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

Table 1: Final Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1 Alconbury & The Stukeleys	1	the parishes of Alconbury and Alconbury Weston; part of The Stukeleys parish (the proposed Stukeleys parish ward)	Map 2
2 Brampton	2	the parishes of Brampton, Grafham and Perry	Map 2
3 Buckden	1	the parishes of Buckden, Diddington and Southoe & Midloe	Map 2
4 Earith	2	the parishes of Bluntisham, Earith and Holywell-cum-Needingworth	Map 2
5 Ellington	1	the parishes of Barham & Woolley, Brington & Molesworth, Buckworth, Bythorn & Keyston, Catworth, Easton, Ellington, Leighton, Old Weston, Spaldwick and Stow Longa	Map 2
6 Elton & Folksworth	1	the parishes of Alwalton, Chesterton, Elton, Folksworth & Washingley, Haddon, Morborne, Sibson cum Stibbington and Water Newton	Map 2
7 Fenstanton	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parish of Fenstanton	Map 2
8 Godmanchester	2	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parish of Godmanchester	Map 2
9 Gransden & The Offords	2	the parishes of Abbotsley, Great Gransden, Great Paxton, Offord Darcy, Offord Cluny, St Neots Rural, Tetworth, Toseland, Waresley and Yelling; part of Eynesbury Hardwicke parish (the existing Spinney parish ward)	Map 2
10 Huntingdon East	3	part of Huntingdon parish (the proposed Huntingdon East parish ward)	Map 2 and large map
11 Huntingdon North	2	part of Huntingdon parish (the proposed Huntingdon North parish ward)	Map 2 and large map
12 Huntingdon West	2	part of Huntingdon parish (the proposed Huntingdon West parish ward); part of The Stukeleys parish (the proposed Hinchingsbrooke parish ward)	Map 2 and large map
13 Kimbolton & Staughton	1	the parishes of Covington, Great Staughton, Hail Weston, Kimbolton and Tilbrook	Map 2
14 Little Paxton	1	the parish of Little Paxton	Map 2
15 Ramsey	3	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parish of Ramsey	Map 2
16 St Ives East	2	part of St Ives parish (the proposed St Ives East parish ward)	Map 2 and large map
17 St Ives South	2	part of St Ives parish (the proposed St Ives South parish ward)	Map 2 and large map
18 St Ives West	1	part of St Ives parish (the proposed St Ives West parish ward)	Map 2 and large map
19 St Neots Eaton Ford	2	part of St Neots parish (the proposed St Neots Eaton Ford parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A2
20 St Neots Eaton Socon	2	part of St Neots parish (the proposed St Neots Eaton Socon parish ward)	Map 2 and Map A2
21 St Neots Eynesbury	3	part of Eynesbury Hardwicke parish (the existing Town parish ward); part of St Neots parish (the proposed St Neots Eynesbury parish ward)	Maps 2, A3 and A4
22 St Neots Priory Park	2	part of St Neots parish (the proposed St Neots Priory Park parish ward)	Map 2 and map A3
23 Sawtry	2	the parishes of Conington, Glatton, Great Gidding, Hamerton, Little Gidding, Sawtry, Steeple Gidding, Upton & Coppingford and Winwick	Map 2
24 Somersham	2	the parishes of Broughton, Colne, Old Hurst, Pidley cum Fenton, Somersham and Woodhurst	Map 2

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
25 Stilton	1	the parishes of Denton & Caldecote, Holme and Stilton	Map 2
26 The Hemingfords	2	the parishes of Hemingford Abbots, Hemingford Grey and Hilton; part of Houghton & Wyton parish (the proposed Houghton & Wyton parish ward)	Map 2 and large map
27 Upwood & The Raveleys	1	the parishes of Abbots Ripton, Kings Ripton, Upwood & The Raveleys and Woodwalton; part of Houghton & Wyton parish (the proposed Airfield parish ward)	Map 2
28 Warboys & Bury	2	the parishes of Bury, Warboys and Wistow	Map 2
29 Yaxley & Farcet	3	the parishes of Farcet and Yaxley	Map 2

Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.

2 Map 2 and the Appendix, including the large map in the back of the report, illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.

Table 2: Final Recommendations for Huntingdonshire

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Alconbury & The Stukeleys	1	2,029	2,029	-9	2,510	2,510	8
2	Brampton	2	4,716	2,358	6	4,710	2,355	1
3	Buckden	1	2,426	2,426	9	2,510	2,510	8
4	Earith	2	4,666	2,333	4	4,670	2,335	0
5	Ellington	1	2,224	2,224	0	2,250	2,250	-3
6	Elton & Folksworth	1	2,150	2,150	-4	2,150	2,150	-8
7	Fenstanton	1	2,246	2,246	1	2,450	2,450	5
8	Godmanchester	2	4,522	2,261	1	4,790	2,395	3
9	Gransden & The Offords	2	3,531	1,766	-21	4,740	2,370	2
10	Huntingdon East	3	6,509	2,170	-3	6,543	2,181	-6
11	Huntingdon North	2	4,220	2,110	-6	4,447	2,224	-4
12	Huntingdon West	2	4,157	2,079	-7	4,460	2,230	-4
13	Kimbolton & Staughton	1	2,461	2,461	10	2,450	2,450	5
14	Little Paxton	1	2,449	2,449	10	2,410	2,410	4
15	Ramsey	3	5,933	1,978	-11	5,780	1,927	-17
16	St Ives East	2	4,762	2,381	7	5,005	2,503	8
17	St Ives South	2	5,025	2,513	12	4,821	2,411	4
18	St Ives West	1	2,409	2,409	8	2,474	2,474	6
19	St Neots Eaton Ford	2	5,107	2,554	14	5,090	2,545	9
20	St Neots Eaton Socon	2	4,487	2,244	0	4,800	2,400	3
21	St Neots Eynesbury	3	6,493	2,164	-3	6,900	2,300	-1
22	St Neots Priory Park	2	4,487	2,244	0	4,450	2,225	-4
23	Sawtry	2	5,032	2,516	13	5,020	2,510	8
24	Somersham	2	4,363	2,182	-2	4,360	2,180	-6
25	Stilton	1	2,310	2,310	3	2,310	2,310	-1
26	The Hemingfords	2	4,613	2,307	3	4,590	2,295	-1
27	Upwood & The Raveleys	1	1,887	1,887	-16	2,380	2,380	2

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
28 Warboys & Bury	2	4,386	2,193	-2	4,450	2,225	-4
29 Yaxley & Farcet	3	6,577	2,192	-2	7,420	2,473	6
Totals	52	116,177	-	-	120,940	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,234	-	-	2,326	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Huntingdonshire District 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 district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Huntingdonshire in Cambridgeshire. The five districts in Cambridgeshire have now been reviewed as part of the programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England started by the LGCE in 1996. We have inherited that programme, which we currently expect to complete in 2004.

2 Huntingdonshire's last review was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which reported to the Secretary of State in January 1976 (Report no. 142). The electoral arrangements of Cambridgeshire County Council were last reviewed in December 1983 (Report no. 460). We expect to begin reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements towards the end of the year.

3 In making final recommendations to the Electoral Commission, we have had regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3692), i.e. the need to:
 - a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
 - b) secure effective and convenient local government; and
 - c) achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of Huntingdonshire was conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (LGCE, fourth edition, published in December 2000). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review.

5 Our task is to make recommendations on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also propose changes to the electoral arrangements for parish and town councils in the district.

6 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as possible, equal representation across the district as a whole. Schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward will have to be fully justified. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

7 The LGCE was not prescriptive on council size. Insofar as Huntingdonshire is concerned, it started from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but was willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, the LGCE found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and emphasised that any proposal for an increase in council size would need to be fully justified. In particular, it did not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, or that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

8 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 17 April 2001, when the LGCE wrote to Huntingdonshire District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. It also notified Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Cambridgeshire Local Councils Association, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituencies in the district, the Members of the European Parliament for the Eastern Region and the headquarters of the main political parties. It placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Huntingdonshire District Council to publicise the review further. The Stage One consultation period was put into abeyance from 10 May 2001 until 7 June 2001 due to the General Election. Consequently the closing date for receipt of submissions at the end of Stage One was 13 August 2001. At Stage Two the LGCE considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared its draft recommendations.

9 Stage Three began on 27 November 2001 with the publication of the LGCE's report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Huntingdonshire in Cambridgeshire*, and ended on 28 January 2002. During this period comments were sought from the public and any other interested parties on the preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four the draft recommendations were reconsidered in the light of the Stage Three consultation and we now publish the final recommendations.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

10 The district of Huntingdonshire is a predominately rural area in the west of Cambridgeshire. It is bordered by the districts of Peterborough to the north, Fenland and East Cambridge to the east and South Cambridgeshire to the south. It contains three significantly populated market towns, those of Huntingdon, St Ives and St Neots. The district has excellent transport links, and economic growth and commercial activity is concentrated along the road and rail corridors. The current population of the district is 157,200, which is spread over 90,957 hectares.

11 The district is parished in its entirety, containing 84 civil parishes. The three major towns, detailed above, comprise 49 per cent of the district's total electorate.

12 The electorate of the district is 116,177 (April 2001). The Council presently has 53 members who are elected from 34 wards, eight of which are relatively urban in Huntingdon, St Ives and St Neots, with the remainder being mainly rural. Four of the wards are each represented by three councillors, 11 are each represented by two councillors and 19 are single-member wards. The Council is elected by thirds.

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

14 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,192 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 2,282 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic change and migration since the last review, the number of electors per councillor in 20 of the 34 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, in 15 wards by more than 20 per cent and in seven wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in St Ives North ward, where the councillor represents 57 per cent more electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Huntingdonshire

Table 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Brampton	2	3,701	1,851	-16	3,680	1,840	-19
2 Buckden	1	2,025	2,025	-8	2,110	2,110	-8
3 Bury	1	1,612	1,612	-26	1,560	1,560	-32
4 Earith	2	3,313	1,657	-24	3,320	1,660	-27
5 Eaton Ford	2	4,091	2,046	-7	4,090	2,045	-10
6 Eaton Socon	2	5,503	2,752	26	5,470	2,735	20
7 Ellington	1	1,860	1,860	-15	1,880	1,880	-18
8 Elton	1	1,415	1,415	-35	1,420	1,420	-38
9 Eynesbury	3	6,098	2,033	-7	6,160	2,053	-10
10 Farcet	1	1,340	1,340	-39	1,320	1,320	-42
11 Fenstanton	1	2,246	2,246	2	2,450	2,450	7
12 Godmanchester	2	4,522	2,261	3	4,790	2,395	5
13 Gransden	1	2,121	2,121	-3	4,030	4,030	77
14 Hemingford Abbots & Hilton	1	1,289	1,289	-41	1,300	1,300	-43
15 Hemingford Grey	1	2,075	2,075	-5	2,040	2,040	-11
16 Houghton & Wyton	1	1,674	1,674	-24	2,120	2,120	-7
17 Huntingdon North	3	7,110	2,370	8	7,460	2,487	9
18 Huntingdon West	3	7,058	2,353	7	7,260	2,420	6
19 Kimbolton	1	1,706	1,706	-22	1,700	1,700	-26
20 Needingworth	1	1,957	1,957	-11	1,960	1,960	-14
21 Paxton	1	2,850	2,850	30	2,810	2,810	23
22 Priory Park	2	4,177	2,089	-5	4,140	2,070	-9
23 Ramsey	3	5,933	1,978	-10	5,780	1,927	-16
24 St Ives North	2	6,867	3,434	57	6,780	3,390	49
25 St Ives South	2	5,329	2,665	22	5,520	2,760	21
26 Sawtry	2	4,610	2,305	5	4,600	2,300	1
27 Somersham	1	2,830	2,830	29	2,810	2,810	23
28 Staughton	1	2,134	2,134	-3	2,150	2,150	-6
29 Stilton	1	3,296	3,296	50	3,290	3,290	44
30 The Offords	1	2,115	2,115	-4	2,090	2,090	-8

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
31 The Stukeleys	1	2,918	2,918	33	3,410	3,410	49
32 Upwood & The Raveleys	1	1,462	1,462	-33	1,510	1,510	-34
33 Warboys	2	3,703	1,852	-16	3,830	1,915	-16
34 Yaxley	2	5,237	2,619	19	6,100	3,050	34
Totals	53	116,177	–	–	120,940	–	–
Averages	–	–	2,192	–	–	2,282	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Huntingdonshire District 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 district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Warboys ward were relatively over-represented by 16 per cent, while electors in Yaxley ward were relatively under-represented by 19 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

15 During Stage One the LGCE received 46 representations, including district-wide schemes from Huntingdonshire District Council, Huntingdon Liberal Democrats and the North West Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats. It also received representations from the Huntingdonshire District Labour Party, the Huntingdon Constituency Labour Party, the Huntingdon Constituency Conservative Association, three town councils, 23 parish councils, five district councillors and nine local residents. In the light of these representations and evidence available to it, the LGCE reached preliminary conclusions, which were set out in its report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Huntingdonshire in Cambridgeshire*.

16 The LGCE put forward its own warding arrangements for the majority of its draft recommendations which in the light of evidence received at Stage One it considered provided the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. However, it also adopted parts of the District Council's and the Huntingdon Liberal Democrats' proposals, predominantly in the rural north of the district. The draft recommendations achieved an improvement in electoral equality, and provided a mix of single-, two- and three-member wards across the district. The LGCE proposed that:

- Huntingdonshire District Council should be served by 52 councillors, compared with the current 53, representing 28 wards, six fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 31 of the existing wards should be modified, while three wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- there should be new warding arrangements for the parishes of Eynesbury Hardwicke, Hemingford Grey, Houghton & Wyton, Huntingdon, St Ives, St Neots and The Stukeleys.

Draft Recommendation

Huntingdonshire District Council should comprise 52 councillors, serving 28 wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

17 The LGCE's proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 22 of the 28 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2006.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

18 During the consultation on its draft recommendations report the LGCE received 76 representations. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Huntingdonshire District Council.

Huntingdonshire District Council

19 The District Council submitted an alternative 52-member scheme which it stated would “better reflect local communities of interest”. It put forward revised proposals for the LGCE’s proposed Alconbury & The Giddings, Brampton & Buckden, Ellington and Kimbolton & Staughton wards. It also resubmitted the proposal to include electors of St Neots Rural parish in a district ward with electors of St Neots town, as well as proposing to include the proposed Airfield parish ward of Houghton & Wyton parish in a district ward with electors of St Ives town.

Cambridgeshire County Council

20 The County Council made general comments on the review as well as making observations as to the effect the draft recommendations would have on future county council electoral divisions.

Political Groups

21 The LGCE received a statement from Huntingdonshire District Council’s Conservative and Liberal Democrat groups, supported by Independent members. They made a number of comments on the review as a whole and compared the draft recommendations for Huntingdonshire with those of the other local authorities in Cambridgeshire. Separately the Huntingdonshire District Council Conservative Group supported by Huntingdon & North West Cambridgeshire Conservative Associations (referred to as the Conservatives in the remainder of this report) also made observations on the review as a whole, while putting forward comments on specific warding arrangements. Huntingdon Constituency Labour Party welcomed the draft recommendations for Huntingdon town.

22 Huntingdon Liberal Democrats made general comments on the review as a whole. They put forward detailed proposals for the proposed Brampton & Buckden ward as well as proposing minor modifications to Ellington ward. They also outlined their views on Huntingdonshire District Council’s Stage Three proposals. The North West Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats commented on the draft recommendations for Bury & Warboys, Earith, Elton, Ramsey, Somersham, Stilton, Upwood & The Raveleys and Yaxley & Farcet wards.

Parish and Town Councils

23 The LGCE received submissions from three town councils. Huntingdon Town Council stated that it wished to see its area represented by two three-member wards. St Ives Town Council put forward proposals to include electors from neighbouring parishes in district wards with electors from St Ives. St Neots Town Council supported the proposal to include electors of St Neots Rural parish in a ward with electors of St Neots town. It also commented on the LGCE’s proposed district ward boundaries within the town.

24 Abbots Ripton, Catworth, Easton, Great Gransden, Great Staughton, Kings Ripton, Leighton Bromswold, Perry, Sawtry and Yaxley parish councils supported the draft recommendations for their respective areas. Warboys Parish Council supported the proposed boundaries for Bury & Warboys ward but proposed an alternative ward name. Alwalton and Grafham parish councils supported the District Council's Stage Three proposals, while Folksworth & Washingley Parish Council restated its support for the District Council's Stage One proposals.

25 Brampton, Buckden, Buckworth, Hail Weston and Stow Longa parish councils opposed the draft recommendations for Brampton & Buckden and Ellington wards and put forward their own proposals for the wards covering their parishes. Alconbury, Alconbury Weston, Great & Little Gidding, The Stukeleys, Upwood & The Raveleys and Woodwalton parish councils opposed the draft recommendations for Alconbury & The Giddings, Sawtry and Upwood & The Raveleys wards and put forward their own proposals for the wards covering their parishes. Hemingford Abbots, Hemingford Grey and Houghton & Wyton parish councils made comments on the draft recommendations for The Hemingfords ward and neighbouring wards.

26 Offord Cluny, Offord Darcy and Stilton parish councils supported elements of the draft recommendations for their areas. However, they stated they could be improved upon and proposed alternatives. Colne Parish Council opposed the proposal to place its parish in a ward separate from Bluntisham and Earith parishes; Earith Parish Council also opposed this proposal. Holywell-cum-Needingworth Parish Council proposed dividing the proposed Earith ward into two single-member wards, and Woodhurst Parish Council commented on the proposal to include its parish in Somersham ward.

Other Representations

27 A further 31 representations from local councillors and residents were received in response to the draft recommendations. Submissions commenting on the district as a whole were received from Councillor Downes, member for Brampton ward, Councillor Reynolds, member for St Ives North ward, Councillor Rogers, member for Earith ward, and Councillor Simmonds, member for Eaton Ford ward. Each of these district councillors also submitted more detailed comments on their own areas. County Councillor Lucas commented on the draft recommendations for Bury & Warboys, Somersham and The Hemingfords wards. Councillor Baker, member for Ellington ward, Councillor Garner, member for Sawtry ward, Councillor Mugglestone, member for Kimbolton ward, Councillor Sanderson, member for Huntingdon West ward, Councillor Tuplin, member for Sawtry ward, and Councillor Turpin, member for The Stukeleys ward, all commented on the draft recommendations for their, and neighbouring, wards. Councillor Cranston, of Perry Parish Council, Councillor Hartley, of Brampton Parish Council, and Councillor Lomax, of Huntingdon Town Council, also commented on the proposals for the wards covering their parishes.

28 Representations were received from 12 residents of Huntingdon all of whom supported the draft recommendations for Huntingdon town. A petition, signed by 71 residents of Oxmoor, was also received supporting the draft recommendations for Huntingdon North ward. Two residents of Brampton and a resident of Huntingdon opposed the draft recommendations for Brampton & Buckden ward. A resident of Brington supported the Huntingdon Liberal Democrats' proposal for Ellington ward.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

29 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Huntingdonshire is, so far as reasonably practicable and consistent with the statutory criteria, to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended) – which stipulates the need to secure effective and convenient local government, reflect the identities and interests of local communities and secure the matters referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (equality of representation). Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

30 In relation to Schedule 11, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on estimated changes in the number and distribution of local government electors likely to take place over the next five years. We must also have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

31 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which results in 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.

32 We accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for an authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be minimised, the aim 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 make electoral equality their starting point, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identities and interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate must also be considered, and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

Electorate Forecasts

33 Since 1975 there has been a 64 per cent increase in the electorate of Huntingdonshire district. The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 5.4 per cent, from 116,177 to 122,490, over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in Gransden ward, in particular in St Neots Rural parish, in which there is an area earmarked for significant development. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Having accepted that this is an inexact science and, having considered the forecast electorates, the LGCE stated in its draft recommendations report that it was satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

34 At Stage Three the LGCE received a number of representations commenting on its electorate forecasts, the majority of these concerning the development in Ramsey parish. Huntingdon Liberal Democrats stated that “the development in Ramsey will not proceed”. However, they stated that there would be a new development in another part of the district, as yet to be confirmed, but “the two key areas under consideration are east of St Neots and west of Brampton”. They also commented that such a revision could enable the creation of a Brampton ward consisting solely of Brampton parish. Brampton Parish Council stated that the proposed

development in Ramsey was not now expected to be built and that “one of the alternative locations for the displaced houses is the land in Brampton”. Buckden Parish Council commented on the electorate projections for Buckden parish based on changes to the electorate between the 2001 and 2002 electoral registers. St Ives Town Council stated that “there seems to have been an error, as there is only a projected increase in the St Ives area of 104 people”. A resident of Brampton stated “there is a strong possibility that the local Structure Plan will be amended to allow considerable growth in Brampton”.

35 In the light of these comments, we asked Huntingdonshire District Council to re-examine its original electorate forecasts for these areas. The District Council confirmed “that the projected figures for 2006 are in accordance with our original submission and similarly this applies to the query on electorate projections for St Ives”. It considered that at the time the electorate projections were “as robust as possible”. However, the District Council stated that a Public Inquiry on the Local Plan Alteration has been taking place “which could modify the existing Plan”. The Council stated that at the time of writing the exact details of the report would not be available until towards the end of Stage Four.

36 The Planning Inspectorate’s report, following the Public Inquiry, recommended that the developments to the west of Ramsey and on the adjoining RAF Upwood site should no longer be identified as a housing site. The Planning Inspectorate went on to outline a number of recommended sites for these proposed developments to be relocated to, in Huntingdon, Godmanchester, Little Paxton, St Ives, St Neots and Yaxley. We are led to believe that these planned developments would not be ratified by Huntingdonshire District Council until June 2002, which would be too late for the purposes of this review; however, this has resulted in continued uncertainty over the correct electorate forecasts for some parts of the district. The LGCE was notified of the Planning Inspectorate’s Report at the end of March 2002. The Boundary Committee has taken into account the removal of the proposed developments in Ramsey and Upwood; which has resulted in a reduction in the number of electors in the proposed Bury & Warboys, Ramsey and Upwood & The Raveleys wards. We have been supplied with new 2006 electorate forecasts for these areas by Huntingdonshire District Council. The deletion from the Local Plan of these proposed developments has resulted in a reduction in the electorate projection for Huntingdonshire as a whole from 122,490 to 120,940, and therefore the councillor:elector ratio has fallen from 2,311 to 2,282. Under a council size of 52 the councillor:elector ratio has fallen from 2,356 to 2,326. The effects these changes have had on the final recommendations are outlined in the Electoral Arrangements section of this chapter. As stated earlier there is continued uncertainty over the relocation of the properties, originally to be built in the Ramsey development, to a new site within Huntingdonshire. Therefore, at this stage we do not propose modifying our electorate forecasts, for any alternative sites, to incorporate possible additional growth resulting from the Planning Inspectorate’s Report.

37 As stated earlier, we are aware that forecasting electorates is an inexact science, and we note the unfortunate timing of these developments with regard to the PER. We have used the updated figures provided by the District Council for the proposed Bury & Warboys, Ramsey and Upwood & The Raveleys wards. We remain satisfied with the District Council’s electorate projections in the remainder of Huntingdonshire and believe that in these areas they represent the best estimates that can be reasonably made at this time.

Council Size

38 As already explained, the LGCE started its review by assuming that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although it was willing to carefully look at arguments why this might not be the case.

39 Huntingdonshire District Council presently has 53 members. At Stage One the District Council proposed a council of 49 members which it stated would “suit the requirements of the new models of political management, reflect changes to streamline the Council’s organisation and accountability in the delivery of services, particularly through new forms of partnership” and would “provide the best opportunity to formulate a submission which meets the requirements of the statutory criteria and guidance”. The Huntingdon Liberal Democrats proposed a council size of 55 members, arguing that the addition of two councillors would “stabilise the current level of electors per councillor”. They opposed any reduction in council size, concluding that “there is no case on the grounds of workload to reduce the number of councillors”. North West Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats proposed a council size of 54. They argued that the number of councillors should not be reduced, because of the increasing workload assumed by councillors.

40 When formulating its draft recommendations the LGCE carefully considered the representations it received during Stage One concerning council size. It concluded that none of the three submissions regarding council size received at Stage One was sufficiently well argued to justify its adoption. The LGCE therefore wrote to each of the three interested parties which had submitted proposals on council size, inviting further argumentation in support of their proposals. In response, Huntingdonshire District Council put forward arguments based on a number of factors, concluding that “the potential benefits of a leaner, more dynamic organisation should be recognised from the perspective of delivering effective and convenient local government to the district’s electors”. The Huntingdon Liberal Democrats argued that the “Agenda for Modernising Local Government stresses the need for increasing democratic accountability, openness and transparency and an ever-increasing quality of service delivery. In other words what is being provided now is not sufficient.” They concluded that “there is a strong case for recognising that the number of councillors chosen in 1974 is no longer adequate”. The North West Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats argued that there should be an increase of one councillor on the basis of the changing role of councillors. They argued that members of the council had three significant duties to carry out, namely, “to represent the interests of residents on the Council, to formulate and monitor the local authority’s policies and priorities, and to represent the interests of both residents and the authority on and to a wide range of external bodies”.

41 After assessing the further evidence received from the three groups, the LGCE concluded that, although improved, the argumentation provided was still insufficient. It was not persuaded that the existing council size of 53 did not facilitate convenient and effective local government or that the proposals received would provide more convenient and effective local government than the existing council size. None of the interested parties explained how their proposals for council size would relate to the model of political management adopted by the council. Therefore, having decided that there was insufficient evidence to support a council size of 49, 54 or 55, the LGCE sought to prepare its draft recommendations for Huntingdonshire based on a council size of 53. However, it noted that under the existing council size it was not possible to provide a good allocation of councillors between the three towns and the rural area by 2006. Consequently, it considered a council size of 52 members and a councillor:elector ratio of 1:2,356. A council size of 52 resulted in a better allocation in two out of the three towns and in the rural areas, while also

securing a better level of electoral equality throughout the district than a 53-member council. The LGCE therefore based its draft recommendations on a council size of 52, which it believed provided the best balance between achieving good electoral equality and meeting the statutory criteria.

42 During Stage Three the LGCE received three representations regarding council size. The Huntingdon Liberal Democrats noted that the draft recommendations for the districts of East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire had both recommended an increase in council size despite a smaller councillor:elector ratio in those districts. They commented that an increase to a council size of 55, as they had proposed at Stage One, would go some way towards providing parity with those districts and asked that time be given for “further discussion ... so that a more appropriate level of councillor:elector ratio can be used”.

43 Councillor Garner, member for Sawtry ward, stated that although he “was pleased [the draft recommendations] increased the number of proposed councillors from 49 as proposed by Huntingdonshire District Council to 52 ... [he] would have preferred the number of councillors to remain at 53 as at present or even increased to 54 or 55”. He stated that this would have assisted in producing a scheme which reflected “the natural affinity of villages”. Councillor Downes, member for Brampton ward, stated that it had been proposed to increase the number of councillors in the districts of South Cambridgeshire and East Cambridgeshire and that “it would have been fairer to increase Huntingdonshire by between two and four councillors”. However, Councillor Downes submitted proposals for the district as a whole based on a council size of 53.

44 We carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three concerning council size. We note the comparisons between Huntingdonshire and the council sizes of neighbouring districts in Cambridgeshire. However, existing council size varies widely across local government. This reflects the diverse natures of local authorities themselves. Levels of representation should be tailored to the characteristics of individual areas. Accordingly, neither we, nor previously the LGCE, accept that, in reviewing a particular area, regard should be had to the council sizes of other authorities in a county. We did not consider that any of the arguments put forward at Stage Three were strong enough to convince us to move away from the draft recommendation for a council size of 52. We therefore propose endorsing the proposed council size of 52 as final.

Electoral Arrangements

45 In its draft recommendations the LGCE proposed a council of 52 members, as stated above. Consequently, it was unable to accept the majority of the ward pattern proposed by the District Council, which was based on a council size of 49. However, in certain areas the District Council’s proposals were compatible with a 52-member council and had met no significant opposition during the Council’s local consultation at Stage One. In such areas the District Council’s proposals were adopted as part of the draft recommendations. Similarly, the two alternative district-wide schemes also had different councillor:elector ratios to that which the LGCE proposed. In the majority of the north, east and west of the district the LGCE found that the scheme proposed by the Huntingdon Liberal Democrats was compatible with its councillor:elector ratio and, as a result, these proposals formed the basis for the draft recommendations in these areas. For the urban areas of the district, the LGCE based its draft recommendations on the proposals of the District Council (for St Ives and St Neots) and on those of the North West Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats and the Labour groups (for Huntingdon).

46 In response to the draft recommendations report, the District Council put forward an alternative proposal based on a council size of 52 which, it concluded, would provide a better reflection of community identities across the district. Cambridgeshire County Council stated that “where there is consensus between District and Town/Parish Councils ... this should be respected”. It also stated that the district and county reviews should be conducted at the same time, which would help to retain “co-terminosity between district wards and county electoral divisions”.

47 A further six representations were received at Stage Three commenting on issues which relate to the district as a whole. A submission was received from Huntingdonshire District Council’s Conservative and Liberal Democrat groups, supported by Independent members. This submission compared the councillor:elector ratios between Huntingdonshire and four neighbouring districts in Cambridgeshire, all of which had lower councillor:elector ratios. It also compared the levels of electoral equality in the three towns of Huntingdon, St Ives and St Neots to “the rural wards of Kimbolton and Somersham ... which appear to demonstrate a lack of understanding of rural issues”. These comments were supported in a further submission from the Huntingdonshire District Council Conservative Group supported by Huntingdon and North West Cambridgeshire Conservative Associations. However, the Conservatives stated that the separate submission was “to ensure that the final report does not again show undue weight towards the Liberal Democrats ... [who] are mentioned no fewer than 51 times compared with the Conservatives being mentioned only twice”. This submission also commented further on councillor:elector ratios in urban and rural wards and expressed views on individual warding arrangements. Finally, the Conservatives claimed that “there is no justification for the additional councillor in Huntingdon: this additional member should be allocated to rural wards”. The Huntingdon Liberal Democrats outlined their opposition to the creation of multi-member wards “except where that involves a serious breach of the guidelines on reasonable electoral equality and community identity”. They restated their preference for single-member wards wherever possible.

48 Comments were also received from Councillor Downes, member for Brampton ward, who stated “it is extremely undesirable to have multi-member wards in rural settings ... [we] should only use multi-member wards where strictly necessary”. Councillor Mugglestone, member for Kimbolton ward, stated that there should be a lower councillor:elector ratio in the rural areas. Councillor Rogers, member for Earith ward, commented generally on the draft recommendations, stating that they “concentrated on numerical or electoral equality whilst ignoring the need for a shared community identity ... [but] diverge by some 17 per cent between certain wards”. Councillor Rogers also noted that “a number of unelected organisations played an important role in the [LGCE’s] findings” and commented that “it would have been better to start with a review of the parishes”. A resident of Huntingdon stated that there should be a lower councillor:elector ratio which would “allow for more councillors and smaller wards” and put Huntingdonshire “on a par with other districts of Cambridgeshire”.

49 When formulating our final recommendations we noted the comparisons between Huntingdonshire and the councillor:elector ratios of neighbouring districts in Cambridgeshire. However, we have no regard to the council sizes of the other districts in Cambridgeshire county and therefore make no comparisons with other councillor:elector ratios. We consider the arguments put forward for the council size and reach a judgement on the appropriate council size for the district of Huntingdonshire. We also noted that there were queries over the allocation of councillors between the rural areas. However, by dividing the number of electors in a given area by the councillor:elector ratio we can calculate the correct allocation of councillors for that area. On the basis of the electorate under a council size of 52 the towns of Huntingdon (including the

proposed Hinchingsbrooke parish ward), St Ives and St Neots are entitled to seven, five and nine councillors respectively by 2006. Consequently the remaining parishes in the district are together entitled to 31 councillors.

50 We considered the comments from Huntingdon Liberal Democrats concerning multi-member wards. In previous reviews the LGCE tended to reinforce the pattern of multi-member wards in urban areas with some single-member wards in rural areas. When considering proposals for an increase in the number of single-member wards in Huntingdonshire, which is wholly parished, we must have regard to their effect on parish boundary and warding arrangements. As part of our final recommendations we have proposed ten multi-member rural wards. Due to the electorates of the constituent parishes in these wards, we would have to divide between two district wards at least one parish in each ward in order to create single-member wards. We consider that if there is an opportunity to create a two- or three-member ward which provides good levels of electoral equality, this is preferable to single-member wards which involve the division of parishes. Comments were also received to the effect that councillors in rural areas should represent smaller wards than councillors in urban areas. This is not a consideration we can take into account. Legislation requires us to make recommendations which provide that, so far as practicable, having regard to community identities and interests and effective and convenient local government, each elector's vote carries equal weight whether they live in urban or rural areas.

51 We noted the Conservatives' comments concerning the number of times the Liberal Democrats were mentioned in the draft recommendations report. However, this is due to the fact that both the Huntingdon Liberal Democrats and the North West Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats submitted district-wide schemes at Stage One whereas the Conservatives did not. We have also noted Councillor Rogers' comment that "a number of unelected organisations" had had their proposals adopted in the draft recommendations. When considering submissions the LGCE looked for weight of evidence and argumentation as opposed to assertion, therefore it did not have regard to the source of a submission but instead the level of argumentation and evidence provided. We adopt the same approach.

52 We noted Cambridgeshire County Council's comments on the timing of the district and county reviews. However, our approach in two-tier county areas is first to review the electoral arrangements of the district councils and then, once the necessary electoral change orders have been made for the districts, to review those of the county council. Our future recommendations for electoral division boundaries in all counties, including Cambridgeshire, will be based on the new district wards. We noted Councillor Rogers' comments that a review of parishes should be carried out before a review of district warding arrangements. However, under the provisions of the Local Government and Rating Act 1997, district councils have the power to conduct reviews and make recommendations direct to the Secretary of State for the creation, abolition and alteration of parish areas. Therefore we have no power to conduct parish reviews before, during or after the periodic electoral review.

53 As outlined earlier, we received information late in Stage Four of the review stating that a number of developments in the district, which the District Council had taken into account in formulating its five-year forecasts, will now no longer proceed. This information was received after we had taken decisions on the final recommendations for Huntingdonshire. Throughout the review there has been much uncertainty and controversy over the accuracy of the five-year forecast. That uncertainty appears likely to continue for the foreseeable future. This places the Committee in a difficult position since we cannot be confident that our final recommendations will provide as good levels of electoral equality, by 2006, across Huntingdonshire as we might

have wished. Nevertheless, we see no alternative at this stage but to base our recommendations on the February 2001 electoral register and have regard to the District Council's original five-year forecast for 2006, less those electors associated with developments which we have been informed will not proceed.

54 Should the position regarding future developments in the district be clarified prior to the Electoral Commission taking decisions on our final recommendations, it will no doubt wish to consider the possibility of making modifications. Alternatively, we would be prepared to conduct a further review of the area at some point in the future should it become clear that significant electoral imbalances are arising.

55 As stated earlier in the chapter, following the removal of the proposed developments in the Ramsey area, the councillor:elector ratio for a 52 member Huntingdonshire District Council, by 2006, has fallen from 1:2,356 to 1:2,326. Consequently, the councillor:elector ratios for individual wards have changed from draft to final, even if the boundaries of these wards have remained unchanged. The revised electoral variances are outlined later in the chapter.

56 The draft recommendations have been reviewed in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Elton, Farcet, Stilton and Yaxley wards;
- (b) Bury, Ramsey, Upwood & The Raveleys and Warboys wards;
- (c) Ellington, Sawtry and The Stukeleys wards;
- (d) Brampton, Buckden, Kimbolton, Paxton and Staughton wards;
- (e) Earith, Houghton & Wyton, Needingworth and Somersham wards;
- (f) Eaton Ford, Eaton Socon, Eynesbury, Priory Park wards (St Neots), Gransden and The Offords wards;
- (g) Fenstanton, Godmanchester, Hemingford Abbots & Hilton, Hemingford Grey, St Ives South and St Ives North wards;
- (h) Huntingdon North and Huntingdon West wards.

57 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in the Appendix and on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Elton, Farcet, Stilton and Yaxley wards

58 These four wards are situated in the north of the district. Elton ward is currently represented by one councillor and comprises the parishes of Alwalton, Chesterton, Elton, Haddon, Morborne, Sibson cum Stibbington and Water Newton. Farcet ward is coterminous with the parish of Farcet and returns a single member. Stilton ward comprises the parishes of Denton & Caldecote, Folksworth & Washingley, Glatton, Holme and Stilton and is represented by one councillor, while Yaxley ward is coterminous with the parish of Yaxley and returns two councillors. The number of electors per councillor is 35 per cent below the district average (38 per cent below in 2006) in Elton ward; 39 per cent below (42 per cent below in 2006) in Farcet ward; 50 per cent above (44 per cent above in 2006) in Stilton ward; and 19 per cent above (34 per cent above in 2006) in Yaxley ward.

59 During Stage One, Huntingdonshire District Council recommended combining the existing wards of Elton and Stilton in a new two-member ward. It proposed combining the existing wards of Farcet and Yaxley to create a new three-member Yaxley & Farcet ward. The Huntingdon Liberal Democrats proposed including the parish of Folksworth & Washingley, currently in

Stilton ward, in a revised Elton ward. They proposed retaining the existing Yaxley ward and creating a new Farcet ward combining the parish of Farcet with a new parish ward from Ramsey parish. Finally, they proposed transferring the parish of Glatton from the existing Stilton ward into a revised Sawtry ward. The North West Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats proposed combining the existing wards of Elton and Stilton, adding Conington parish and removing Holme parish to create a new two-member Stilton ward. The parishes of Yaxley and Holme would then be combined to create a revised three-member Yaxley ward. Farcet parish would be placed with a new parish ward of Ramsey parish in a revised single-member Farcet ward.

60 In addition to the district-wide schemes received at Stage One, the LGCE received three representations relevant to these wards. Alwalton Parish Council recommended that the parish of Folksworth & Washingley be transferred from Stilton ward into Elton ward. Farcet Parish Council and the Huntingdonshire District Labour Party both made representations to the effect that Yaxley and Farcet parishes should not be combined in a three-member ward and suggested creating new parish wards to allow the parishes to be represented by three single-member wards.

61 The LGCE carefully considered all the representations received for this area during Stage One. It accepted the Huntingdon Liberal Democrats' proposals for the Elton and Stilton wards, as it believed they provided good levels of electoral equality and a better reflection of community identities, while retaining single-member wards in the rural areas. It concurred with the District Council's proposals for Farcet and Yaxley parishes, stating it was reluctant to divide parishes between different district wards unless completely necessary, and it believed that combining the parishes of Farcet and Yaxley in a three-member ward was preferable to warding areas of Ramsey parish. The draft recommendations for the area were, therefore, to adopt the Huntingdon Liberal Democrats' proposed single-member wards of Elton and Stilton, and Huntingdonshire District Council's proposed three-member Yaxley & Farcet ward.

62 Under the draft recommendations Elton ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 4 per cent below the district average (9 per cent below by 2006), Stilton ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 3 per cent above the district average (2 per cent below by 2006) and Yaxley & Farcet would have a ratio 2 per cent below the district average (5 per cent above by 2006).

63 At Stage Three nine representations were received concerning these four wards. Huntingdonshire District Council proposed including Glatton parish in a revised single-member Stilton ward with the parishes of Denton & Caldecote, Holme and Stilton. It supported the draft recommendations for Elton and Yaxley & Farcet wards.

64 The North West Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats stated that "the creation of two single-member [Elton and Stilton] wards ignores the strong community of interest between Stilton and Folksworth". They therefore proposed a two-member ward comprising the draft recommendations' Elton and Stilton wards. They also proposed that Folksworth be included in the name of the ward covering this parish as it is a larger settlement than Elton. The North West Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats also stated that they believed their Stage One proposals for Farcet and Yaxley wards were still the most suitable. However, they added that "the next best thing" would be to include part of Yaxley parish in a single-member ward with Farcet parish.

65 Alwalton Parish Council supported the draft recommendation to include its parish in a single-member ward. However, it stated that the District Council's Stage Three proposal for the ward "better meets the local needs". Folksworth & Washingley Parish Council stated that it supported the District Council's Stage One proposal for a two-member ward "encompassing Stilton with

Elton". Stilton Parish Council supported the LGCE's proposal for "a single member ward rather than a large two member ward". However, it proposed a new ward "consisting of Stilton, Folksworth & Washingley, Denton & Caldecote, Haddon and Morbone which would reinforce the close links that already exist". Yaxley Parish Council supported the proposal for a three-member ward comprising Farcet and Yaxley parishes.

66 Councillor Reynolds, member for St Ives North ward, Councillor Rogers, member for Earith ward, and Councillor Simmonds, member for Eaton Ford ward, proposed a single-member Stilton ward comprising the parishes of Holme and Stilton, with Denton & Caldecote parish being transferred into Sawtry ward. They supported the LGCE's proposals for Elton and Yaxley & Farcet wards. Councillor Downes, member for Brampton ward, supported the District Council's proposed Elton ward and put forward proposals identical to the draft recommendations for Stilton and Yaxley & Farcet wards.

67 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to endorse the draft recommendations for Stilton and Yaxley & Farcet wards as they would achieve reasonable electoral equality and have received some local support. We note that there was some opposition to the proposal for two single-member Elton and Stilton wards, instead of a single two-member ward, but we also received support for this proposal and, generally across the district, there has been a preference for single-member wards. We considered the proposal to transfer the parish of Denton & Caldecote into Sawtry ward. However, we did not consider the arguments to be strong enough to justify this modification, especially as we are unaware of the views of the parish council concerned. This proposal would also provide a higher level of electoral inequality in Sawtry ward, in the light of modifications we are making to the south of Sawtry ward, outlined later in the chapter. We considered Folksworth & Washingley Parish Council's proposed modifications to Stilton ward, however, these proposals would provide unacceptable levels of electoral inequality in the neighbouring Elton ward. We have not been persuaded to move away from the draft recommendations for Yaxley & Farcet ward as the alternative proposals would involve warding parishes, which we believe is undesirable. We also noted the support of Yaxley Parish Council for the draft recommendations. We have decided to confirm as final the proposed boundaries of Elton ward. However, in the light of comments from the North West Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats we propose renaming the proposed ward Elton & Folksworth to better reflect its constituent parts.

68 Due to the decrease in the electorate projected for the existing Bury, Ramsey and Upwood & The Raveleys wards in 2006, and consequently the district as a whole, the 2006 councillor:elector ratio has changed to 2,326. Consequently the electoral variances, by 2006, for this area have altered slightly from our draft recommendations. Under our final recommendations Elton & Folksworth and Yaxley & Farcet wards would have councillor:elector ratios 4 per cent and 2 per cent below the district average respectively (8 per cent below and 6 per cent above by 2006). Stilton ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 3 per cent above the district average (1 per cent below the average by 2006).

Bury, Ramsey, Upwood & The Raveleys and Warboys wards

69 These wards are situated in the north and north-east of the district. Bury ward (comprising the parishes of Bury and Wistow) and Upwood & The Raveleys ward (comprising the parishes of Abbots Ripton, Kings Ripton, Woodwalton and Upwood & The Raveleys) are each represented by a single councillor. Under the existing arrangements the number of electors per councillor is 26 per cent below and 33 per cent below the district average respectively (32 per cent below and 34 per cent below by 2006). Warboys ward (comprising the parishes of

Broughton, Old Hurst, Pidley cum Fenton, Warboys and Woodhurst) is currently represented by two councillors, and Ramsey ward (comprising the parish of Ramsey) is currently represented by three councillors. The number of electors per councillor in these wards is 16 per cent below and 10 per cent below the district average respectively (16 per cent below in both wards by 2006).

70 At Stage One Huntingdonshire District Council proposed retaining a three-member Ramsey ward, coterminous with Ramsey parish. The Council proposed a single-member Bury & Upwood ward, comprising the parishes of Bury, Upwood & The Raveleys and Woodwalton. It proposed a new three-member Warboys & Somersham ward, comprising the parishes of Abbots Ripton, Broughton, Kings Ripton, Old Hurst, Pidley-cum-Fenton, Somersham, Warboys, Wistow and Woodhurst. The Huntingdon Liberal Democrats proposed a single-member Ramsey & Bury ward comprising the towns of Ramsey and Bury, while the more rural areas of these two parishes would be transferred into the neighbouring Farcet and Warboys wards. The revised two-member Warboys ward would comprise the parishes of Warboys, Wistow and parts of Ramsey parish. The parish of Broughton would be transferred into a revised Upwood & The Raveleys ward, and the parishes of Old Hurst, Pidley-cum-Fenton and Woodhurst would be transferred into a revised Somersham ward. The Huntingdon Liberal Democrats proposed adding the rural parish ward of The Stukeleys parish to the existing ward of Upwood & The Raveleys and transferring the parish of Woodwalton from this ward into a revised Sawtry ward, to create a new single-member The Stukeleys ward. The North West Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats proposed warding the parish of Ramsey to incorporate the relatively urban areas of Ramsey and Bury in a single ward. The northern, more rural parts of the parish of Ramsey would be transferred to a revised Farcet ward. The remaining parish ward of Ramsey parish would be transferred into a revised Warboys ward, which would comprise this area and the parishes of Upwood & The Raveleys, Warboys and Wistow.

71 As well as the district-wide proposals, the LGCE received four other representations regarding this area during Stage One. Warboys Parish Council objected to the District Council's proposals for a new Warboys & Somersham ward. Woodhurst Parish Council stated it wished to remain in the same ward as Warboys parish. Ramsey Town Council stated that the parishes of Ramsey and Bury should not be in a district ward together. Wistow Parish Council stated that the parish of Wistow is geographically more closely aligned with the parishes of Bury and Upwood & The Raveleys.

72 The LGCE carefully considered the proposals received during Stage One for this area. It adopted the District Council's proposal to retain the existing three-member Ramsey ward. It noted the opposition from Warboys and Wistow parish councils to an excessively large ward encompassing Somersham and several other neighbouring villages, and agreed that a smaller rural ward would better facilitate convenient and effective local government in this area. It therefore proposed a two-member Bury & Warboys ward, comprising the parishes of Bury, Warboys and Wistow. The LGCE adopted the Huntingdon Liberal Democrats' proposals for the Upwood & The Raveleys ward. It proposed creating two new parish wards within The Stukeleys parish as a result of the proposals at district ward level; these parish electoral arrangements are discussed later in the chapter. This would include the rural parish ward of The Stukeleys in the proposed Upwood & The Raveleys ward.

73 Under the draft recommendations, Bury & Warboys, Ramsey and Upwood & The Raveleys wards would have councillor:elector ratios 2 per cent below, 11 per cent below and 19 per cent below the district average respectively (3 per cent above, 2 per cent below and 1 per cent below respectively by 2006).

74 At Stage Three 16 representations were received concerning these four existing wards. Huntingdonshire District Council proposed including Woodwalton parish in a revised single-member Upwood & The Raveleys ward with the parishes of Abbots Ripton, Kings Ripton and Upwood & The Raveleys as well as the proposed parish ward of The Stukeleys parish covering the rural part of the parish.

75 North West Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats commented on all wards in this area at Stage Three. They stated that “the two settlements of Forty Foot and Mereside” situated in Ramsey parish should be included in a two-member district ward with the parishes of Warboys and Wistow. They also proposed a single-member Bury & Ramsey South ward comprising Bury parish and part of Ramsey parish, covering electors to the south of Ramsey town, and a two-member Ramsey Town ward, covering the remainder of Ramsey parish. They stated that these proposals would “conform with the separation of rural and urban wards”. The North West Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats also stated that “Upwood and Stukeley would not appear to have much affinity with each other, however, short of re-working a number of adjacent wards it is difficult to see a suitable alternative”. They also stated that “Warboys is larger than Bury” and that this should be reflected in the proposed ward name. The Conservatives stated that “The Stukeleys have no community with Upwood & The Raveleys”, and noted that “Upwood shares interests and road links with Bury”. They also stated that Woodwalton parish “has no community of interest with Sawtry but does have with The Riptons, Upwood & The Raveleys”.

76 Abbots Ripton Parish Council supported the draft recommendations, but stated that it “understood that The Stukeleys may not support this proposal”. Kings Ripton Parish Council accepted the draft recommendations. The Stukeleys Parish Council opposed the proposed Upwood & The Raveleys ward. Upwood & The Raveleys Parish Council strongly opposed the proposal to include its parish in a ward with The Stukeleys parish from which it is separated by Alconbury Airfield, which “forms a natural barrier”. It stated it “would recommend the inclusion of the parishes of Wistow and Woodwalton” in Upwood & The Raveleys ward. Woodwalton Parish Council proposed including its parish in Upwood & The Raveleys ward as this would better reflect community identities while not having “a significant impact on the number of voters in the wards concerned”. Woodwalton Parish Council also supported Huntingdonshire District Council’s proposals for the district as a whole in full.

77 Warboys Parish Council stated it had “no objection to the proposed new two-member ward, comprising the parishes of Warboys, Bury and Wistow”. However, it wished to see the ward renamed Warboys ward. Woodhurst Parish Council opposed the draft recommendation which transferred its parish into Somersham ward, stating that it should be placed in “the Warboys ward where it has close relationships”.

78 County Councillor Lucas, for St Ives North & Warboys division, stated that “the villages of Broughton, Oldhurst and Woodhurst all wish, very strongly, to remain with Warboys”. He outlined links between these villages and stated that there “are no similar links with the other villages to which the report proposes these villages should be attached”. Councillor Reynolds, member for St Ives North ward, Councillor Rogers, member for Earith ward, and Councillor Simmonds, member for Eaton Ford ward, proposed a single-member Upwood & The Raveleys ward comprising the parishes of Abbots Ripton, Kings Ripton, Upwood & The Raveleys and Woodwalton with the proposed Airfield parish ward of Houghton & Wyton parish. They proposed transferring Broughton parish into Somersham ward and stated that the Airfield parish ward of Houghton & Wyton parish is linked to the remainder of Upwood & The Raveleys ward by the B1090. The councillors supported the LGCE’s proposals for Bury & Warboys and Ramsey wards. Councillor Downes, member for Brampton ward, proposed a revised single-

member Upwood ward comprising the parishes of Abbots Ripton, Kings Ripton, Upwood & The Raveleys and Woodwalton together with the proposed Great Stukeley parish ward of The Stukeleys parish. He proposed adopting the LGCE's proposed Ramsey and Bury & Warboys wards although he proposed naming the latter Warboys & Bury.

79 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received during Stage Three of the review. We have noted that there was considerable opposition to the proposal to include The Stukeleys parish in a ward with Upwood & The Raveleys parish, due to the lack of community links, accentuated by the position of Alconbury Airfield between the two parishes. A number of alternative proposals have been put forward, and we have decided to adopt the proposal for a revised single-member Upwood & The Raveleys ward, put forward by Councillors Reynolds, Rogers and Simmonds. We have noted that this proposal would address the majority of issues put forward by local respondents in this area. We looked carefully at the proposal to include the Airfield parish ward of Houghton & Wyton parish in this ward. We noted that there was opposition to the proposal to include the area in a ward with Somersham parish. We concluded that the electors of the Airfield parish ward would have good communication links with the Abbots Ripton and Kings Ripton parishes, which would help to provide a stronger community identity in the area. This proposed single-member Upwood & The Raveleys ward would combine the parishes of Abbots Ripton, Kings Ripton, Upwood & The Raveleys and Woodwalton with the proposed Airfield parish ward of Houghton & Wyton parish.

80 We noted that, with the exception of the North West Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats, the proposal for a three-member Ramsey ward received support during Stage Three. As stated in the draft recommendations, it is desirable to avoid warding parishes, and we therefore propose confirming the proposed three-member Ramsey ward. We note that Woodhurst Parish Council and Councillor Lucas opposed the draft recommendations for Bury & Warboys ward. However, we also note that Warboys Parish Council had no objection to the draft recommendations. When considering modifications to the draft recommendations we have to have regard to the proposals for the district as a whole. Any proposal to retain the existing Warboys ward would result in modifications across the district, which would conflict with the representations concerning neighbouring areas received at both Stages One and Three. Consequently, we have decided to confirm the draft recommendations for Bury & Warboys ward. However, we propose renaming the ward Warboys & Bury, as suggested by the North West Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats and Councillor Downes.

81 As stated earlier in the chapter, the District Council informed us during Stage Four that the proposed Ramsey housing development has been removed from the local plan. Consequently the 2006 electorate forecasts for each of the proposed wards in this area have been revised. Therefore we have been unable to provide the levels of electoral equality, by 2006, in Ramsey ward that we might have wished. Nevertheless, we see no alternative at this stage but to base our recommendations on the February 2001 electoral register and have regard to the District Council's original five-year forecast for 2006, less those electors associated with developments which we have been informed will not proceed.

82 Under our final recommendations Ramsey, Upwood & The Raveleys and Warboys & Bury wards would have councillor:elector ratios 11 per cent, 16 per cent and 2 per cent below the district average respectively (17 per cent below, 2 per cent above and 4 per cent below by 2006).

Ellington, Sawtry and The Stukeleys wards

83 The wards of Ellington, Sawtry and The Stukeleys are in the centre and west of the district. Ellington ward comprises the parishes of Barham & Woolley, Brington & Molesworth, Buckworth, Bythorn & Keyston Easton, Ellington, Leighton, Old Weston and Spaldwick, and returns one councillor. Sawtry ward is represented by two councillors and comprises the parishes of Conington, Great Gidding, Hamerton, Little Gidding, Sawtry, Steeple Gidding and Winwick. The Stukeleys ward consists of the parishes of Alconbury, Alconbury Weston, The Stukeleys and Upton & Coppingford and is represented by one councillor. The number of electors per councillor is 15 per cent below the district average (18 per cent below in 2006) in Ellington ward, 5 per cent above (1 per cent above in 2006) in Sawtry ward and 33 per cent above (49 per cent above by 2006) in The Stukeleys ward.

84 At Stage One, Huntingdonshire District Council proposed significant changes to the warding arrangements in the west of the district. It proposed a revised Brampton & Ellington ward, comprising the parishes of Barham & Woolley, Brampton, Brington & Molesworth, Easton, Ellington, Leighton and Spaldwick. It proposed enlarging Sawtry ward by transferring into it the parishes of Old Weston and Upton & Coppingford from Ellington ward and The Stukeleys ward respectively. It also proposed transferring Buckworth parish from Ellington ward to The Stukeleys ward to create a new Alconbury & The Stukeleys ward. The Huntingdon Liberal Democrats proposed combining the parishes of Stow Longa and Catworth in a new ward with the parishes of the existing Ellington ward. They also proposed that Alconbury, Alconbury Weston, Great Gidding, Hamerton, Little Gidding, Steeple Gidding, Upton & Coppingford and Winwick parishes should form a new Alconbury & The Giddings ward. The North West Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats proposed transferring the parish of Conington from the existing Sawtry ward into a revised Stilton ward, while transferring the parishes of Buckworth and Upton & Coppingford into a revised Sawtry ward. They proposed that the Hinchingsbrooke area of The Stukeleys parish be warded to enable those electors to the east of the A14 to be placed in a district ward in Huntingdon. They suggested that the remainder of the parish be combined with the parish of Brampton to create a revised Brampton district ward. They proposed combining the parishes of the existing Ellington ward with Catworth, Covington and Tilbrook parishes from the existing Kimbolton ward.

85 The LGCE received six representations from parish councils and residents in the area. Councillor Mugglestone proposed a new Ellington & Spaldwick district ward, comprising the parishes of Barham & Woolley, Brington & Molesworth, Bythorn & Keystone, Catworth, Easton, Ellington, Grafham, Leighton Bromswold, Spaldwick and Stow Longa. He also proposed the retention of the existing Alconbury & The Stukeleys and Sawtry wards. Ellington Parish Council opposed the District Council's proposals for a new Brampton & Ellington ward, a position also supported by a resident of Molesworth. Two residents of Brington and a resident of Old Weston opposed the District Council's proposed Sawtry ward which combined the parishes of Old Weston and Sawtry. Sawtry Parish Council objected to the District Council's proposals for two extra parishes to be incorporated in the ward. Leighton Bromswold Parish Council objected to being incorporated in a ward with either Sawtry parish or Brampton parish and stated that it wished to remain in Ellington ward.

86 The LGCE carefully considered the representations received regarding these wards at Stage One. It adopted the ward pattern proposed by the Huntingdon Liberal Democrats for this area, as it considered that it provided the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. It agreed with Councillor Mugglestone that the smaller villages along the A14 should not be in a district ward with larger villages such as Brampton, Buckden or Sawtry. The LGCE

therefore recommended a single-member Ellington ward comprising the parishes of Barham & Woolley, Brington & Molesworth, Buckworth, Bythorn & Keystone, Catworth, Covington, Easton, Ellington, Hamerton, Leighton, Old Weston, Spaldwick and Stow Longa. It recommended transferring Covington parish into the new Ellington ward. It adopted the Huntingdon Liberal Democrats' proposals for a new single-member Alconbury & The Giddings ward, and a new two-member ward comprising the larger parishes of Conington, Glatton, Sawtry and Woodwalton.

87 Under the draft recommendations the wards of Alconbury & The Giddings, Ellington and Sawtry would have councillor:elector ratios 2 per cent below, 6 per cent above and 3 per cent above the district average respectively (5 per cent below, 2 per cent above and 3 per cent below respectively by 2006).

88 At Stage Three 26 representations were received concerning this area. Huntingdonshire District Council commented on the draft recommendations, putting forward alternative warding arrangements in order to reflect community interests. It proposed a revised single-member Alconbury ward comprising the parishes of Alconbury, Alconbury Weston, Barham & Woolley, Brington & Molesworth, Buckworth, Bythorn & Keyston, Leighton and Old Weston; a revised single-member Ellington ward comprising the parishes of Catworth, Easton, Ellington, Grafham, Perry, Spaldwick and Stow Longa; and a revised two-member Sawtry ward comprising the parishes of Conington, Great Gidding, Hamerton, Little Gidding, Sawtry, Steeple Gidding, Upton & Coppingford and Winwick. The District Council proposed transferring the parishes of Glatton and Woodwalton from the LGCE's proposed Sawtry ward and into the revised Stilton and Upwood & The Raveleys wards respectively.

89 Huntingdon Liberal Democrats outlined their opposition to the District Council's Stage Three proposals for Ellington ward. They put forward two minor modifications to the LGCE's proposed Ellington ward transferring Covington parish into Kimbolton & Staughton ward and Buckworth and Hamerton parishes into the proposed Alconbury & The Giddings ward. They commented that these parishes do not have the same community interests as the villages along the A14 which make up the remainder of the proposed Ellington ward. The North West Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats commented on the LGCE's proposed Upwood & The Raveleys ward, stating that "Upwood and Stukeley would not appear to have much affinity with each other, however, short of re-working a number of adjacent wards it is difficult to see a suitable alternative". The Conservatives stated that "The Alconburys have no community with The Giddings; The Giddings' community of interest is Sawtry. Alconbury's community is with The Stukeleys." They also stated that Woodwalton parish "has no community of interest with Sawtry but does have with The Riptons and Upwood & The Raveleys".

90 Alconbury Parish Council strongly disagreed with the District Council's Stage Three proposals and stated that it wished to be included in a ward "with the neighbouring villages of Little & Great Stukeley and Upton & Coppingford". This proposal was supported by Alconbury Weston Parish Council, which commented that it was "disappointed by the proposal to separate the Alconburys from the Stukeleys". Great & Little Gidding Parish Council stated its strong opposition to the LGCE's proposed Alconbury & The Giddings ward, adding that its "interests are now inextricably bound to Sawtry", which it wished to be combined in a ward with. Sawtry Parish Council said it was "content with the draft proposals". However, the Parish Council noted that "the changes for other villages/towns appear reasonable but only local councillors and villagers will be able to judge whether their interests are served by the draft recommendations". The Stukeleys Parish Council was "delighted" with the proposal to create a new Hinchingsbrooke parish ward and include these electors in Huntingdon town. However, it strongly disagreed with

the draft recommendation which included The Stukeleys in a district ward with Upwood & The Raveleys parish. It said “there have never been any common interests” between these villages, adding that “the huge Alconbury Airfield site is a large barrier between us” and that its parish should be placed in a ward “with the neighbouring villages of Alconbury, Alconbury Weston, Upton and Coppingford”. The parish councils of Upwood & The Raveleys and Woodwalton put forward alternative warding arrangements at Stage Three, as outlined earlier in the chapter.

91 Buckworth Parish Council stated that its parish “should be part of the Alconbury ward, rather than remain in Ellington ward”. Catworth Parish Council accepted the proposal to include its parish in a revised Ellington ward. Easton Parish Council expressed its “support for and agreement to [the LGCE’s] proposals”. However, it commented that it “was surprised to see the inclusion of Hamerton which is not an A14 corridor village” in Ellington ward. Grafham Parish Council stated that the parish looks more naturally to Barham & Wooley, Easton, Ellington and Spaldwick parishes. Leighton Bromswold Parish Council opposed Huntingdonshire District Council’s Stage Three proposals and supported the draft recommendations for Ellington ward. Stow Longa Parish Council strongly objected to the draft recommendation which transferred its parish from Kimbolton ward into “an enlarged ward covering the A14 villages (Ellington ward)”.

92 Councillor Reynolds, member for St Ives North ward, Councillor Rogers, member for Earith ward, and Councillor Simmonds, member for Eaton Ford ward, proposed a single-member ward comprising the parishes of Alconbury, Alconbury Weston and the proposed Great Stukeley parish ward; a single-member Ellington ward comprising the parishes of Barham & Woolley, Brington & Molesworth, Buckworth, Ellington, Easton, Hamerton, Great & Little Gidding, Leighton, Old Weston, Spaldwick, Steeple Gidding, Upton & Coppingford and Winwick; and a two-member Sawtry ward comprising the parishes of Conington, Denton & Caldecote, Glatton and Sawtry. They also proposed that Woodwalton parish be transferred into Upwood & The Raveleys ward and that Bythorn & Keyston, Catworth, Covington and Stow Longa parishes be transferred into a two-member Kimbolton & Great Staughton ward.

93 Councillor Garner, member for Sawtry ward, stated that the draft recommendations for Sawtry ward were “acceptable”. However, he outlined a number of links between the communities of Sawtry and The Giddings, Hamerton and Winwick, which, in his view, are stronger than those between Sawtry and Glatton, Upton & Coppingford or Woodwalton. Councillor Tuplin, member for Sawtry ward, stated that Great & Little Gidding should be included in Sawtry ward instead of Woodwalton. Councillor Turpin, member for The Stukeleys ward, supported the comments of The Stukeleys Parish Council, commenting that the existing arrangements for The Stukeleys ward should be retained.

94 Councillor Baker, member for Ellington ward, generally agreed with the draft recommendations for Ellington ward. However, he proposed that Covington parish should be included in a ward with Kimbolton parish. He also commented that Hamerton parish “is not a natural member of the A14 corridor villages” and proposed including the parish in the proposed Alconbury & The Giddings ward. Councillor Downes, member for Brampton ward, proposed a revised single-member Ellington ward comprising the parishes of Barham & Woolley, Brington & Molesworth, Bythorn & Keyston, Catworth, Easton, Ellington, Leighton, Old Weston, Spaldwick and Stow Longa; a revised single-member Alconbury ward comprising the parishes of Alconbury, Alconbury Weston, Buckworth, Great Gidding, Hamerton, Little Gidding, Steeple Gidding, Upton & Coppingford and Winwick; and a two-member Sawtry ward comprising the parishes of Conington, Glatton and Sawtry. Councillor Downes proposed including the rural part of The Stukeleys parish and Woodwalton parish in a revised Upwood & The Raveleys ward.

95 A resident of Brington stated that “the Huntingdon Liberal Democrats’ proposal for Ellington ward ... meets with my full approval”.

96 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period. We have noted that there has been considerable opposition to some of the draft recommendations in this area, especially that for a new Alconbury & The Giddings ward. We noted that the parish councils of Alconbury, Alconbury Weston and The Stukeleys wished to see their parishes form a single-member ward together with the parish of Upton & Coppingford. However, this ward would provide a relatively high level of electoral inequality, and we have therefore decided to adopt the proposal put forward by Councillors Reynolds, Rogers and Simmonds for a single-member Alconbury & The Stukeleys ward comprising the parishes of Alconbury, Alconbury Weston and the proposed The Stukeleys parish ward of The Stukeleys parish. This proposal has local support and would provide a good level of electoral equality. We are endorsing the proposal to include the proposed Hinchingsbrooke parish ward of The Stukeleys parish in a ward with electors of Huntingdon town.

97 As a consequence of our proposed Alconbury & The Stukeleys ward we are unable to endorse the LGCE’s proposed Alconbury & The Giddings ward. We have noted that the majority of submissions received stated that the parishes of Great Gidding, Little Gidding and Steeple Gidding should be included in a ward with Sawtry parish whereas Woodwalton parish should be included in a ward with Upwood & The Raveleys parish. We also received proposals to include the parishes of Hamerton and Winwick in Sawtry ward. We have decided to adopt all of these proposals to create a two-member Sawtry ward, comprising the parishes of Conington, Glatton, Great Gidding, Hamerton, Little Gidding, Sawtry, Steeple Gidding, Upton & Coppingford and Winwick. We have decided to include Upton & Coppingford parish in this ward as we consider that it has stronger links with this proposed Sawtry ward than the proposed Ellington ward. We have also decided to transfer Woodwalton parish into a revised Upwood & The Raveleys ward, as requested by the parish councils in the area.

98 We have decided to confirm the draft recommendations for Ellington ward, subject to two modifications. We have decided to transfer Hamerton parish into Sawtry ward as proposed by the District Council as we consider it has stronger community links with the parishes of this ward. We have also decided to transfer Covington parish into a revised single-member Kimbolton & Staughton ward as proposed by the Huntingdon Liberal Democrats and Councillor Baker as we have been persuaded that this modification would provide a better reflection of community identity. However, we have been unable to adopt the Huntingdon Liberal Democrats’ and Buckworth Parish Council’s proposal to include Buckworth parish in the proposed Alconbury & The Giddings ward, which we do not propose adopting as part of our final recommendations. We noted that during Stage One Buckworth Parish Council stated it did not wish to be included in a ward with Sawtry parish and, consequently, we propose retaining it in the revised Ellington ward. We considered the proposal by Stow Longa Parish Council to transfer its parish into a ward with Kimbolton parish. However, we concluded this would provide a high level of electoral inequality in both Ellington and Kimbolton & Staughton wards. Under our final recommendations the single-member Ellington ward will comprise the parishes of Barham & Woolley, Brington & Molesworth, Buckworth, Bythorn & Keyston, Catworth, Easton, Ellington, Leighton, Old Weston, Spaldwick and Stow Longa.

99 Due to the decrease in the electorate projected for the existing Bury, Ramsey and Upwood & The Raveleys wards in 2006, and consequently the district as a whole, the 2006 councillor:elector ratio has changed to 2,326. Consequently the electoral variances, by 2006, for

this area have altered slightly from our draft recommendations. Under our final recommendations Alconbury & The Stukeleys ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 9 per cent below the district average (8 per cent above by 2006). Ellington ward would have a councillor:elector ratio equal to the district average (3 per cent below by 2006). Sawtry ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 13 per cent above the district average (8 per cent above by 2006).

Brampton, Buckden, Kimbolton, Paxton and Staughton wards

100 These wards are situated in the south and south-west of the district. Brampton ward (comprising the parish of Brampton) is represented by two councillors. Under the existing arrangements the number of electors per councillor in this ward is 16 per cent below the district average (19 per cent below by 2006). Buckden ward (comprising the parish of Buckden), Kimbolton ward (comprising the parishes of Catworth, Covington, Kimbolton, Stow Longa and Tilbrook) and Paxton ward (comprising the parishes of Diddington, Little Paxton and Southoe & Midloe) are each represented by a single councillor and have councillor:elector ratios 8 per cent below, 22 per cent below and 30 per cent above the district average respectively (8 per cent below, 26 per cent below and 23 per cent above by 2006).

101 At Stage One Huntingdonshire District Council proposed a new Brampton & Ellington ward, comprising the parishes of Barham & Woolley, Brampton, Brington & Molesworth, Easton, Ellington, Leighton and Spaldwick. The parishes of Buckden and Grafham would be combined to create a new single-member Buckden & Grafham ward. The District Council also proposed a new Staughton & The Offords ward, which would comprise the parishes of Diddington, Hail Weston, Great Staughton, Offord Cluny, Offord Darcy and Southoe & Midloe. It proposed including the parishes of Bythorn & Keyston and Perry with the parishes of the existing Kimbolton ward to create a revised single-member Kimbolton ward. Finally, the District Council proposed a single-member Little Paxton ward, coterminous with the parish of Little Paxton. The Huntingdon Liberal Democrats proposed a revised two-member Brampton ward comprising the parishes of Brampton and Grafham. They proposed a revised single-member Kimbolton ward, comprising the parishes of Covington, Great Staughton, Hail Weston, Kimbolton and Tilbrook. The parishes of Catworth and Stow Longa would be transferred from the existing Kimbolton district ward into a revised Ellington ward. The Huntingdon Liberal Democrats proposed that the parishes of Perry and Southoe & Midloe should be transferred into a new Gransden ward. Little Paxton parish would form a single-member district ward. The North West Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats proposed placing The Stukeleys parish with the parish of Brampton in a revised Brampton ward. They proposed combining the parishes of Buckden, Diddington, Grafham, Offord Cluny, Offord Darcy, Perry and South & Midloe in a revised two-member Buckden ward. They proposed a revised Kimbolton ward, comprising the parishes of Great Staughton, Hail Weston, Kimbolton and Stow Longa. They also proposed combining the parishes of Great Paxton, Little Paxton, Toseland and Yelling with the existing Gransden ward to create a new Gransden ward.

102 The LGCE received six other representations for this area during Stage One. Councillor Mugglestone opposed the District Council's proposal to include Perry parish in a revised Kimbolton ward. Brampton Parish Council wished to retain the existing ward arrangements. Buckden Parish Council stated that they would prefer to remain in the existing Buckden ward. However, the council accepted that this might not be possible and acknowledged that the parish has links with Brampton, Diddington and Southoe & Midloe parishes. Catworth Parish Council wished to remain in the current Kimbolton ward. Southoe & Midloe Parish Council objected to the District Council's proposals and suggested that "an association with Diddington would

appear sensible and with Hail Weston and Great Staughton plausible”. Perry Parish Council objected to any proposal which would separate the parish of Perry from the parish of Great Staughton.

103 The LGCE carefully considered all representations received for these wards. It considered that to link the parishes south along the A1 would give a better sense of community identity than to combine the larger villages of Brampton and Buckden with the significantly smaller ones along the A14 to the west. It acknowledged the representations objecting to the creation of a ward straddling the significant boundaries of the River Great Ouse and the railway line and concurred with this line of argument. The LGCE agreed that the villages on either side of these natural boundaries have little sense of community identity with each other. It therefore did not accept the proposals of any of the three groups who submitted district-wide schemes, all of whom suggested breaching these natural boundaries in some form. The LGCE recommended that Little Paxton parish should form a single-member district ward and therefore included Hail Weston parish in a ward with the villages along the A1. It acknowledged that the situation was not ideal as Hail Weston had a more direct communication link with the proposed ward of Kimbolton & Staughton. However, including Hail Weston parish in Kimbolton & Staughton ward could only be achieved by removing the parish of Perry. It proposed a three-member Brampton & Buckden ward, comprising the parishes of Brampton, Buckden, Diddington, Grafham, Hail Weston and Southoe & Midloe; and a single-member Kimbolton & Staughton ward comprising the parishes of Great Staughton, Kimbolton, Perry and Tilbrook.

104 Under the draft recommendations Brampton & Buckden and Kimbolton & Staughton wards would have councillor:elector ratios 4 per cent and 13 per cent above the district average respectively (equal to the district average and 7 per cent above by 2006) and Little Paxton ward would have a ratio 10 per cent above the district average (2 per cent above by 2006).

105 At Stage Three 21 representations were received concerning these five existing wards. Huntingdonshire District Council put forward new warding arrangements for this area, proposing a revised three-member Brampton ward comprising the parishes of Brampton, Buckden, Diddington, Offord Cluny, Offord Darcy and Southoe & Midloe and a revised single-member Kimbolton ward comprising the parishes of Covington, Great Staughton, Hail Weston, Kimbolton and Tilbrook. It proposed transferring the parishes of Grafham and Perry into a revised Ellington ward. The District Council supported the draft recommendations for Little Paxton ward.

106 The Conservatives stated that “Hail Weston has no community of interest with Brampton/Buckden, it has an interest with Great Staughton or possibly Little Paxton”. They noted that the District Council had included Perry parish in its proposed Kimbolton ward. However, they stated that Perry has “an equal interest with Grafham and Buckden where there is a direct road link”. The Conservatives also noted that The Offords “share a road link and community with Buckden”.

107 Huntingdon Liberal Democrats stated they were “totally opposed” to the LGCE’s proposed Brampton & Buckden ward. They stated that Hail Weston parish has “no commonality of interest” with Brampton and that Hail Weston parish should be included in a revised Kimbolton & Staughton ward, the parishes of which share common interests. They also proposed including Covington parish in Kimbolton & Staughton ward rather than Ellington ward. They further stated that “in the event that Brampton has to be combined with additional parishes, those parishes should be Grafham and Perry”. The Huntingdon Liberal Democrats commented that Brampton had communication links with Grafham and that Grafham and Perry parishes “are

inextricably linked by Grafham Water”. They outlined their opposition to the District Council’s proposal to include The Offords in a district ward with Brampton parish. They concluded that the adoption of their proposals would allow the creation of a single-member Buckden ward comprising the parishes of Buckden, Diddington and Southoe & Midloe.

108 Brampton Parish Council stated its strong opposition to Huntingdonshire District Council’s proposal to include the parish in a ward with The Offords. It also stated that “to link Brampton with a string of villages to the south is unacceptable, Hail Weston has nothing in common with Brampton”. The Parish Council stated that if the existing “Brampton ward has to be increased then [it] suggests that Grafham and Perry both be added to Brampton” and that “they are two villages, linked to Brampton by road, that share many issues, being on opposite sides of the same tourist attraction of Grafham Water”. Brampton Parish Council proposed a consequential change to include Hail Weston parish in a ward with “the old A45 villages, leaving Buckden as a single member ward as now with Diddington and Southoe & Midloe [parishes]”. Buckden Parish Council opposed the District Council’s Stage Three proposal and stated that it wished to see the existing arrangements retained or, if this was not acceptable, “a single-member ward embracing Buckden, Diddington and Southoe & Midloe parishes”. Grafham Parish Council stated it wished to be in a single-member ward and that the parish looks more naturally to Barham & Wooley, Easton, Ellington and Spaldwick parishes. Hail Weston Parish Council “strongly object to the change of ward boundaries, which places [it] with Brampton, Buckden, Diddington, Grafham and Southoe & Midloe” parishes. The Parish Council stated it had no links with Brampton and Buckden but that it did have links with Great Staughton, Kimbolton, Perry and Tilbrook parishes. Great Staughton Parish Council accepted the draft recommendations, and Perry Parish Council supported the recommendations, stating that it “feels very strongly about our links to Great Staughton”. Catworth and Stow Longa parish councils made submissions concerning the LGCE’s proposed Ellington ward, as discussed earlier in the chapter.

109 Councillor Reynolds, member for St Ives North ward, Councillor Rogers, member for Earith ward, and Councillor Simmonds, member for Eaton Ford ward, proposed a two-member Brampton ward comprising Brampton parish and the proposed Hinchingsbrooke parish ward of The Stukeleys parish, to avoid including Brampton parish in a ward with parishes along the A14; a single-member Buckden ward comprising the parishes of Buckden and Diddington; and a two-member Kimbolton & Great Staughton ward comprising the parishes of Bythorn & Keyston, Catworth, Covington, Grafham, Great Staughton, Hail Weston, Kimbolton, Perry, Southoe & Midloe, Stow Longa and Tilbrook.

110 Councillor Downes, member for Brampton ward, stated that “both Brampton and Buckden are clearly defined separate communities” and proposed a two-member Brampton ward and a single-member Buckden ward identical to those put forward by Brampton and Buckden parish councils. Councillor Mugglestone, member for Kimbolton ward, generally supported the draft recommendations for Kimbolton & Staughton ward. However, he commented that “whether Perry or Hail Weston [parishes] should be in the ward is open to some debate”. He also requested that Covington parish should be included in this ward as it “has always had strong community links with Kimbolton”. Councillor Cranston, of Perry Parish Council, supported the draft recommendations which linked Great Staughton and Perry parishes and opposed any proposal to link Perry with Grafham parish. Councillor Hartley, of Brampton Parish Council, stated his opposition to proposals to include Brampton parish with either Hail Weston parish or The Offords for reasons of community identity. He supported the proposal put forward by Brampton Parish Council for a revised Brampton ward.

111 A further three submissions were received from local residents regarding this area. A resident of Brampton supported the proposal for a new Brampton ward put forward by Brampton Parish Council. Another resident of Brampton expressed “concern about [the] proposal to form a three-member ward stretching from Brampton to Hail Weston” and asked that the draft recommendations be reconsidered. A resident of Huntingdon stated that “Brampton and Hail Weston have very little in common”.

112 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period. We have noted that there was no support locally for the proposed three-member Brampton & Buckden ward and that a number of alternative proposals were put forward. We noted that Huntingdonshire District Council restated its Stage One proposal to include The Offords in a ward with parishes to the west of the River Great Ouse. However, we have decided to confirm the draft recommendation to retain the existing ward boundary in this area, as there was local opposition to the proposal to breach this “natural barrier”. We also considered the proposal to include Grafham parish in a revised Ellington ward. However, this was opposed by local respondents and would have resulted in modifications across the district, which would conflict with the representations concerning neighbouring areas received at both Stages One and Three.

113 We have noted that there was a large amount of opposition to including the parishes of Brampton and Hail Weston in the same ward, with the majority of submissions stating that Hail Weston parish should be transferred into a ward with Great Staughton parish. Any such proposal would result in Perry parish not being included in a ward with Great Staughton. Perry parish was included in the proposed Kimbolton & Staughton ward as part of the draft recommendations and this proposal was supported by Perry Parish Council and Councillor Cranston, and accepted by Great Staughton Parish Council. However, when considering our final recommendations in this area we have had to consider the weight of evidence and argumentation as well as the effect that our proposals for a single ward will have on neighbouring wards. We consider that the inclusion of Hail Weston parish, instead of Perry parish, in Kimbolton & Staughton ward will enable us to produce better electoral arrangements for the area as a whole. We have concluded that although Perry parish does not have strong links with Brampton parish, on balance they appear stronger than Hail Weston parish’s links with Brampton. We consider that Grafham Water can provide a focal point between Perry parish and Grafham parish, which has good links with Brampton parish. Consequently, we have decided to adopt as part of our final recommendations Brampton Parish Council’s, Buckden Parish Council’s, Huntingdon Liberal Democrats’ and Councillor Downes’ proposals for a two-member Brampton ward comprising Brampton, Grafham and Perry parishes, and a single-member Buckden ward comprising Buckden, Diddington and Southoe & Midloe parishes. We therefore also propose a modified single-member Kimbolton & Staughton ward comprising Covington, Great Staughton, Hail Weston, Kimbolton and Tilbrook parishes, as put forward by the Huntingdon Liberal Democrats. We note that these final recommendations may be opposed by Grafham, and especially, Perry parish councils. However, we consider that they provide the best electoral arrangement for the area as a whole, based on the evidence received during Stage Three of the review. We have decided to confirm the draft recommendations for Little Paxton ward as part of our final recommendations.

114 Due to the decrease in the electorate projected for the existing Bury, Ramsey and Upwood & The Raveleys wards in 2006, and consequently the district as a whole, the 2006 councillor:elector ratio has changed to 2,326. Consequently the electoral variances, by 2006, for this area have altered slightly from our draft recommendations. Under our final recommendations Brampton, Buckden, Kimbolton & Staughton and Little Paxton wards would have councillor:elector ratios 6 per cent, 9 per cent, 10 per cent and 10 per cent above the district average respectively (1 per cent, 8 per cent, 5 per cent and 4 per cent above by 2006).

Earith, Houghton & Wyton, Needingworth and Somersham wards

115 These wards are situated in the east of the district and are each represented by a single councillor except for Earith ward, which is represented by two councillors. The wards of Houghton & Wyton and Somersham are coterminous with the parishes of the same names; Needingworth ward is coterminous with Holywell-cum-Needingworth parish; and Earith ward comprise the parishes of Bluntisham, Colne and Earith. Under the existing arrangements the number of electors per councillor in both Earith and Houghton & Wyton wards is 24 per cent below the district average at present (27 per cent below and 7 per cent below by 2006). Needingworth and Somersham wards have councillor:elector ratios 11 per cent below and 29 per cent above the district average respectively (14 per cent below and 23 per cent above the district average by 2006).

116 At Stage One the District Council proposed combining the existing wards of Earith and Needingworth to create a new two-member Needingworth & Earith ward. It proposed a new three-member Warboys & Somersham ward, comprising the parishes of Abbots Ripton, Broughton, Kings Ripton, Old Hurst, Pidley-cum-Fenton, Somersham, Warboys, Wistow and Woodhurst. The Council also proposed that Houghton & Wyton parish should be placed in a single-member ward with Hemingford Abbots parish to form a new Houghton & Hemingford Abbots ward. The Huntingdon Liberal Democrats proposed a revised Somersham ward comprising the parishes of Colne, Old Hurst, Pidley-cum-Fenton, Somersham, Woodhurst and a parish ward of Houghton & Wyton. This parish ward would comprise the area including the former air base at Wyton, keeping it separate from the villages of Houghton and Wyton. They also proposed a new two-member Earith ward, comprising the parishes of Bluntisham, Earith and Holywell-cum-Needingworth. The North West Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats put forward identical proposals for new Needingworth and Somersham wards to those put forward by the Huntingdon Liberal Democrats.

117 As well as the district-wide submissions, the LGCE received two other representations relating to this area at Stage One. Councillor Mugglestone proposed combining Houghton & Wyton parish with Abbots Ripton and Kings Ripton parishes in a single-member Houghton & Riptons ward. Earith Parish Council stated its support for the District Council's proposals.

118 The LGCE carefully considered the representations received during Stage One for this area. It proposed adopting the Huntingdon Liberal Democrats' scheme for the revised Somersham ward. It created two new parish wards in Houghton & Wyton parish as put forward by the Huntingdon Liberal Democrats. The proposed boundary follows the B1090 from St Ives to the junction with the A141, then south to meet the district ward boundary with Huntingdon. This boundary clearly separates the more established historical village of Houghton & Wyton, which forms a new two-member The Hemingfords ward with the similar villages of Hemingford Abbots, Hemingford Grey and Hilton, from the former RAF base. This proposal enables the former Wyton air base to be included in the proposed two-member Somersham ward with the parishes of Colne, Old Hurst, Pidley-cum-Fenton, Somersham and Woodhurst. The LGCE accepted the proposals of the Huntingdon Liberal Democrats for Earith ward. The west boundary of this ward is constrained by the town of St Ives, and this dictates the ward pattern in the area. The LGCE recognised that Earith Parish Council supported the District Council's proposals and it accepted that the village of Colne shares a sense of community identity with Earith and Bluntisham; however, it was not possible to place these parishes in the same district ward, for reasons of electoral equality. It therefore recommended a two-member Earith ward, comprising the parishes of Bluntisham, Earith and Holywell-cum-Needingworth.

119 Under the draft recommendations, Earith and Somersham wards would have councillor:elector ratios 4 per cent above and 3 per cent above the district average respectively (1 per cent below and 7 per cent above respectively by 2006).

120 At Stage Three 15 representations were received concerning this area. Huntingdonshire District Council broadly supported the draft recommendations. However, it proposed one modification to the proposed Somersham ward. It proposed transferring the proposed Airfield parish ward of Houghton & Wyton parish into a ward with electors of St Ives town, as outlined later in the chapter. It proposed no further modification to the proposed Somersham ward and supported the draft recommendations for Earith ward in full.

121 The Conservatives commented that “Colne has no community of interest with Somersham but links with Bluntisham and Earith”. They also stated that the proposed Airfield parish ward, of Houghton & Wyton parish, “has no community with Somersham ... if the housing has a community of interest it is with St Ives or The Riptons”. North West Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats agreed with the draft recommendations for Earith ward and stated that the proposal for Somersham ward “would be difficult to improve on”.

122 Colne Parish Council stated that “Colne should be included in the proposed Earith ward, if need be by relocating Holywell-cum-Needingworth”. It outlined a number of community links between its parish and Bluntisham and Earith parishes. Earith Parish Council stated that “Earith, Colne and Bluntisham have become integrated villages with clearly identifiable problems”. It requested “that a way should be found to retain the village of Colne within the Earith ward”. Holywell-cum-Needingworth Parish Council stated its concern “that they will in effect be represented by two district councillors” it suggested that “Earith ward be split into two” single-member wards. Woodhurst Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations, which transferred its parish into Somersham ward.

123 Houghton & Wyton Parish Council stated that it “has deep concerns about the proposals to create an Airfield parish ward within the parish and to merge the two villages with the Hemingfords and Hilton in a two councillor district ward”. It stated that there is no direct road link between Houghton & Wyton and The Hemingfords and that the River Great Ouse forms “a natural barrier”. The Parish Council also stated that the Airfield parish ward should be included in a ward with the villages of Houghton and Wyton as “both the RAF and the Parish Council are striving to create a sense of identity ... within it and the villages”. It also observed that the Airfield parish ward has no community links with Somersham village, with which it would be linked under the draft recommendations. Hemingford Abbots Parish Council outlined its concerns with the draft recommendations, which included Houghton and Wyton villages in The Hemingfords ward. Hemingford Grey Parish Council stated that the villages of Houghton and Wyton “may feel isolated from the rest of the ward”.

124 County Councillor Lucas, for St Ives North & Warboys division, stated that “the villages of Broughton, Oldhurst and Woodhurst all wish, very strongly, to remain with Warboys”. He also stated that the proposed Airfield parish ward of Houghton & Wyton parish would have “a far more relevant link with either St Ives West ward or with Houghton & Wyton parish [ward] in the Hemingfords ward”. Councillor Reynolds, member for St Ives North ward, Councillor Rogers, member for Earith ward, and Councillor Simmonds, member for Eaton Ford ward, proposed a two-member Somersham ward comprising the parishes of Broughton, Colne, Old Hurst, Pidley-cum-Fenton, Somersham and Woodhurst. They proposed transferring the Airfield parish ward of Houghton & Wyton parish into a revised Upwood & The Raveleys ward. The councillors

supported the LGCE's proposed Earith ward. Councillor Downes supported the District Council's proposals for Earith and Somersham wards.

125 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period. We noted that Colne Parish Council, Earith Parish Council and the Conservatives opposed the draft recommendations for Earith ward. However, only one alternative proposal was put forward. Colne Parish Council proposed "relocating Holywell-cum-Needingworth" parish. We have noted that due to the parish's geographical position it is only possible to relocate Holywell-cum-Needingworth parish in a ward with St Ives town. Although we recognise the arguments for retaining the parishes of Bluntisham, Colne and Earith in a ward together we do not feel these are strong enough to warrant transferring Holywell-cum-Needingworth parish into a ward with St Ives town. We considered the proposal from Holywell-cum-Needingworth Parish Council to divide the proposed two-member Earith ward into two single-member wards by warding Earith parish. However, we believe that parish warding should be avoided if there is a viable warding alternative. We have also noted that Huntingdonshire District Council, North West Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats and Councillor Downes supported the draft recommendations for Earith ward, and consequently we propose confirming the draft recommendations for Earith ward as final.

126 We noted that at Stage Three a number of submissions commented that there were no links between the proposed Airfield parish ward of Houghton & Wyton parish and Somersham parish. Consequently, we propose removing the proposed Airfield parish ward. However, in order to maintain an acceptable level of electoral equality we propose transferring Broughton parish, which has strong links with Old Hurst and Woodhurst parishes, into the proposed Somersham ward. We considered Councillor Lucas' comments. However, any proposal to retain the existing Warboys ward would result in modifications across the district which would conflict with representations concerning neighbouring areas received at both Stages One and Three. We therefore propose a single-member Somersham ward comprising the parishes of Broughton, Colne, Old Hurst, Pidley-cum-Fenton, Somersham and Woodhurst as part of our final recommendations. Consequently, we are including the proposed Airfield parish ward in a revised Upwood & The Raveleys ward as proposed by Councillors Reynolds, Rogers and Simmonds. We considered including the Airfield parish ward in St Ives town. However, we did not receive sufficient evidence at Stage Three that such a proposal would be supported locally. We were unable to retain the whole of Houghton & Wyton parish in the proposed The Hemingfords ward as such a proposal would have resulted in an unacceptably high level of electoral inequality. We also noted that the proposed Airfield parish ward has good communication links with the parishes of Abbots Ripton, Kings Ripton, Upwood & The Raveleys and Woodwalton which form the proposed Upwood & The Raveleys ward.

127 Due to the decrease in the electorate projected for the existing Bury, Ramsey and Upwood & The Raveleys wards in 2006, and consequently the district as a whole, the 2006 councillor:elector ratio has changed to 2,326. Consequently the electoral variances, by 2006, for this area have altered slightly from the draft recommendations. Under our final recommendations Earith ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 4 per cent above the district average (equal to the district average by 2006). Somersham ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 2 per cent below the district average (6 per cent below by 2006).

Eaton Ford, Eaton Socon, Eynesbury, Priory Park wards (St Neots), Gransden and The Offords wards

128 The wards of Eaton Ford, Eaton Socon and Priory Park are each represented by two councillors and have councillor:elector ratios 7 per cent below, 26 per cent above and 5 per cent below the district average respectively (10 per cent below, 20 per cent above and 9 per cent below by 2006). Eynesbury ward is represented by three councillors and has a councillor:elector ratio 7 per cent below the district average (10 per cent below by 2006). These four wards together cover the area of St Neots Town Council. The single-member The Offords ward (comprising the parishes of Great Paxton, Offord Darcy, Offord Cluny, Toseland and Yelling) has a councillor:elector ratio 4 per cent below the district average (8 per cent below by 2006), and Gransden ward (comprising the parishes of Abbotsley, Eynesbury Hardwicke, Great Gransden, St Neots Rural, Tetworth and Waresley) is represented by one councillor and has a councillor:elector ratio 3 per cent below the district average (77 per cent above by 2006).

129 At Stage One, Huntingdonshire District Council proposed four two-member and one single-member wards for the town of St Neots. It proposed transferring the existing Town parish ward of Eynesbury Hardwicke parish into a revised Eynesbury district ward. The Council proposed altering the existing boundary between Eaton Ford and Eaton Socon wards to run down Duloe Brook. It proposed creating a new single-member St Neots Town ward, comprising those electors, currently in Eynesbury ward, to the north of Hen Brook and in Priory Park ward to the south of the High Street and Cambridge Street. The Council proposed warding St Neots Rural parish to include electors currently in Gransden ward in a revised Priory Park ward. It stated that the area immediately to the east of Priory Park ward, bounded by the railway line, Cambridge Road and Priory Hill, has been earmarked for significant residential development, and that the electors in this new development should be included in a district ward with electors of St Neots town, with whom they will share common interests and identities. The remainder of Gransden ward, the parishes of Abbotsley, Great Gransden, Tetworth and Waresley, and the remaining parish wards of Eynesbury Hardwicke and St Neots Rural parishes, would be combined with the parishes of Great Paxton, Toseland and Yelling to create a new single-member Gransden ward. Finally, the Council proposed a new two-member Staughton & The Offords ward comprising the parishes of Diddington, Great Staughton, Hail Weston, Offord Cluny, Offord Darcy and Southoe & Midloe.

130 The Huntingdon Liberal Democrats proposed that the town of St Neots be allocated 10 councillors. It supported the District Council's proposals that the Town parish ward of Eynesbury Hardwicke parish be transferred into Eynesbury district ward, which covers part of St Neots town. It also supported the proposal to create a new parish ward in St Neots Rural parish, as outlined earlier. However, the group did not submit any further detailed warding arrangements for the town. They proposed a revised two-member Gransden ward, comprising the existing ward (minus the parish wards detailed above) and the parishes of Great Paxton, Offord Cluny, Offord Darcy, Perry, Southoe & Midloe, Toseland and Yelling. The North West Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats proposed five two-member wards in the town of St Neots. They supported the proposal to transfer parts of Eynesbury Hardwicke and St Neots Rural parishes, currently in Gransden ward, into the town of St Neots for district warding purposes. They also proposed a new two-member Paxton ward, comprising the remainder of the existing Gransden ward and the parishes of Little Paxton, Great Paxton, Toseland and Yelling.

131 Four other representations were received during Stage One. St Neots Town Council stated that its recommendations "are broadly in accord with the proposals formulated by the District Council". The Town Council also suggested that the District Council's proposed new Central

ward should be renamed “St Neots Town ward”. Yelling Parish Council objected to being placed in a ward with any parishes of the existing Gransden ward. Offord Cluny and Offord Darcy parish councils objected to the District Council’s proposal to include their parishes in a district ward with the parishes of Brampton, Buckden, Diddington, Great Staughton and Southoe & Midloe. They stated that The Offords were separated from these parishes by the significant boundaries of the River Great Ouse, the A1 and the railway line.

132 The LGCE carefully considered all the representations received during Stage One concerning this area. It adopted the proposal to include the Town parish ward of Eynesbury Hardwicke parish in a district ward with electors of St Neots town, as this area is clearly identifiable with the town rather than with the largely rural parish of Eynesbury Hardwicke. The ward boundary would run along the railway line to the east of the St Neots Eynesbury ward. In the town of St Neots, it proposed basing its recommendations on the District Council’s submission for the two two-member wards to the west of the Great Ouse. It agreed that Duloe Brook provides a strong boundary between Eaton Ford and Eaton Socon wards. To the east of the River Great Ouse, it made an amendment to the existing ward boundary. The boundary would run down Hen Brook, then north around the cemetery to meet the current ward boundary.

133 The LGCE acknowledged that there is a substantial area in St Neots Rural parish which has been earmarked for significant residential development, to the east of St Neots town. However, when putting forward its draft recommendations it could not recommend creating a parish ward for this area to enable it to be in the same district ward as part of the urban area of St Neots, as there are currently insufficient electors in the area to justify the creation of a parish ward. The LGCE was reluctant to move the whole of St Neots Rural parish into a district ward with part of St Neots town, as it considered such a proposal would not facilitate effective and convenient local government for those electors currently in the St Neots Rural parish. In the Gransden area the LGCE accepted that, for reasons of electoral equality, all parishes from Great Gransden in the south to Offord Cluny in the north must be included in the same ward, as proposed by the Huntingdon Liberal Democrats. However, it did not propose breaching the significant barrier of the River Great Ouse and the railway line. It therefore recommended a new two-member Gransden & The Offords ward, comprising the parishes of Abbotsley, Great Gransden, Great Paxton, Offord Cluny, Offord Darcy, St Neots Rural, Tetworth, Toseland, Waresley and Yelling, and the rural parish ward of Eynesbury Hardwicke.

134 Under the draft recommendations the wards of St Neots Eaton Ford, St Neots Eaton Socon, St Neots Eynesbury and St Neots Priory Park would have councillor:elector ratios 19 per cent above, 4 per cent below, 2 per cent below and 2 per cent below the district average respectively (8 per cent above, 2 per cent above, 1 per cent below and 8 per cent below by 2006 respectively). Gransden & The Offords ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 21 per cent below the district average (1 per cent above by 2006).

135 At Stage Three 10 representations were received concerning this area. Huntingdonshire District Council resubmitted its Stage One proposals for the town of St Neots and Gransden ward, including the proposal to include electors of St Neots Rural parish in a district ward with electors of St Neots town. The District Council proposed including Offord Cluny and Offord Darcy parishes in a ward with parishes to the west of the River Great Ouse; however, it put forward a new grouping of parishes, as outlined earlier in the chapter.

136 The Conservatives stated that “The Offords have no interest with the Gransdens”. However, they commented that The Offords have links with Buckden or Godmanchester parishes.

137 St Neots Town Council supported Huntingdonshire District Council's proposals to create a new St Neots Town ward and to include part of St Neots Rural parish in Priory Park ward. It also made a comment on the draft recommendations, stating that if the District Council's proposals "are to be rejected, it would be better for the amended boundary of the Priory Park ward to follow Henbrook and Foxbrook".

138 Great Gransden Parish Council stated that "it seems sensible to include the Offords" in a new two-member Gransden & The Offords ward. Offord Cluny Parish Council stated that it was "pleased to see that [it] has now been grouped together with villages to the east of the River Great Ouse and the East Coast main line". It stated that the existing arrangements should be retained, or "if this is not possible then the proposed new two-member ward should be divided into two". Offord Darcy Parish Council made similar comments, stating that we should "retain the status quo, or at worst include the Eynesbury Hardwicke and/or St Neots Rural [parishes]" in the existing The Offords ward.

139 Councillor Downes, member for Brampton ward, noted that all of the proposed wards for St Neots are above the district average and that "this seems patently unfair". Councillor Downes stated that the town of St Neots and the LGCE's proposed Gransden & The Offords ward should be allocated a total of 11 councillors. Councillor Simmonds, member for Eaton Ford ward, stated that the part of St Neots Rural parish which the District Council had proposed transferring into Priory Park ward should be included with electors of the town. Councillor Reynolds, member for St Ives North ward, and Councillor Rogers, member for Earith ward, supported the LGCE's proposed Gransden & The Offords, St Neots Eaton Ford, St Neots Eaton Socon, St Neots Eynesbury and St Neots Priory Park wards.

140 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period. We noted that Huntingdonshire District Council, St Neots Town Council and Councillor Simmonds resubmitted the proposal to include the proposed housing development in St Neots Rural parish in a ward with electors of St Neots town. As outlined in the draft recommendations report, in order to create a parish ward there must be sufficient electors currently registered in the proposed ward. The proposed warding of St Neots Rural parish to include an area in a St Neots town district ward would involve the creation of a parish ward with no electors currently registered. We, like the LGCE before us, do not consider that the creation of an electoral ward with no electors registered to vote would provide for effective and convenient local government. Comparisons have been made between our proposals for Eynesbury Hardwicke parish and St Neots Rural parish. However, in Eynesbury Hardwicke parish we are not creating parish wards; they already exist, and there are electors currently registered in both parish wards. We are therefore left with two alternatives, to transfer the whole of St Neots Rural parish into a district ward with St Neots town, or to retain the existing ward boundary between the town and St Neots Rural parish. To include the whole of St Neots Rural parish in a ward with St Neots town we would hope to have the support of St Neots Rural Parish Council, as such a proposal would result in electors with rural interests being included in a predominantly urban ward. The possibility of transferring the whole of St Neots Rural parish into the town was outlined in the draft recommendations report. However, at Stage Three no comments were received on this proposal. Therefore, we have concluded that the whole of St Neots Rural parish should be retained in the proposed Gransden & The Offords ward, as proposed in the draft recommendations.

141 We have noted that Offord Cluny and Offord Darcy parish councils preferred the draft recommendations to any proposal linking their parishes with parishes to the west of the River Great Ouse and the East Coast main line. We have considered the proposals from these two

parish councils to divide the proposed two-member Gransden & The Offords ward into two single-member wards. However, such a proposal would require St Neots Rural parish to be warded with the creation of a parish ward with no electors currently registered, which we are therefore not proposing to adopt, as outlined earlier. We noted the support of Great Gransden Parish Council and, consequently, we have decided to confirm the draft recommendation for a two-member Gransden & The Offords ward as part of our final recommendations.

142 We noted that at Stage Three there were again issues raised over the correct allocation of councillors to St Neots town. However, as stated in the draft recommendations, under a council size of 52, St Neots town, is entitled to nine district councillors by 2006. The electorate of the proposed St Neots Eaton Ford, St Neots Eaton Socon, St Neots Eynesbury and St Neots Priory Park wards by 2006 would be 21,240 (based on figures provided by Huntingdonshire District Council). This electorate divided by the councillor: elector ratio of 1:2,326 results in a councillor entitlement of 9.13, which has to be rounded to the nearest whole figure which is nine. Therefore the electorate of the town of St Neots is entitled to nine district councillors, as proposed in the draft recommendations.

143 In St Neots town we noted that St Neots Town Council put forward an amendment to the draft recommendations' boundary between the proposed St Neots Eynesbury and St Neots Priory Park wards. It proposed modifying the boundary to "follow Hen Brook and Fox Brook". We have decided to adopt this boundary modification as part of our final recommendations as it provides a stronger boundary while improving the levels of electoral equality in both wards. We have decided to confirm the remainder of the draft recommendations for St Neots town as final.

144 Due to the decrease in the electorate projected for the existing Bury, Ramsey and Upwood & The Raveleys wards in 2006, and consequently the district as a whole, the 2006 councillor:elector ratio has changed to 2,326. Consequently the electoral variances, by 2006, for this area have altered slightly from our draft recommendations. Under our final recommendations St Neots Eaton Socon and St Neots Priory Park ward would both have councillor:elector ratios equal to the district average (3 per cent above and 4 per cent below by 2006). St Neots Eynesbury ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 3 per cent below the district average (1 per cent below by 2006). St Neots Eaton Ford ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 14 per cent above the district average (9 per cent by 2006). Gransden & The Offords ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 21 per cent below the district average (2 per cent above by 2006).

Fenstanton, Godmanchester, Hemingford Abbots & Hilton, Hemingford Grey, St Ives South and St Ives North wards

145 The wards of Fenstanton, Hemingford Abbots & Hilton and Hemingford Grey are situated in the east of the district and are currently each represented by one councillor. These three wards are each coterminous with the parishes of the same names. Their councillor:elector ratios are 2 per cent above, 41 per cent below and 5 per cent below the district average (7 per cent above, 43 per cent below and 11 per cent below by 2006). Godmanchester ward is also coterminous with the parish of the same name, returns two district councillors and has a councillor:elector ratio 3 per cent above the district average (5 per cent above by 2006). The district wards of St Ives North and St Ives South together cover the area of St Ives Town Council, each is represented by two councillors and they have councillor:elector ratios 57 per cent above and 22 per cent above the district average respectively (49 per cent above and 21 per cent above the district average by 2006 respectively).

146 At Stage One the District Council proposed retaining both the existing Fenstanton and Godmanchester wards as single- and two-member district wards respectively. The Council proposed creating a parish ward in Hemingford Grey parish consisting of the development south of the boundary between St Ives South and Hemingford Grey parish, which would enable this area to be included in a proposed St Ives South district ward. The remaining parish ward of Hemingford Grey parish would be combined with Hilton parish to create a new Hemingford Grey & Hilton ward, returning one councillor. The Council also proposed a new single-member Houghton & Hemingford Abbots district ward, comprising the parishes of Houghton & Wyton and Hemingford Abbots. In the town of St Ives, the council proposed two two-member wards and a single-member ward.

147 The Huntingdon Liberal Democrats also proposed retaining the existing Godmanchester ward. They proposed transferring electors from Fenstanton ward into St Ives South ward by creating a parish ward for the area immediately south of St Ives. The remainder of Fenstanton parish would form a single-member Fenstanton ward. They proposed six new single-member district wards in the town of St Ives, namely Central, East, North East, North West, South East and South West. The North West Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats proposed retaining the existing Godmanchester ward. They proposed identical proposals to the Huntingdon Liberal Democrats for Fenstanton ward. The group proposed combining the parishes of Hemingford Abbots, Hemingford Grey and Hilton and a parish ward of Houghton & Wyton in a new two-member Hemingfords ward. In the town of St Ives, the group suggested three wards: North, South and West, each returning two members. They also proposed including the area around the former air force base in Houghton & Wyton parish in the West ward of St Ives.

148 Two additional representations were received during Stage One. The Huntingdonshire District Labour Party opposed the District Council's plan to move the electors from the parish of Hemingford Grey into St Ives for district warding purposes, and suggested transferring them into the parish of Fenstanton. Hemingford Grey Parish Council stated that it is "desirable to retain one councillor per ward and to have villages grouped together which are similar in character and adjacent to each other".

149 The LGCE carefully considered all the representations received during Stage One. It adopted the proposal from the District Council and the two Liberal Democrat groups to retain the existing two-member Godmanchester ward. It stated that it would have liked to recommend creating parish wards in both Fenstanton and Hemingford Grey parishes to incorporate all of this area in St Ives for district warding purposes; however, this would have resulted in unacceptable levels of electoral inequality. It adopted the District Council's proposal to create a parish ward in Hemingford Grey parish to transfer those electors into a district ward with electors from St Ives town. It recommended retaining Fenstanton ward in its current form. It proposed adopting the proposals of the Huntingdon Liberal Democrats for a two-member The Hemingfords ward, comprising a parish ward of Houghton & Wyton and the parishes of Hemingford Abbots, Hemingford Grey and Hilton. In St Ives town, the LGCE based its draft recommendations on those proposed by the District Council. However, it proposed modifications to the ward boundaries to improve electoral equality. It therefore recommended that St Ives have three wards, two-member St Ives East and St Ives South wards and a single-member St Ives West ward.

150 Under the draft recommendations, Fenstanton ward and Godmanchester ward would return one and two councillors respectively and have councillor:elector ratios 1 per cent above the district average (4 per cent above and 2 per cent above by 2006 respectively). The proposed two-member The Hemingfords ward, comprising a parish ward of Houghton & Wyton parish and the

parishes of Hemingford Abbots, Hemingford Grey and Hilton, would have a councillor:elector ratio 1 per cent below the district average (6 per cent below the district average by 2006). In the town of St Ives, St Ives East, St Ives South and St Ives West would return two, two and one councillor respectively and would have councillor:elector ratios 7 per cent, 16 per cent and 8 per cent above the district average respectively (6 per cent, 6 per cent and 5 per cent above by 2006 respectively).

151 At Stage Three eight representations were received concerning this area. Huntingdonshire District Council proposed retaining the existing ward boundary between Hemingford Grey parish and St Ives town, and consequently it did not support the proposed Armes Corner parish ward of Hemingford Grey parish being included in a district ward with electors of St Ives town. The District Council proposed no further modifications to the proposed The Hemingfords ward and supported the draft recommendations for Fenstanton and Godmanchester wards in full. However, it proposed a modification to the draft recommendations for St Ives town which transferred the proposed Airfield parish ward of Houghton & Wyton parish into a revised two-member St Ives ward, and put forward a number of minor modifications to the draft recommendations for St Ives East and St Ives South wards in order to improve electoral equality.

152 Hemingford Abbots Parish Council stated its opposition to the proposal for a two-member ward, commenting that there are no direct road links between Houghton & Wyton and The Hemingfords, and that they are situated either side of the River Great Ouse, which acts as “a barrier”. The Parish Council stated that its parish should be included in a single-member ward with either Hilton or Hemingford Grey parish. Hemingford Grey Parish Council stated its opposition to the LGCE’s proposal to create an Armes Corner parish ward of its parish and to transfer the electors into St Ives South district ward. It stated that it does “not believe that the residents of Armes Corner parish ward look to St Ives for their services any more or less than other residents in the village; we share the same problems”. The Parish Council also stated that the villages of Houghton & Wyton “may feel isolated from the rest of the ward”. Houghton & Wyton Parish Council stated that there are no direct road links between its parish and The Hemingfords, from which it is separated by the River Great Ouse. St Ives Town Council stated that those electors to the north of Fenstanton parish should form a district ward with electors of St Ives, commenting that “their issues relate specifically to St Ives [and] they do not have an affinity with Fenstanton”. It proposed transferring these electors into St Ives South ward and that consequently the town should return six councillors, an increase of one from the draft recommendations.

153 Councillor Reynolds, member for St Ives North ward, opposed the District Council’s proposal to include the proposed Airfield parish ward of Houghton & Wyton parish in a ward with electors of St Ives town. Councillor Reynolds also proposed including those electors to the north of Fenstanton and Hemingford Grey parishes in a ward with electors of St Ives town. Councillor Rogers, member for Earith ward, and Councillor Simmonds, member for Eaton Ford ward, proposed a two-member St Ives ward without part of Hemingford Grey parish. They proposed that the whole of Hemingford Grey parish should form a two-member ward with Hemingford Abbots and Hilton parishes as well as the proposed Houghton & Wyton parish ward. Both councillors supported the draft recommendations for Fenstanton ward. Councillors Reynolds, Rogers and Simmonds supported the LGCE’s proposals for St Ives East and St Ives West wards. Councillor Downes, member for Brampton ward, supported the District Council’s proposals for St Ives town, Fenstanton, Godmanchester and The Hemingfords wards.

154 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period. We noted that Hemingford Grey Parish Council was opposed to the proposal to create an Armes

Corner parish ward in its parish and to include this area in a ward with electors of St Ives town. We also noted that at Stage Three the District Council proposed retaining the existing boundary between Hemingford Grey parish and St Ives town. We consider that any proposal to ward a parish, which is based on community identity arguments and not electoral equality should be supported by all the parish councils concerned. We have noted the proposal of St Ives Town Council to ward both this area and a part of Fenstanton parish. However, Hemingford Grey Parish Council does not support the proposal. We therefore do not propose adopting the draft recommendation to ward Hemingford Grey parish. We would recommend that Huntingdonshire District Council conduct a review of the parish boundaries in this area, under the Local Government & Rating Act 1997, to address the issue of including electors of Fenstanton and Hemingford Grey parishes in St Ives town. We have noted that Hemingford Abbots, Hemingford Grey and Houghton & Wyton parish councils commented that their parishes are divided by the River Great Ouse and would have no direct road links. We note these comments. However, due to the position of these parishes with Huntingdon town to the west, St Ives town to the east and the district boundary to the south we have been unable to devise an alternative warding arrangement that provides good electoral equality and does not include parishes in district wards with parts of the neighbouring towns. Consequently we propose a revised two-member The Hemingfords ward comprising the parishes of Hemingford Abbots, Hemingford Grey and Hilton and the proposed Houghton & Wyton parish ward of Houghton & Wyton parish. We propose confirming the draft recommendations for Fenstanton and Godmanchester wards as part of our final recommendations.

155 We considered the proposal put forward by Huntingdonshire District Council to transfer the Airfield parish ward of Houghton & Wyton parish into a revised St Ives West ward. However, we noted that this proposal was not supported by Houghton & Wyton Parish Council or St Ives Town Council. We are therefore unaware of the level of local support such a proposal would command and do not propose adopting it as part of our final recommendations. As stated earlier, we do not propose adopting the draft recommendation to include the proposed Armes Corner parish ward of Hemingford Grey parish in St Ives South ward. The retention of the existing boundary in this area will provide improved levels of electoral equality in both St Ives South and The Hemingfords wards. We propose adopting the remainder of the draft recommendations for St Ives town as part of our final recommendations as we consider they provide the best reflection of the statutory criteria.

156 Due to the decrease in the electorate projected for the existing Bury, Ramsey and Upwood & The Raveleys wards in 2006, and consequently the district as a whole, the 2006 councillor:elector ratio has changed to 2,326. Consequently the electoral variances, by 2006, for this area have altered slightly from our draft recommendations. Under our final recommendations St Ives East, St Ives South and St Ives West wards would have councillor:elector ratios 7 per cent, 12 per cent and 8 per cent above the district average respectively (8 per cent, 4 per cent and 6 per cent by 2006). Fenstanton, Godmanchester and The Hemingfords wards would have councillor:elector ratios 1 per cent, 1 per cent and 3 per cent above the district average respectively (5 per cent above, 3 per cent above and 1 per cent below by 2006).

Huntingdon North and Huntingdon West wards

157 The parish of Huntingdon is situated in the centre of the district and currently comprises two wards. Huntingdon North and Huntingdon West wards are each represented by three members. Under the existing arrangements, the number of electors per councillor is 8 per cent

above and 7 per cent above the district average respectively (9 per cent above and 6 per cent above by 2006).

158 At Stage One the District Council proposed two three-member wards for the town of Huntingdon. The Council also proposed creating a parish ward for the Hinchingsbrooke area of The Stukeleys parish, in order to ensure the electors within this area are represented with electors of Huntingdon town for district ward purposes. The Huntingdon Liberal Democrats proposed the same parish warding arrangements in the Hinchingsbrooke area of The Stukeleys parish as the District Council. However, they opposed the District Council's proposals for the town of Huntingdon and proposed a two-member ward and five single-member wards. Their proposed wards would be named Central, East, Hartford, North, Stukeley Meadows and South West. The North West Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats agreed with the District Council's proposals for the Hinchingsbrooke area of The Stukeleys parish. They proposed three two-member wards and a single-member ward in the town of Huntingdon, to be named Hartford, Market, Meadows and Sapley wards.

159 The LGCE received 11 other representations regarding this area during Stage One. Huntingdon Town Council proposed two district wards, following the same boundaries as those put forward by Huntingdonshire District Council. The Huntingdonshire District Labour Party put forward its own proposals for three wards covering Huntingdon town. They agreed that the Hinchingsbrooke area of The Stukeleys parish should fall within Huntingdon town for district warding purposes. The Huntingdon Constituency Labour Party was in agreement with the Huntingdonshire District Labour Party. Huntingdon Constituency Conservative Association stated that Huntingdon's ward names should be "readily identifiable within their communities".

160 Councillor Lomax found the size of the West ward in the District Council's submission "alarming" and asked that "careful consideration be given to the size of this ward". Five other representations were received from residents echoing Councillor Lomax's concerns over the size of the District Council's proposed West ward. The chairman of the Oxmoor Community Action Group stated his concern over the possibility that Oxmoor will "become fragmented by any changes". During Stage One the LGCE also received a petition signed by 66 residents of the Oxmoor area, objecting to the District Council's proposals.

161 The LGCE carefully considered all the representations regarding Huntingdon received during Stage One. It noted the opposition from residents and councillors in the area to the Town and District Councils' proposals for two large three-member wards. In particular, it recognised the representations from residents in the Oxmoor area who opposed the District Council's proposal to split the Oxmoor area between two wards. It believed this area has a strong sense of community identity and, therefore, did not adopt the District Council's proposals. The LGCE adopted the proposal to create a parish ward for the Hinchingsbrooke area of The Stukeleys parish, which would enable this area to be included in a district ward with Huntingdon town. It believed the wards proposed by the two Labour groups and the North West Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrats would best represent the differing communities within the town of Huntingdon, and it based its recommendations on those proposals. It recommended a two-member Huntingdon North ward, comprising the distinct communities of Oxmoor and Sapley, a three-member Huntingdon East ward, comprising the Hartford and Newtown areas in the east of the town, and a two-member Huntingdon West ward, comprising the commercial centre and the newer residential and proposed residential areas of Stukeley Meadows and Hinchingsbrooke.

162 Under the draft recommendations, Huntingdon East, Huntingdon North and Huntingdon West wards would have councillor:elector ratios 2 per cent, 6 per cent and 8 per cent below the

district average respectively (7 per cent, 6 per cent and 5 per cent below the district average by 2006 respectively).

163 At Stage Three 23 representations were received concerning Huntingdon town. Huntingdonshire District Council put forward a number of significant boundary modifications to the draft recommendations. However, it generally supported the warding arrangement of a three-member Huntingdon East ward and two two-member Huntingdon North and Huntingdon West wards.

164 The Conservatives stated that “there is no justification for the additional councillor in Huntingdon”. They also objected to the LGCE’s proposed Huntingdon North ward which included the whole of the Oxmoor area which, they commented, “is now mixed and does not have single identity and should be mixed with other areas”.

165 Huntingdon Constituency Labour Party supported the draft recommendations for Huntingdon town, stating that they “reflect the identities and interests of local communities”. It proposed one minor modification between Huntingdon East and Huntingdon North wards.

166 Huntingdon Town Council proposed that Huntingdon town should be represented by two three-member wards and stated that its original proposals should be reconsidered.

167 Councillor Downes, member for Brampton ward, put forward proposals to divide the proposed Huntingdon West ward into two single-member Stukeleys Meadow and Huntingdon West wards. He stated that this would “give greater identification between the electorate and the councillor”. Councillor Reynolds, member for St Ives North ward, Councillor Rogers, member for Earith ward, and Councillor Simmonds, member for Eaton Ford ward, proposed transferring the proposed Hinchingsbrooke parish ward of The Stukeleys parish into a two-member Brampton ward. They consequently proposed two three-member Huntingdon East and Huntingdon North West wards covering the town of Huntingdon in its entirety.

168 Councillor Lomax of Huntingdon Town Council supported the draft recommendations for Huntingdon town. Councillor Sanderson, member for Huntingdon West ward, opposed the proposal to include the whole Oxmoor area in the proposed Huntingdon North ward, stating that “this will create divisions in our town”. He put forward modifications to the proposed boundary between Huntingdon East and Huntingdon West wards. Councillor Sanderson also opposed the proposal to include the Hinchingsbrooke area in a district ward with electors of Huntingdon town, stating that “this area would be better served where it is” as part of The Stukeleys.

169 Representations were also received from 12 residents of Huntingdon, all of whom supported the draft recommendations for Huntingdon town. Four of these representations specifically supported the proposal to include the whole of the Oxmoor area in the proposed Huntingdon North ward. The LGCE also received a petition, signed by 71 residents of Oxmoor, supporting the draft recommendations for Huntingdon North ward.

170 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period. We considered the proposal to include Hinchingsbrooke parish ward of The Stukeleys parish in a ward with Brampton parish. However, this parish ward was created in recognition of The Stukeleys Parish Council and Huntingdon Town Council’s contention that the electors in this area considered themselves to be part of Huntingdon town. We therefore conclude that any proposal to remove Hinchingsbrooke parish ward from a ward with electors of Huntingdon town would not reflect community identities and interests in the area. We noted that the Conservatives

argued that Huntingdon town should not be allocated seven councillors and that Huntingdon Town Council proposed the retention of two three-member wards. However, as stated in the draft recommendations, under a council size of 52, Huntingdon town, with the inclusion of the Hinchingsbrooke parish ward of The Stukeleys parish, is entitled to seven district councillors by 2006. The electorate of the proposed Huntingdon East, Huntingdon North and Huntingdon West wards by 2006 would be 15,450 (based on figures provided by Huntingdonshire District Council). This electorate divided by the councillor: elector ratio of 1:2,326 results in a councillor entitlement of 6.6, which has to be rounded to the nearest whole figure, which is seven. We noted that Huntingdonshire District Council, the Conservatives and Councillor Sanderson opposed our proposal to include the whole of the Oxmoor estate in a two-member Huntingdon North ward. However, we also noted that the draft recommendations received support from the Huntingdon Constituency Labour Party, Councillor Lomax and a large number of local residents for the proposals for Huntingdon as a whole and for Huntingdon North ward in particular. In light of this local support we propose confirming, without modification, the draft recommendations for Huntingdon town as final.

171 Due to the decrease in the electorate projected for the existing Bury, Ramsey and Upwood & The Raveleys wards in 2006, and consequently the district as a whole, the 2006 councillor:elector ratio has changed to 2,326. Consequently the electoral variances, by 2006, for this area have altered slightly from our draft recommendations. Under our final recommendations Huntingdon East, Huntingdon North and Huntingdon West wards would have councillor:elector ratios 3 per cent, 6 per cent and 7 per cent below the district average respectively (6 per cent, 4 per cent and 4 per cent by 2006).

Electoral Cycle

172 By virtue of the amendments made to the Local Government Act 1992 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001, we have no powers to make recommendations concerning the electoral cycle.

Conclusions

173 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to the LGCE's consultation report, we have decided to endorse its proposals in a number of areas while moving away from the draft recommendations in some areas, as outlined below:

- we have decided to confirm the LGCE's draft recommendations for Earith, Gransden & The Offords, Huntingdon East, Huntingdon North, Huntingdon West, Little Paxton, St Ives East, St Ives West, St Neots Eaton Ford, St Neots Eaton Socon and Yaxley & Farcet wards;
- we propose new Alconbury & The Stukeleys, Ellington, Kimbolton & Staughton, St Ives South, St Neots Eynesbury, St Neots Priory Park, Sawtry, Somersham, The Hemingfords and Upwood & The Raveleys wards, based on representations from parish councils, local councillors and local residents;
- we have decided to adopt the Huntingdon Liberal Democrats' proposed Brampton and Buckden wards;

- we have decided to confirm the draft recommendations' boundaries for Bury & Warboys and Elton wards, but rename them Warboys & Bury and Elton & Folksworth respectively;
- we propose retaining the existing electoral arrangements for Fenstanton, Godmanchester and Ramsey wards.

174 We conclude that, in Huntingdonshire:

- there should be a reduction in council size from 53 to 52;
- there should be 29 wards, five fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 31 of the existing wards should be modified.

175 Table 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2001 and 2006 electorate figures.

Table 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	53	52	53	52
Number of wards	34	29	34	29
Average number of electors per councillor	2,192	2,234	2,282	2,326
Number of wards with a variance of more than 10 per cent from the average	20	6	22	1
Number of wards with a variance of more than 20 per cent from the average	15	1	15	0

176 As Table 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 20 to six, with only one ward varying by more than 20 per cent from the district average. This level of electoral equality would improve further in 2006, with only one ward, Ramsey ward, varying by more than 10 per cent from the average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Huntingdonshire District Council should comprise 52 councillors serving 29 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in the Appendix, including the large map inside the back cover.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

177 When reviewing parish electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule states that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards, it should also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. In the LGCE’s draft recommendations report it proposed consequential changes to the warding arrangements for the parishes of Eynesbury Hardwicke, Hemingford Grey, Houghton & Wyton, Huntingdon, St Ives, St Neots and The Stukeleys to reflect the proposed district wards.

178 The parish of Eynesbury Hardwicke is currently served by nine councillors and is divided into two parish wards, those of Spinney and Town, although we aware that there is not wide-spread local recognition of this warding arrangement. The LGCE proposed retaining the existing arrangements for the parish of Eynesbury Hardwicke to facilitate its draft recommendations at district level.

179 In response to the LGCE’s consultation report, there were no submissions received opposing this proposal. Having considered all the evidence received at Stages One and Three, and in light of the confirmation of the proposed district wards in the area, we confirm the draft recommendation for warding Eynesbury Hardwicke parish as final.

Final Recommendation
Eynesbury Hardwicke Parish Council should comprise nine councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Spinney parish ward (returning three councillors) and Town parish ward (returning six). The parish ward boundary should reflect the proposed district ward boundary in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A4 in the Appendix.

180 The parish of Hemingford Grey is currently served by 13 councillors and is not warded. The LGCE proposed two new parish wards, Armes Corner and Hemingford Grey, to reflect the proposed district ward boundaries put forward in the draft recommendations. It proposed that Armes Corner parish ward be represented by a single councillor and Hemingford Grey parish ward be represented by 12 councillors.

181 In response to the LGCE’s consultation report, Hemingford Grey Parish Council opposed this proposal and Huntingdonshire District Council put forward a proposal which retained the existing ward boundary between Hemingford Grey parish and St Ives town, as outlined earlier in the chapter. Having considered all the evidence received at Stages One and Three, and in light of the modifications to the draft recommendations for the district wards in the area, we propose retaining the existing electoral arrangements for Hemingford Grey Parish Council.

Final Recommendation
Hemingford Grey Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, as at present, and should not be warded.

182 The parish of Houghton & Wyton is currently served by 13 councillors and is not warded. The LGCE proposed creating two new parish wards, Airfield and Houghton & Wyton, to reflect

district ward boundaries. It proposed that Airfield parish ward be represented by four councillors and Houghton & Wyton parish ward be represented by nine councillors.

183 In response to the LGCE's consultation report, there were a number of submissions received opposing this proposal, as outlined earlier in the report. However, having considered all the evidence received at Stages One and Three, and in light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm the draft recommendation for warding Houghton & Wyton parish as final.

Final Recommendation

Houghton & Wyton Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Airfield parish ward (returning four councillors) and Houghton & Wyton parish ward (returning nine councillors). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

184 The parish of Huntingdon is currently served by 16 councillors representing three parish wards: North (returning eight councillors), West No. 1 (returning five councillors) and West No. 2 (returning three councillors). The LGCE proposed modifying the boundaries between the three parish wards to reflect the draft recommendations at district ward level. It proposed that these revised wards be named Huntingdon East parish ward, Huntingdon North parish ward and Huntingdon West parish ward and should return eight, four and four councillors respectively.

185 In response to the LGCE's consultation report, there were a number of submissions received commenting on the proposed warding arrangements for Huntingdon town, as outlined earlier in the chapter. Having considered all the evidence received at Stages One and Three, and in light of the confirmation of the proposed district wards in the area, we confirm the draft recommendation for warding Huntingdon parish as final.

Final Recommendation

Huntingdon Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Huntingdon East (returning eight councillors), Huntingdon North (returning four councillors) and Huntingdon West (returning four councillors). The boundaries between the three parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

186 The parish of St Ives is currently served by 16 councillors and is divided into two parish wards, North and South, each of which returns eight parish councillors. The LGCE proposed creating a third parish ward and modifying the boundaries between the two existing parish wards, in order to reflect the draft recommendations at district ward level. It proposed new St Ives East, St Ives South and St Ives West parish wards returning six, six and four councillors respectively.

187 In response to the LGCE's consultation report there were a number of submissions received commenting on the proposals for St Ives town. Having considered all the evidence received at Stages One and Three, and in light of the confirmation of the proposed district wards in the area, we confirm the draft recommendation for warding St Ives town as final.

Final Recommendation

St Ives Town Council should comprise 16 parish councillors, representing three wards: St Ives East (returning six councillors), St Ives North (returning six councillors) and St Ives West (returning four councillors). The boundaries between the three parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

188 The parish of St Neots is currently served by 18 councillors and is divided into four parish wards, Eaton Ford, Eaton Socon, Eynesbury and Priory Park (returning three, five, six and four councillors respectively). The LGCE proposed modifying the boundaries between the existing parish wards, in order to reflect the draft recommendations at district ward level. It proposed new St Neots Eaton Ford, St Neots Eaton Socon, St Neots Eynesbury and St Neots Priory Park parish wards returning four, four, six and four councillors respectively.

189 In response to the LGCE's consultation report, St Neots Town Council proposed a minor modification to the ward boundary between St Neots Eynesbury and St Neots Priory Park wards. We propose adopting this modification as part of our final recommendations. Having considered all the evidence received at Stages One and Three, and in light of the confirmation of the proposed district wards in the remainder of St Neots town, we confirm the draft recommendation, with the modification between St Neots Eynesbury and St Neots Priory Park wards, for warding St Neots parish as final.

Final Recommendation

St Neots Parish Council should comprise 18 parish councillors, representing four wards: St Neots Eaton Ford (returning four councillors), St Neots Eaton Socon (returning four councillors), St Neots Eynesbury (returning six councillors) and St Neots Priory Park (returning four councillors). The boundaries between the four parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Maps A2, A3 and A4 in the Appendix.

190 The parish of The Stukeleys is currently served by 13 councillors and is currently not warded. The LGCE proposed creating two new parish wards, Great Stukeley and Hinchibrooke, to reflect the draft recommendations at district ward level. Following correspondence with The Stukeleys Parish Council during Stage Two, and with the understanding that Huntingdonshire District Council will be reviewing the parish boundary between Huntingdon and The Stukeleys parishes following the completion of this periodic electoral review, the LGCE proposed an increase in the number of councillors serving on The Stukeleys Parish Council from 13 to 16. The LGCE proposed a new Great Stukeleys parish ward (returning 13 councillors) and a new Hinchibrooke parish ward (returning three councillors).

191 In response to the LGCE's consultation report, the majority of representations received supported these proposals, although there was some opposition, as outlined earlier in the chapter. The Stukeleys Parish Council supported the proposal, though it requested that the proposed Great Stukeley parish ward be renamed The Stukeleys parish ward to reflect the two villages of Great Stukeley and Little Stukeley. We propose adopting this modification as part of our final recommendations. Having considered all the evidence received at Stages One and Three, and in

light of the confirmation of the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, we confirm the draft recommendation for warding The Stukeleys parish as final.

Final Recommendation

The Stukeleys Parish Council should comprise 16 parish councillors, representing two wards: The Stukeleys parish ward (returning 13 councillors) and Hinchingsbrooke parish ward (returning three councillors). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Map 2: Final Recommendations for Huntingdonshire

6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

192 Having completed the review of electoral arrangements in Huntingdonshire and submitted our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3692).

193 It is now up to the Electoral Commission to decide whether to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 4 June 2002.

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

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

APPENDIX

Final Recommendations for Huntingdonshire: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for the Huntingdonshire area.

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the district and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail on Maps A2, A3 and A4 and the large map at the back of this report.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed boundary between St Neots Eaton Ford and St Neots Eaton Socon wards.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed boundary between St Neots Eynesbury and St Neots Priory Park wards.

Map A4 illustrates the proposed boundary between St Neots Eynesbury and Gransden & The Offords wards, and the existing parish warding arrangements for the parish of Eynesbury Hardwicke.

The **large map** inserted at the back of this report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for the towns of Huntingdon and St Ives, and the parish warding arrangements for the parish of Houghton & Wyton.

Map A1: Final Recommendations for Huntingdonshire: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed boundary between St Neots Eaton Ford and St Neots Eaton Socon wards

Map A3: Proposed boundary between St Neots Eynesbury and St Neots Priory Park wards

Map A4: Proposed boundary between St Neots Eynesbury and Gransden & The Offords wards