

Draft recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements for  
Hastings in East Sussex

*February 2001*

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

The Local Government Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament. Our task is to review and make recommendations to the Government on whether there should be changes to local authorities' electoral arrangements.

Members of the Commission are:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)  
Professor Michael Clarke CBE (Deputy Chairman)  
Peter Brokenshire  
Kru Desai  
Pamela Gordon  
Robin Gray  
Robert Hughes CBE

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

We are statutorily required to review periodically the electoral arrangements – such as the number of councillors representing electors in each area and the number and boundaries of wards and electoral divisions – of every principal local authority in England. In broad terms our objective 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, and the number of councillors and ward names.

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## SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Hastings on 25 July 2000.

- **This report summarises the representations we received during the first stage of the review, and makes draft recommendations for change.**

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

- **in nine of the 16 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and three wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2005 this unequal representation is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in eight wards and by more than 20 per cent in four wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 63-64) are that:

- **Hastings Borough Council should have 32 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 16 wards, as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In 30 of the proposed 32 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to continue with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2005.**

This report sets out our draft recommendations on which comments are invited.

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for nine weeks from 20 February 2001. Because we take this consultation very seriously, we may move away from our draft recommendations in the light of Stage Three responses. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations and then make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.**
- **It will then be for the Secretary of State to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. He will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 23 April 2001:

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

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
1	Ashdown	2	Ashdown ward (part); Hollington ward (part)	Large map
2	Baird	2	Broomgrove ward (part); Elphinstone ward (part); Ore ward (part)	Large map
3	Braybrooke	2	Braybrooke ward (part); Elphinstone ward (part); Gensing ward (part); Mount Pleasant ward (part); Silverhill ward (part)	Large map
4	Castle	2	Braybrooke ward (part); Castle ward (part); Central St Leonards ward (part); Mount Pleasant ward (part); Old Hastings ward (part)	Large map
5	Central St Leonards	2	Central St Leonards ward (part); Gensing ward (part); Maze Hill ward (part)	Large map
6	Conquest	2	Ashdown ward (part); St Helens ward (part)	Large map
7	Gensing	2	Castle ward (part); Gensing ward (part); Maze Hill ward (part); Silverhill ward (part)	Large map
8	Hollington	2	Hollington ward (part); West St Leonards ward (part); Wishing Tree ward (part)	Large map
9	Maze Hill	2	Central St Leonards ward (part); Maze Hill ward (part); West St Leonards ward (part)	Large map
10	Old Hastings	2	Broomgrove ward (part); Mount Pleasant ward (part); Old Hastings ward (part); Ore ward (part)	Large map
11	Ore	2	Broomgrove ward (part); Ore ward (part)	Large map
12	St Helens	2	Braybrooke ward (part); Elphinstone ward (part); St Helens ward (part)	Large map
13	Silverhill	2	Ashdown ward (part); Maze Hill ward (part); Silverhill ward (part); Wishing Tree ward (part)	Large map
14	Tressell	2	Braybrooke ward (part); Broomgrove ward (part); Mount Pleasant ward (part)	Large map
15	West St Leonards	2	Ashdown ward (part); Maze Hill ward (part); West St Leonards ward (part)	Large map
16	Wishing Tree	2	Hollington ward (part); Wishing Tree ward (part)	Large map

*Notes: 1 The are no civil parishes in the district.*

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Hastings

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Ashdown	2	3,619	1,810	-5	4,274	2,137	6
2 Baird	2	3,865	1,933	1	3,886	1,943	-3
3 Braybrooke	2	3,794	1,897	-1	3,849	1,925	-4
4 Castle	2	4,079	2,040	7	4,147	2,074	3
5 Central St Leonards	2	3,967	1,984	4	4,049	2,025	1
6 Conquest	2	3,871	1,936	2	3,952	1,976	-2
7 Gensing	2	4,174	2,087	9	4,310	2,155	7
8 Hollington	2	3,890	1,945	2	4,257	2,129	6
9 Maze Hill	2	3,894	1,947	2	4,081	2,041	2
10 Old Hastings	2	4,271	2,136	12	4,352	2,176	8
11 Ore	2	3,844	1,922	0	3,933	1,967	-2
12 St Helens	2	3,901	1,951	2	4,029	2,015	0
13 Silverhill	2	3,629	1,815	-5	3,668	1,834	-9
14 Tressell	2	3,300	1,650	-14	3,789	1,895	-6
15 West St Leonards	2	3,478	1,739	-9	3,817	1,909	-5
16 Wishing Tree	2	3,663	1,832	-4	3,889	1,945	-3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>61,239</b>	–	–	<b>64,282</b>	–	–
<b>Averages</b>	–	–	<b>1,914</b>	–	–	<b>2,009</b>	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Hastings Borough Council.

Notes: 1 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.

2 The total forecast electorate differs slightly from the existing wards due to rounding.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Hastings in East Sussex on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the five districts in East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Unitary Authority as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Hastings. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in October 1977 (Report No. 259). The electoral arrangements of East Sussex County Council were last reviewed in August 1981 (Report No. 417). We expect to review the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992, ie the need to:
  - (a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
  - (b) secure effective and convenient local government;
- the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements* contained in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (see Appendix B).

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the Borough Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards.

5 We also have regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (fourth edition published in December 2000). This sets out our approach to the reviews.

6 In our *Guidance*, we state that we wish wherever possible to build on schemes which have been prepared locally on the basis of careful and effective consultation. Local interests are normally in a better position to judge what council size and ward configuration are most likely to secure effective and convenient local government in their areas, while allowing proper reflection of the identities and interests of local communities.

7 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, as far as possible, equality of representation across the district as a whole. Having regard to the statutory criteria, our aim is to achieve as low a level

of electoral imbalance as is practicable. We will require particular justification for schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

8 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the general assumption that the existing council size already secures effective and convenient local government in that district but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified: in particular, we do not accept that an increase in a district’s electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a district council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other districts.

9 The review is in four stages (Figure 3).

*Figure 3: Stages of the Review*

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Description</b>
One	Submission of proposals to the Commission
Two	The Commission’s analysis and deliberation
Three	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	Final deliberation and report to the Secretary of State

10 In July 1998 the Government published a White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, ie in year one half of the district council would be elected, in year two half the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities. The proposals have been taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, provides that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities’ electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Order under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in two-tier areas, and our present *Guidance*.

11 Stage One began on 25 July 2000, when we wrote to Hastings Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified East Sussex County Council, East Sussex Police Authority, the local authority associations, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the Southern Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 16 October 2000.

12 At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

13 Stage Three began on 20 February 2001 and will end on 23 April 2001. This stage involves publishing the draft recommendations in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations.**

14 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to move away from them in any areas, and submit final recommendations to the Secretary of State. Interested parties will have a further six weeks to make representations to the Secretary of State. It will then be for him to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If the Secretary of State accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, he will make an Order. The Secretary of State will determine when any changes come into effect.



## 2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

15 The borough of Hastings is bound on three sides by Rother district, its only neighbouring local authority, and to the south by the English Channel. The borough is fairly densely populated and urban in character and has a population of approximately 84,500 covering an area of 2,972 hectares. The borough is divided into two distinct communities: Hastings and St Leonards. It is entirely unparished.

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

17 The electorate of the district is 61,239 (February 2000). The Council presently has 32 members who are elected from 16 wards. All wards are each represented by two councillors. The Council is elected by thirds.

18 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Hastings borough, with around 5 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Ashdown and West St Leonards wards.

19 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,914 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,009 by the year 2005 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in nine of the 16 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average and three wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Ashdown ward where the two councillors represent 41 per cent more electors than the borough average.

*Map 1: Existing Wards in Hastings*

Figure 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Ashdown	2	5,390	2,695	41	5,464	2,732	43
2 Braybrooke	2	3,713	1,857	-3	3,751	1,876	-2
3 Broomgrove	2	3,341	1,671	-13	3,845	1,923	0
4 Castle	2	2,422	1,211	-37	2,476	1,238	-35
5 Central St Leonards	2	3,154	1,577	-18	3,237	1,619	-15
6 Elphinstone	2	3,554	1,777	-7	3,650	1,825	-5
7 Gensing	2	3,504	1,752	-8	3,650	1,825	-5
8 Hollington	2	4,463	2,232	17	5,396	2,698	41
9 Maze Hill	2	3,532	1,766	-8	3,738	1,869	-2
10 Mount Pleasant	2	3,790	1,895	-1	3,811	1,906	0
11 Old Hastings	2	3,086	1,543	-19	3,155	1,578	-18
12 Ore	2	3,839	1,920	0	3,910	1,955	2
13 St Helens	2	4,241	2,121	11	4,283	2,142	12
14 Silverhill	2	3,722	1,861	-3	3,825	1,913	0
15 West St Leonards	2	5,127	2,564	34	5,556	2,778	45
16 Wishing Tree	2	4,361	2,181	14	4,535	2,268	18
<b>Totals</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>61,239</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>64,282</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,914</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,009</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Hastings Borough Council.

Notes: 1 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 2000, electors in Ashdown ward were relatively under-represented by 41 per cent, while electors in Castle ward were relatively over-represented by 37 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

2 The total forecast electorate differs slightly from the proposed wards due to rounding.



### 3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

20 At the start of the review we invited members of the public and other interested parties to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Hastings Borough Council.

21 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met officers and members from the Borough Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received three representations during Stage One, including a borough-wide scheme from the Borough Council, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the Borough Council and the Commission.

#### **Hastings Borough Council**

22 The Borough Council, following a local consultation exercise during Stage One, proposed no change to the current council size of 32 members, serving 16 wards. It proposed retaining a pattern of two-member wards but stated a preference for moving to a system of elections by halves. The Council stated that its scheme “should not necessarily relate to the existing ward areas except where it was appropriate to do so because of community ties”. It further stated, that under its proposals, the community group areas fell mainly within whole wards.

23 During Stage Two the Council identified a number of significant discrepancies in the electorate figures for its proposed wards, resulting in different levels of electoral equality than had initially been assumed. The Council’s proposal is summarised at Appendix A.

#### **Conservative Group on Hastings Borough Council**

24 The Conservative Group proposed a scheme based on ten three-member wards. However it did not provide details of ward boundaries for such a scheme.

#### **Other Representations**

25 We received one further representation from a local resident proposing that “ the existing ward boundaries are modified using a combination of geographical, historical and numerical factors and one, two or three councillors be allocated accordingly”.



## 4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

26 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Hastings 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 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the identities and interests of local communities – and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

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

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

29 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, the objective of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of electoral equality, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity and interests. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five year period.

### **Electorate Forecasts**

30 The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 5 per cent from 61,239 to 64,282 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expects most of the growth to be in Hollington ward, although a significant amount is also expected in Broomgrove ward. The Council has 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. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

31 We accept that forecasting electorates is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the Borough Council's figures, are content that they represent the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time. We welcome further evidence on electorate forecasts during Stage Three.

## **Council Size**

32 As already explained, the Commission's starting point is to assume that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case.

33 Hastings Borough Council presently has 32 members. The Borough Council did not propose any change to council size. The Conservative Group on the Council proposed reducing the council size to 30 members, however no evidence of consultation on this alternative council size or investigation into the impact this might have on the council's internal management was provided, and no detailed scheme was submitted based a 30-member council.

34 Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we have concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 32 members.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

35 During Stage One we received only one borough-wide scheme, from the Borough Council itself. However, following the provision of revised electorate figures, much of this scheme did not provide for the levels of electoral equality first anticipated, particularly in the west of the borough. We have therefore been unable to use some of the ward boundaries identified under this scheme and have developed our own proposals for much of the borough.

36 For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Central St Leonards, Gensing, Maze Hill and West St Leonards wards;
- (b) Hollington, Silverhill and Wishing Tree wards;
- (c) Ashdown, Braybrooke, Broomgrove, Elphinstone and St Helens wards;
- (d) Castle, Mount Pleasant, Old Hastings and Ore wards.

37 Details of our draft recommendations are set out in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

## **Central St Leonards, Gensing, Maze Hill and West St Leonards wards**

38 These wards lie in the south west of the borough and are each represented by two councillors. Central St Leonards, Gensing and Maze Hill wards are all currently over-represented by 18 per cent, 8 per cent and 8 per cent respectively (15 per cent, 5 per cent and 2 per cent by 2005). West St Leonards ward is currently under-represented by 34 per cent (45 per cent by 2005).

39 The Council proposed addressing the under-representation in West St Leonards ward by including that part of the current ward north of Crowhurst Road in a modified Hollington ward, and the areas south east of Hollington Stream in a modified Maze Hill ward. Its proposed Maze Hill ward would then comprise that part of West St Leonards ward south-east of Hollington Stream and the whole of the current Maze Hill ward, less that part generally east of The Green. It also proposed a modified Gensing ward comprising that part of Maze Hill ward east of The Green and the majority of Gensing ward, less that part to the south of and including Pevensy Road. This area would then be included in a modified Central St Leonards ward.

40 Given the more accurate electorate data produced during Stage Two, these wards did not result in the improved levels of electoral equality initially envisaged. Under these warding arrangements the number of electors per councillor in the wards of Central St Leonards, Gensing, Maze Hill and West St Leonards would be 11 per cent below, 16 per cent below, 19 per cent above and 12 per cent below the borough average respectively (14 per cent, 17 per cent, 18 per cent and 7 per cent in 2005). These proposals are detailed in Appendix A.

41 We have therefore looked at alternative warding patterns in this area which would result in improved levels of electoral equality. Under the Council's proposals, West St Leonards ward would have an electoral variance of 7 per cent by 2005. We considered that electoral equality could be further improved without adversely affecting community identity by including that part of the current Maze Hill ward west of Caves Road in the modified West St Leonards ward. This area, while lying to the east of the railway line, has access to the remainder of the West St Leonards ward and we consider that including this area in this ward would not be detrimental to community identities.

42 Given the level of over-representation which would persist in the Council's proposed Gensing ward, we looked at alternative ward boundaries which would also reflect the communities in the area. We therefore propose amending the Council's scheme to include the area south of Shornden Wood in Gensing ward. This would therefore include the whole of the Bohemia community in a single ward and result in the number of electors per councillor in this ward being 9 per cent above the borough average and 7 per cent above by 2005.

43 Under the Council's proposals the modified Central St Leonards ward would be over-represented by 11 per cent (14 per cent by 2005), while the proposed Maze Hill ward would be

under-represented by 19 per cent (18 per cent by 2005). We have therefore looked at possible transfers of electors from Maze Hill ward to Central St Leonards ward. Having visited the area and sought advice from Council officers, we propose including the area south of West Hill Road, the seafront area, in Central St Leonards ward. This area is separated from the remainder of Maze Hill ward by steep cliffs and is similar in character to the remainder of the seafront area, already included in Central St Leonards ward under the Council's proposals. We have looked at alternative areas for inclusion into Central St Leonards ward but consider that they form more integral parts of the proposed Maze Hill ward.

44 We consider that these proposals would achieve improved levels of electoral equality while reflecting the statutory criteria and we therefore put them forward for consultation. Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the wards of Central St Leonards, Gensing, Maze Hill and West St Leonards ward would be 4 per cent above, 9 per cent above, 2 per cent above and 9 per cent below the borough average respectively (1 per cent, 7 per cent, 2 per cent and 5 per cent in 2005). These proposals are illustrated and named in the large map inserted at the back of the report.

### **Hollington, Silverhill and Wishing Tree wards**

45 These three wards lie in the centre and west of the borough and are each represented by two councillors. Hollington and Wishing Tree wards are both currently under-represented by 17 per cent and 14 per cent respectively (41 per cent and 18 per cent by 2005). Silverhill ward is currently over-represented by 3 per cent, but is forecast to have the same number of electors per councillor as the borough average by 2005.

46 During Stage One we received proposals for alternative warding arrangements for this area from the Borough Council. It proposed that that part of Hollington ward north-west of Queensway be included in a modified Ashdown ward, but that the north-eastern boundary of Hollington ward be extended to include electors on both sides of Battle Road. It also proposed modifying the boundary between the wards of Hollington and Wishing Tree, including those electors to the south of, and including, Blackman Avenue (currently in Hollington ward) in a modified Wishing Tree ward. Those electors generally to the north of Wishing Tree Road would then form part of a modified Hollington ward. As stated above it also proposed including those electors to the north of Crowhurst Road (currently in West St Leonards ward) in Hollington ward. It further proposed that Silverhill ward be expanded to include the Bohemia community, plus those electors to the east of Sedlescombe Gardens and Menzies Drive, currently in Wishing Tree ward.

47 However, on the basis of the Council's revised electorate data, the number of electors per councillor in the modified wards of Hollington, Silverhill and Wishing Tree would be 12 per cent above, 28 per cent above and 12 per cent below the average respectively (16 per cent, 26 per cent and 14 per cent by 2005). These proposals are detailed in Appendix A.

48 Given these high levels of electoral imbalance, we have considered alternative arrangements for this area. In order to improve electoral equality in both Ashdown ward (see below) and Hollington ward, we propose reverting to the existing boundary for most of its length, ie the centre of Battle Road, which we consider to be a clear and identifiable boundary. We propose, however, that the area around Augustus Way be included in a modified Ashdown ward. We further propose using Battle Road and Sedlescombe Road South as the boundary between the wards of Silverhill and Wishing Tree. Finally in this area, we propose that the whole of the Bohemia community, the area generally east of London Road and south of Shornden Wood be included in a modified Gensing ward (discussed above). We consider that this would improve electoral equality in Silverhill ward and would continue to reflect community identities by retaining Bohemia in a single ward.

49 These proposals would result in the number of electors per councillor in the wards of Hollington, Silverhill and Wishing Tree being 2 per cent above, 5 per cent below and 4 per cent below the average respectively (6 per cent, 9 per cent and 3 per cent by 2005). Given the improved levels of electoral equality achieved under such warding arrangements while reflecting community identities, we are putting these proposals forward for consultation. These proposals are illustrated and named in the large map inserted at the back of the report.

### **Ashdown, Braybrooke, Broomgrove, Elphinstone and St Helens wards**

50 These five wards are each represented by two councillors. Ashdown and St Helens wards are both currently under-represented by 41 per cent and 11 per cent respectively (43 per cent and 12 per cent in 2005). Braybrooke, Broomgrove and Elphinstone wards are all over-represented at present, by 3 per cent, 13 per cent and 7 per cent. By 2005 Broomgrove ward is forecast to have the same number of electors per councillor as the borough average, although Braybrooke and Elphinstone wards are forecast to be over-represented by 2 per cent and 5 per cent respectively in 2005.

51 In this area the Council proposed dividing Ashdown ward, given the current degree of electoral imbalance. It proposed a modified Ashdown ward, comprising that part of Hollington ward to the north-west of Queensway and that part of Ashdown ward generally west of Silverhill Avenue. Those electors on both sides of Battle Road would then be included in Hollington ward, as discussed above. The remainder of Ashdown ward, plus that part of the current St Helens ward west of St Helens Wood would then form a new Conquest ward. The remainder of St Helens ward, less an area generally south of Freshwater Avenue, and that part of Elphinstone generally west of Elphinstone Road, would comprise a modified St Helens ward. The Council further proposed a new Baird ward, comprising that part of Elphinstone ward generally east of Elphinstone Road and that part of Broomgrove ward to the west of the fence marking the line of the railway (which is underground at this point). Finally in this area, the Council proposed a modified Braybrooke ward, comprising that part of St Helens ward generally south of Freshwater Avenue, that part of Elphinstone ward generally south of Elphinstone Avenue, that part of

Braybrooke ward to the west of the railway line, that part of Gensing ward to the north-east of Briscoe's Walk and that part of Silverhill ward south of Upper Park.

52 Under the Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in the wards of Ashdown, Baird, Braybrooke, Conquest and St Helens would be 17 per cent below, 1 per cent above, 9 per cent above, 4 per cent above and 10 per cent below the average respectively (4 per cent, 3 per cent below, 6 per cent, 1 per cent and 11 per cent by 2005). These proposals are detailed in Appendix A.

53 Given the electoral imbalances which would persist we have considered modifications to the Borough Council's proposals. As noted above we propose generally using the centre of Battle Road as the boundary between Ashdown and Hollington wards, additionally including the area around Augustus Way in Ashdown ward. We consider that this would provide a clear and identifiable boundary and would improve electoral equality in both wards.

54 We propose two further minor modifications to improve electoral equality in St Helens ward, which, under the Council's scheme, would be over-represented by 10 per cent (11 per cent in 2005). In the north-west of the ward, we propose that all of St Helens Road south of Ghyllside Drive be retained in St Helens ward. In the south-east of the ward, we propose that the area to the west of, and including, St Helens Park Road should also continue to form part of St Helens ward.

55 Under these proposals, the number of electors per councillor in the wards of Ashdown, Baird, Braybrooke, Conquest and St Helens would be 5 per cent below, 1 per cent above, 1 per cent below, 1 per cent above and 2 per cent above the borough average respectively (6 per cent above, 3 per cent below, 4 per cent, 2 per cent below and equal to the average by 2005). These proposals are illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

### **Castle, Mount Pleasant, Old Hastings and Ore wards**

56 These four wards lie in the east of the borough, to the east of the railway line. They are each represented by two councillors. Castle ward is currently over-represented by 37 per cent (35 per cent in 2005), Mount Pleasant ward is over-represented by 1 per cent, but is forecast to have the same number of electors per councillor as the borough average by 2005. Old Hastings ward is also currently over-represented, by 19 per cent (18 per cent in 2005), while Ore ward has the same number of electors per councillor as the borough average currently, but is forecast to be under-represented by 2 per cent by 2005.

57 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed amendments to all four wards. It proposed minor modifications to Ore ward, uniting whole roads in a single borough ward. It proposed creating a new Tressell ward, comprising that part of Broomgrove ward to the east of the fence marking the railway line (which is underground at this point) and that part of Mount Pleasant ward generally west of Old London Road. It proposed that the remainder of Mount Pleasant ward

be included in a ward with the majority of Old Hastings ward, less the area west of Collier Road. This area of Old Hastings ward, Braybrooke ward east of the railway line and Castle ward would then form a modified Castle ward.

58 These modifications would result in considerable improvements to electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in the new or modified wards of Castle, Old Hastings and Tressell being 7 per cent above, 12 per cent above and 14 per cent below the borough average (3 per cent, 8 per cent and 6 per cent in 2005). In Ore ward the number of electors per councillor would be equal to the borough average initially and 2 per cent below the average by 2005. These proposals are detailed in Appendix A.

59 No other detailed proposals for this area were received. Given the improved levels of electoral equality which would be achieved and the local consultation undertaken on these proposals, we recommend that the Council's warding pattern in this area generally be adopted. We propose one minor modification to the western boundary of Ore ward to align it with ground detail, but this would not affect any electors. These proposals are illustrated and named in the large map inserted at the back of the report.

## **Electoral Cycle**

60 We received one representation regarding the Borough Council's electoral cycle, from the Council itself. It stated that it would prefer a system of elections by halves. It considered that there was a view amongst local electors that they were "missing out in the electoral process due to the fact that not all wards vote each time there is an election".

61 However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Order under the Local Government Act 2000, we can only continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in two-tier areas. Statutorily, we have no power to recommend a change to biennial elections. We therefore propose no change to the Council's present system of elections by thirds at this time.

## **Conclusions**

62 Having considered all the evidence and representations received during the initial stage of the review, we propose that:

- a council of 32 members should be retained;
- there should continue to be 16 wards;
- the boundaries of all 16 existing wards should be modified;
- elections should continue to be held by thirds.

63 Our draft recommendations would involve modifications to all existing wards in Hastings borough, as summarised below:

- we are generally adopting the Council’s proposals for the wards of Ashdown, Braybrooke, Castle, Conquest, Old Hastings, Ore and St Helens. However we propose minor boundary modifications between Ashdown and Hollington wards, between Conquest and St Helens wards and between Braybrooke and St Helens wards;
- we are also proposing a minor boundary modification to the Council’s proposed wards of Baird and Ore to align it to ground detail;
- in Central St Leonards, Gensing, Maze Hill and West St Leonards wards we are putting forward our own proposals, although there are a number of similarities with the Borough Council’s scheme;
- in Hollington, Silverhill and Wishing Tree wards we are putting forward our own proposals.

64 Figure 5 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2000 electorate figures and with forecast electorates for the year 2005.

*Figure 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements*

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	32	32	32	32
Number of wards	16	16	16	16
Average number of electors per councillor	1,914	1,914	2,009	2,009
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	9	2	8	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	3	0	4	0

65 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Hastings Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average

from nine to two. By 2005 no wards are forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough.

**Draft Recommendation**

Hastings Borough Council should comprise 32 councillors serving 16 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

**66 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Hastings and welcome comments from the Borough Council and others relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, electoral cycle and ward names. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.**

*Map 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Hastings*

## 5 NEXT STEPS

67 We are putting forward draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for consultation. We will take fully into account all representations received by 23 April 2001. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment at the offices of the Commission and the Borough Council, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission after the end of the consultation period.

68 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

Review Manager  
Hastings Review  
Local Government Commission for England  
Dolphyn Court  
10/11 Great Turnstile  
London WC1V 7JU

Fax: 020 7404 6142

E-mail: [reviews@lgce.gov.uk](mailto:reviews@lgce.gov.uk)

[www.lgce.gov.uk](http://www.lgce.gov.uk)

69 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to the Secretary of State, who cannot make an Order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after he receives them.



## APPENDIX A

### Hastings Borough Council's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Our draft recommendations detailed in Figures 1 and 2 differ from those put forward by the Borough Council in 12 wards. The Council's proposals are outlined below.

*Figure A1: Hastings Borough Council's Proposal: Constituent Areas*

Ward name	Constituent areas
Ashdown	Ashdown ward (part); Hollington ward (part)
Baird	Broomgrove ward (part); Elphinstone ward (part); Ore ward (part)
Braybrooke	Braybrooke ward (part); Elphinstone ward (part); Gensing ward (part); Mount Pleasant ward (part); St Helens ward (part); Silverhill ward (part)
Castle	Braybrooke ward (part); Castle ward (part); Central St Leonards ward (part); Mount Pleasant ward (part); Old Hastings ward (part)
Central St Leonards	Central St Leonards ward (part); Gensing ward (part); Maze Hill ward (part)
Conquest	Ashdown ward (part); St Helens ward (part)
Gensing	Gensing ward (part); Maze Hill ward (part); Silverhill ward (part)
Hollington	Ashdown ward (part); Hollington ward (part); West St Leonards ward (part); Wishing Tree ward (part)
Maze Hill	Central St Leonards ward (part); Maze Hill ward (part); West St Leonards ward (part)
Old Hastings	Broomgrove ward (part); Mount Pleasant ward (part); Old Hastings ward (part); Ore ward (part)
Ore	Broomgrove ward (part); Ore ward (part)
St Helens	Elphinstone ward (part); St Helens ward (part)
Silverhill	Ashdown ward (part); Gensing ward (part); Maze Hill ward (part); Silverhill ward (part); Wishing Tree ward (part)
Tressell	Braybrooke ward (part); Broomgrove ward (part); Mount Pleasant ward (part)
West St Leonards	Hollington ward (part); West St Leonards ward (part)
Wishing Tree	Ashdown ward (part); Hollington ward (part); Wishing Tree (part)

Figure A2: Hastings Borough Council's Proposal: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Ashdown	2	3,187	1,594	-17	3,843	1,922	-4
Baird	2	3,865	1,933	1	3,886	1,943	-3
Braybrooke	2	4,187	2,094	9	4,242	2,121	6
Castle	2	4,079	2,040	7	4,146	2,073	3
Central St Leonards	2	3,391	1,696	-11	3,472	1,736	-14
Conquest	2	3,983	1,992	4	4,064	2,032	1
Gensing	2	3,205	1,603	-16	3,339	1,670	-17
Hollington	2	4,290	2,145	12	4,657	2,329	16
Maze Hill	2	4,567	2,284	19	4,754	2,377	18
Old Hastings	2	4,271	2,136	12	4,350	2,175	8
Ore	2	3,844	1,922	0	3,933	1,967	-2
St Helens	2	3,428	1,714	-10	3,556	1,778	-11
Silverhill	2	4,910	2,455	28	5,078	2,539	26
Tressell	2	3,300	1,650	-14	3,792	1,896	-6
West St Leonards	2	3,381	1,691	-12	3,722	1,861	-7
Wishing Tree	2	3,351	1,676	-12	3,450	1,725	-14
<b>Totals</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>61,239</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>64,284</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,914</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,009</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on Hastings Borough Council's submission.

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.

## APPENDIX B

### The Statutory Provisions

#### Local Government Act 1992: the Commission's Role

1 Section 13(2) of the Local Government Act 1992 places a duty on the Commission to undertake periodic electoral reviews of each principal local authority area in England, and to make recommendations to the Secretary of State.

2 Under section 13(5) of the 1992 Act, the Commission is required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State for any changes to the electoral arrangements within the areas of English principal authorities as appear desirable to it, having regard to the need to:

- (a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
- (b) secure effective and convenient local government.

3 In reporting to the Secretary of State, the Commission may make recommendations for such changes to electoral arrangements as are specified in section 14(4) of the 1992 Act. In relation to principal authorities, these are:

- the total number of councillors to be elected to the council;
- the number and boundaries of electoral areas (wards or divisions);
- the number of councillors to be elected for each electoral area, and the years in which they are to be elected; and
- the name of any electoral area.

4 Unlike the LGBC, the Commission may also make recommendations for changes in respect of electoral arrangements within parish and town council areas. Accordingly, in relation to parish or town councils within a principal authority's area, the Commission may make recommendations relating to:

- the number of councillors;
- the need for parish wards;
- the number and boundaries of any such wards;

- the number of councillors to be elected for any such ward or, in the case of a common parish, for each parish; and
- the name of any such ward.

5 In conducting the review, section 27 of the 1992 Act requires the Commission to comply, so far as is practicable, with the rules given in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 for the conduct of electoral reviews.

**Local Government Act 1972: Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements**

6 By virtue of section 27 of the Local Government Act 1992, in undertaking a review of electoral arrangements the Commission is required to comply so far as is reasonably practicable with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. For ease of reference, those provisions of Schedule 11 which are relevant to this review are set out below.

7 In relation to shire districts:

Having regard to any changes in the number or distribution of the local government electors of the district likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration (by the Secretary of State or the Commission):

- (a) the ratio of the number of local government electors to the number of councillors to be elected shall be, as nearly as may be, the same in every ward in the district;
- (b) in a district every ward of a parish council shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district;
- (c) in a district every parish which is not divided into parish wards shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district.

8 The Schedule also provides that, subject to (a)–(c) above, regard should be had to:

- (d) the desirability of fixing ward boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (e) any local ties which would be broken by the fixing of any particular ward boundary.

9 The Schedule provides that, in considering whether a parish should be divided into wards, regard shall be had to whether:

- (f) the number or distribution of electors in the parish is such as to make a single election of parish councillors impracticable or inconvenient; and
- (g) it is desirable that any area or areas of the parish should be separately represented on the parish council.

10 Where it is decided to divide any such parish into parish wards, in considering the size and boundaries of the wards and fixing the number of parish councillors to be elected for each ward, regard shall be had to:

- (h) any change in the number or distribution of electors of the parish which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration;
- (i) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (j) any local ties which will be broken by the fixing of any particular boundaries.

11 Where it is decided not to divide the parish into parish wards, in fixing the number of councillors to be elected for each parish regard shall be had to the number and distribution of electors of the parish and any change which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the fixing of the number of parish councillors.



## APPENDIX C

### Code of Practice on Written Consultation

1 The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, [www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm](http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm), requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Non-Departmental Public Bodies, such as the Local Government Commission, are encouraged to follow the Code.

2 The Code of Practice applies to consultation documents published after 1 January 2001, which should reproduce the criteria, give explanations of any departures, and confirm that the criteria have otherwise been followed.

*Table C1: Commission compliance with Code criteria*

Criteria	Compliance/departure
Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process for a policy (including legislation) or service from the start, so that it has the best prospect of improving the proposals concerned, and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage	The Commission complies with this requirement
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose	The Commission complies with this requirement
A consultation document should be as simple and concise as possible. It should include a summary, in two pages at most, of the main questions it seeks views on. It should make it as easy as possible for readers to respond, make contact or complain	The Commission complies with this requirement
Documents should be made widely available, with the fullest use of electronic means (though not to the exclusion of others), and effectively drawn to the attention of all interested groups and individuals	The Commission complies with this requirement
Sufficient time should be allowed for considered responses from all groups with an interest. Twelve weeks should be the standard minimum period for a consultation	The Commission consults on draft recommendations for a minimum of eight weeks, but may extend the period if consultations take place over holiday periods
Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed, and reasons for decisions finally taken	The Commission complies with this requirement

Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated	The Commission complies with this requirement
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