

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
New Forest in Hampshire

February 2000

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 the structure of local government, the boundaries of individual local authority areas, and their 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. We can also make recommendations for change to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils in the district.

This report sets out the Commission's draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of New Forest in Hampshire.

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There are large maps illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for the areas of Fawley, Hordle, Hythe & Dibden, Lymington & Pennington, Milford-on-Sea, and New Milton inserted inside the back cover of this report.

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for New Forest on 20 July 1999.

- **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 New Forest:

- **in 22 of the 33 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and 11 wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average, both initially and by 2004.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 91-92) are that:

- **New Forest District Council should have 60 councillors, two more than at present;**
- **there should be 34 wards, instead of 33 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 29 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one, and four wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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 28 of the proposed 34 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 expected to improve further with no ward expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2004.**

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 Copythorne, Fawley, Hythe & Dibden, Lymington & Pennington, New Milton, Ringwood and Totton & Eling;**

- **the warding of Hordle parish for the first time;**
- **an increase in the number of councillors serving the parish of Rockbourne.**

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

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for eight weeks from 22 February 2000. 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 17 April 2000:

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Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Ashurst, Copythorne South & Netley Marsh	2	Copythorne South ward (part); Colbury ward (the parish of Ashurst & Colbury); Netley Marsh ward (the parish of Netley Marsh)	Maps 2 and A4
2	Barton	2	Barton ward (part); Becton ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
3	Bashley	1	Bashley ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
4	Becton	2	Becton ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
5	Boldre & Sway	2	Boldre ward (the parish of Boldre); Sway ward (the parish of Sway)	Map 2
6	Bramshaw, Copythorne North & Minstead	1	Forest North ward (part)	Maps 2 and A4
7	Bransgore & Burley	2	Bransgore & Sopley ward (part - the parish of Bransgore); Forest West ward (part - the parish of Burley)	Map 2
8	Brockenhurst & Forest South East	2	Brockenhurst ward (the parish of Brockenhurst); Forest South ward (the parishes of Beaulieu, Denny Lodge, East Boldre and Exbury & Lepe)	Map 2
9	Buckland	1	Lymington Town ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
10	Butts Ash & Dibden Purlieu	2	Dibden Purlieu ward (part); Hythe South ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
11	Dibden & Hythe East	2	Hythe & Dibden ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
12	Downlands & Forest	1	Downlands ward (the parishes of Breamore, Damerham, Martin, Rockbourne and Whitsbury) ; Forest North West ward (part - the parishes of Hale and Woodgreen)	Map 2
13	Fawley, Blackfield & Langley	2	Blackfield & Langley ward (part); Fawley ward (part); Fawley Holbury ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
14	Fernhill	2	Bashley ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
15	Fordingbridge	2	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
16	Forest North West	1	Ringwood North ward (part - the parish of Ellingham, Harbridge & Ibsley); Forest North West ward (part - the parishes of Godshill and Hyde)	Map 2

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
17	Furzedown & Hardley	1	Fawley Holbury ward (part); Hythe South ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
18	Holbury & North Blackfield	2	Blackfield & Langley ward (part); Fawley ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
19	Hordle	2	Hordle ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
20	Hythe West & Langdown	2	Hythe & Dibden ward (part); Dibden Purlieu (part); Hythe South ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
21	Lymington Town	2	Lymington Town ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
22	Lyndhurst	1	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
23	Marchwood	2	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
24	Milford	2	Milford ward (the parish of Milford); Hordle ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
25	Milton	2	Milton ward: Becton ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
26	Pennington	2	Lymington Town ward (part); Pennington ward	Map 2 and large map
27	Ringwood East & Sopley	1	Forest West ward (part); Bransgore & Sopley ward (part - the parish of Sopley)	Maps 2, A2 and A3
28	Ringwood North	2	Ringwood North ward (part); Ringwood South ward (part); Forest West ward (part)	Maps 2, A2 and A3
29	Ringwood South	2	Forest West ward (part)	Maps 2, A2 and A3
30	Totton Central	2	Totton Central ward (part)	Maps 2 and A5
31	Totton East	2	Totton Central ward (part); Totton North ward (part)	Maps 2 and A5
32	Totton North	2	Totton Central ward (part); Totton North ward (part)	Maps 2 and A5
33	Totton South	2	<i>Unchanged</i>	Maps 2 and A5
34	Totton West	2	Totton Central ward (part)	Maps 2 and A5

Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for New Forest

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Ashurst, Copythorne South & Netley Marsh	2	4,682	2,341	4	5,018	2,509	7
2	Barton	2	4,464	2,232	-1	4,621	2,311	-1
3	Bashley	1	2,217	2,217	-1	2,308	2,308	-1
4	Becton	2	4,137	2,069	-8	4,428	2,214	-5
5	Boldre & Sway	2	4,328	2,164	-4	4,461	2,231	-5
6	Bramshaw, Copythorne North & Minstead	1	2,136	2,136	-5	2,222	2,222	-5
7	Bransgore & Burley	2	4,730	2,365	5	4,439	2,220	-5
8	Brockenhurst & Forest South East	2	4,553	2,277	1	4,604	2,302	-2
9	Buckland	1	2,333	2,333	4	2,441	2,441	4
10	Butts Ash & Dibden Purlieu	2	5,090	2,545	13	5,095	2,548	9
11	Dibden & Hythe East	2	4,525	2,263	1	4,648	2,324	-1
12	Downlands & Forest	1	2,355	2,355	5	2,354	2,354	0
13	Fawley, Blackfield & Langley	2	4,854	2,427	8	4,838	2,419	3
14	Fernhill	2	4,483	2,242	0	4,796	2,398	2
15	Fordingbridge	2	4,832	2,416	7	5,056	2,528	8
16	Forest North West	1	2,136	2,136	-5	2,144	2,144	-8
17	Furzedown & Hardley	1	2,429	2,429	8	2,495	2,495	7
18	Holbury & North Blackfield	2	5,025	2,513	12	5,005	2,503	7
19	Hordle	2	4,197	2,099	-7	4,351	2,176	-7
20	Hythe West & Langdown	2	4,730	2,365	5	5,092	2,546	9
21	Lymington Town	2	4,714	2,357	5	4,871	2,436	4

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
22 Lyndhurst	1	2,490	2,490	11	2,523	2,523	8
23 Marchwood	2	3,750	1,875	-17	4,457	2,229	-5
24 Milford	2	4,296	2,148	-5	4,225	2,113	-10
25 Milton	2	4,562	2,281	1	4,704	2,352	0
26 Pennington	2	4,709	2,355	5	4,821	2,411	3
27 Ringwood East & Sopley	1	2,037	2,037	-9	2,111	2,111	-10
28 Ringwood North	2	4,783	2,392	6	4,858	2,429	4
29 Ringwood South	2	4,418	2,209	-2	4,720	2,360	1
30 Totton Central	2	4,381	2,191	-3	4,425	2,213	-6
31 Totton East	2	4,305	2,153	-4	4,423	2,212	-6
32 Totton North	2	3,920	1,960	-13	4,841	2,421	3
33 Totton South	2	4,652	2,326	3	4,859	2,430	4
34 Totton West	2	3,765	1,883	-16	4,297	2,149	-8
Totals	60	135,018	-	-	140,551	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,250	-	-	2,343	-

Source: *Electorate figures are based on New Forest District 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.*

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of New Forest in Hampshire on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the 13 districts in Hampshire 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 New Forest. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in January 1976 (Report No. 130). The electoral arrangements of Hampshire County Council were last reviewed in October 1980 (Report No. 397). 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 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* in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (see Appendix C).

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the District Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also make recommendations on the electoral arrangements for parish and town councils in the district.

5 We also have regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (third edition published in October 1999). 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 Second, the broad objective of PERs is then to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the district as a whole. For example, 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 Third, 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

Stage	Description
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, i.e. 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.

11 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1998/99 PER programme, including the Hampshire districts, that until any direction is received from the Secretary of State, the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State’s intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas. The proposals are now being taken forward in a Local Government Bill published in December 1999 and are currently being considered by Parliament.

12 Stage One began on 20 July 1999, when we wrote to New Forest District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Hampshire County Council, Hampshire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Hampshire Local Councils Association, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament and the Members of the European Parliament for the South East Region, and the headquarters of the main

political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 25 October 1999.

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

14 Stage Three began on 22 February 2000 and will end on 17 April 2000. 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.**

15 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

16 The district of New Forest has an electorate of 135,018 which is forecast to increase by around 4 per cent over the next five years, to 140,551. The district is situated in the south-west corner of Hampshire. It covers 290 square miles and has 40 miles of coastline, and is geographically one of the largest district council areas in England. With a population of nearly 170,000, it is also one of the most populous shire districts. The district is dominated by the New Forest with over 90 per cent of the Forest being contained within the district's boundaries. The town of Totton & Eling is the largest town with a population of 26,000. The other main settlements are New Milton, Hythe & Dibden, Fawley, Lymington & Pennington and Ringwood. There are 37 parishes.

17 The electorate of the district is 135,018 (February 1999). The council presently has 58 members who are elected from 33 wards. Six of the wards are each represented by three councillors, 13 are each represented by two councillors and 14 are single-member wards. The council is elected as a whole every four years.

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

19 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in New Forest district, with around 32 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in the eastern parishes of the district (Totton & Eling, Marchwood, Hythe & Dibden and Fawley) and the coastal towns of New Milton and Lymington & Pennington in the south of the district.

20 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,328 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 2,423 by the year 2004 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 22 of the 33 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, 11 wards by more than 20 per cent and seven wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Bransgore & Sopley ward where the councillor represents 76 per cent more electors than the district average. Electoral equality is predicted to deteriorate further over the next five years.

Map 1: Existing Wards in New Forest

Figure 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Barton	2	3,781	1,891	-19	3,900	1,950	-20
2 Bashley	2	6,700	3,350	44	7,104	3,552	47
3 Becton	2	5,348	2,674	15	5,706	2,853	18
4 Blackfield & Langley	2	4,042	2,021	-13	3,952	1,976	-18
5 Boldre	1	1,609	1,609	-31	1,609	1,609	-34
6 Bransgore & Sopley	1	4,098	4,098	76	3,941	3,941	63
7 Brockenhurst	1	2,784	2,784	20	2,820	2,820	16
8 Colbury	1	1,750	1,750	-25	1,927	1,927	-20
9 Copythorne South	1	1,522	1,522	-35	1,573	1,573	-35
10 Dibden & Hythe North	3	7,284	2,428	4	7,800	2,600	7
11 Dibden Purlieu	1	2,601	2,601	12	2,529	2,529	4
12 Downlands	1	1,457	1,457	-37	1,442	1,442	-40
13 Fawley Holbury	3	6,785	2,262	-3	6,842	2,281	-6
14 Fordingbridge	2	4,832	2,416	4	5,054	2,527	4
15 Forest North	1	1,831	1,831	-21	1,909	1,909	-21
16 Forest North West	1	2,052	2,052	-12	2,087	2,087	-14
17 Forest South	1	1,769	1,769	-24	1,785	1,785	-26
18 Forest West	2	4,257	2,129	-9	4,309	2,155	-11
19 Hordle	2	4,381	2,191	-6	4,537	2,269	-6
20 Hythe South	3	5,941	1,980	-15	6,051	2,017	-17
21 Lymington Town	3	7,215	2,405	3	7,429	2,493	3
22 Lyndhurst	1	2,490	2,490	7	2,523	2,523	4
23 Marchwood	1	3,750	3,750	61	4,457	4,457	84
24 Milford	2	4,112	2,056	-12	4,039	2,020	-17
25 Milton	2	4,034	2,017	-13	4,184	2,074	-14
26 Netley Marsh	1	1,715	1,715	-26	1,832	1,832	-24
27 Pennington	2	4,541	2,271	-2	4,653	2,327	-4

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
28 Ringwood North	2	3,883	1,942	-17	3,835	1,918	-21
29 Ringwood South	2	4,712	2,356	1	5,011	2,506	3
30 Sway	1	2,719	2,719	17	2,852	2,852	18
31 Totton Central	3	9,443	3,148	35	10,846	3,615	49
32 Totton North	3	6,928	2,309	-1	7,141	2,380	-2
33 Totton South	2	4,652	2,326	0	4,858	2,429	0
Totals	58	135,018	–	–	140,551	–	–
Averages	–	–	2,328	–	–	2,423	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by New Forest 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 1999, electors in Downlands ward were relatively over-represented by 37 per cent, while electors in Bransgore & Sopley were relatively under-represented by 76 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

21 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 New Forest District Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

22 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met with officers and members from the District Council. We are most grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received seven representations during Stage One, including a district-wide scheme from the District Council, all of which may be inspected, by appointment, at the offices of the District Council and the Commission.

New Forest District Council

23 The District Council submitted a district-wide scheme based on a 60-member council, two more councillors than at present, serving 26 two-member and eight single-member wards. The Council proposed modifying 29 of the existing 33 wards. The wards of Fordingbridge, Marchwood, Lyndhurst and Totton South would remain unchanged. The Council proposed to re-ward some of the parishes and ward the parish of Hordle for the first time in order to improve electoral equality across the district. These proposals generally received support from the parishes concerned, apart from Hythe & Dibden. Under the Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in six of its proposed 34 wards would initially vary from the district average by more than 10 per cent but only one ward would vary by more than 10 per cent by 2004.

Parish and Town Councils

24 We received four representations from parish councils. Bramshaw Parish Council opposed the District Council's recommendation that Bramshaw parish should remain in a ward with Copythorne and Minstead. The parish stated a preference for being placed with the parishes which lie to its west. It concluded that, under the District Council's proposed ward, the parish would be separated from the remainder of the ward by the M27/A31. Marchwood Parish Council supported the District Council's proposal to increase the representation of the current Marchwood ward, from one to two members. Netley Marsh Parish Council opposed any move to more frequent elections and Rockbourne Parish Council proposed an increase in the number of parish councillors, from five to six.

Other Representations

25 We received two further representations from local residents. They argued that the Ashley area of New Milton should be represented by its own town and district councillors, to reflect community identity and interests.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

26 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for New Forest is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to the statutory criteria set out in the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the interests and identities of local communities – and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors 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 ensuing five years. We must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken.

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, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, the objective of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of electoral equality, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates. We will require particular justification for schemes which result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent and over should arise only in the most exceptional of circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

Electorate Forecasts

30 The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 4 per cent from 135,018 to 140,551 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expects most of the growth to be in Totton Central ward, although a significant amount is also expected in Marchwood 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 District 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 District Council’s figures, are content that they represent the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council Size

32 As already explained, the Commission's starting point is to assume that the current council size facilitates convenient and effective local government.

33 New Forest District Council presently has 58 members. The District Council proposed a council of 60 members which, they argued, achieved the best possible numerical solution together with sensible boundaries, taking into account many of the parish councils' views.

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 60 members.

Electoral Arrangements

35 In view of the degree of consensus behind large elements of the District Council's proposals, and the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, we have concluded that we should base our recommendations on the District Council's scheme. We consider that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or other proposals submitted at Stage One. However, to improve electoral equality further and having regard to local community identities and interests, we have decided to move away from the District Council's proposals in two areas.

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

- (a) Downlands, Fordingbridge and Forest North West wards;
- (b) Bransgore & Sopley, Forest West, Ringwood North and Ringwood South wards;
- (c) Colbury, Copythorne South, Forest North and Netley Marsh wards;
- (d) Brockenhurst, Forest South and Lyndhurst wards;
- (e) Marchwood, Totton Central, Totton North and Totton South wards;
- (f) Blackfield & Langley, Dibden & Hythe North, Dibden Purlieu, Fawley Holbury and Hythe South wards;
- (g) Boldre, Hordle, Milford and Sway wards;
- (h) Lymington Town and Pennington wards;
- (i) Barton, Bashley, Becton and Milton wards.

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

Downlands, Fordingbridge and Forest North West wards

38 These three wards are located in the north-west of the district. The single-member ward of Downlands comprises the parishes of Breamore, Damerham, Martin, Rockbourne and Whitsbury and is the most over-represented ward in the district. The number of electors per councillor varies from the district average by 37 per cent (40 per cent by 2004). The two-member ward of

Fordingbridge comprises the parishes of Fordingbridge and Sandleheath and is relatively well represented, varying from the average by 4 per cent both initially and by 2004. The single-member ward of Forest North West, comprising the parishes of Godshill, Hale, Hyde and Woodgreen is presently over-represented by 12 per cent (14 per cent by 2004).

39 During the District Council's own consultation a number of parishes suggested that Sandleheath parish should form part of a ward consisting of other small parishes in the area. However, both Fordingbridge and Sandleheath parish councils proposed no change to the existing arrangements. Therefore, as the existing Fordingbridge ward would continue to be reasonably well represented, both initially and by 2004, the District Council proposed no change to the existing two-member Fordingbridge ward. Under the District Council's scheme, the number of electors per councillor in the ward under a council size of 60 would initially vary from the average by 7 per cent (8 per cent by 2004).

40 The District Council also proposed a single-member Downlands & Forest ward comprising the parishes of Breamore, Damerham, Hale, Martin, Rockbourne, Whitsbury and Woodgreen. Under the District Council's scheme, the number of electors per councillor in the ward would vary from the average by 5 per cent initially but equal the average by 2004.

41 With the exception of Rockbourne, all the parish councils that responded to the District Council's own consultation, from the existing Downlands and Forest North West wards, favoured the retention of single-member wards in rural areas, and they generally supported the District Council's proposals for the area.

42 We have concluded that the proposals for this part of the district put forward by the District Council secure a substantially improved level of electoral equality without, as far as we can gauge, having an adverse effect on local community ties. Indeed, the District Council's proposals appear to have enhanced the community identity of this area, particularly with regards to the parishes of Fordingbridge and Sandleheath. Therefore we are content to adopt the District Council's proposals for an unchanged Fordingbridge ward and the new ward of Downlands & Forest, without amendment.

Bransgore & Sopley, Forest West, Ringwood North and Ringswood South wards

43 These four wards lie in the west of the district. The single-member ward of Bransgore & Sopley comprises the parishes of the ward name, and is the most under-represented ward in the district. The number of electors per councillor varies from the district average by 76 per cent (63 per cent by 2004). The two-member ward of Forest West comprising the parish of Burley and the Bisterne and Hangersley town wards of Ringwood is presently over-represented, varying from the average by 9 per cent (11 per cent by 2004). The two-member Ringwood North ward comprising the parish of Ellingham, Harbridge & Ibsley and the Ringwood North town ward of Ringwood, is over-represented by 17 per cent (21 per cent by 2004). The two-member Ringwood South ward, comprising the Ringwood South town ward of Ringwood, is relatively well represented, varying from the average by 1 per cent (3 per cent by 2004).

44 The District Council, with support from Ellingham, Harbridge & Ibsley Parish Council, proposed including the parish in a modified single-member Forest North West ward, together with the parishes of Godshill and Hyde. In the remainder of the area the District Council proposed

a two-member Bransgore & Burley ward, comprising the parishes of Bransgore and Burley, a single-member Ringwood East & Sopley ward, comprising the parish of Sopley and the rural area of Ringwood and two two-member wards of Ringwood North and Ringwood South from the 'built up' area of Ringwood. The District Council informed us that the boundaries of the proposed new wards which lie within Ringwood Town had been agreed in consultation with the Town Council.

45 The District Council stated that it appreciated that the proposed single-member ward of Ringwood East & Sopley has a forecast electoral variance of 10 per cent. However, Ringwood Town Council strongly supported the boundaries proposed for the three wards involving Ringwood. It had considered including 150 electors from the more urban area of Ringwood in the single-member ward, but this was not supported. It also considered combining the existing Bisterne town ward with the proposed single-member ward. However, the Town Council identified a community link between electors living in the "ribbon development" either side of the B3347 road both north and south of the existing boundary between Ringwood South and Bisterne town wards.

46 We have concluded that the proposals for this part of the district put forward by the District Council secure a substantially improved level of electoral equality without, as far as we can gauge, having an adverse effect on local community ties. Indeed, the District Council's proposals appear to have enhanced the community identity of this area, particularly with regards to the re-warding of the town of Ringwood. Therefore we are content to adopt the District Council's proposals for the single-member Ringwood East & Sopley ward and the two-member wards of Bransgore & Burley, Ringwood North and Ringwood South, without amendment.

47 Under the District Council's 60-member scheme, the number of electors per councillor in the wards would vary from the average by 9 per cent, 5 per cent, 6 per cent and 2 per cent respectively (10 per cent, 5 per cent, 4 per cent and 1 per cent by 2004). As a consequence of these proposals we will be making recommendations for change to the town wards of Ringwood, to reflect the proposed district wards. Please see paragraph 100 later in this chapter and Maps A2 and A3 in Appendix A.

Colbury, Copythorne South, Forest North and Netley Marsh wards

48 These single-member wards are located in the north-eastern corner of the district, and each is substantially over-represented. Colbury ward comprising the parish of Ashurst & Colbury presently varies from the average by 25 per cent (20 per cent by 2004). Copythorne South ward, comprising the South parish ward of Copythorne, is over-represented by 35 per cent both initially and by 2004. Forest North ward, comprising the parishes of Bramshaw and Minstead and the North parish ward of Copythorne, is over-represented by 21 per cent, both initially and by 2004. Netley Marsh ward, comprising the parish of the same name, varies from the average by 26 per cent (24 per cent by 2004).

49 During Stage One the District Council proposed amending the boundary between the Copythorne North and Copythorne South parish wards. The proposed Copythorne North parish ward would be included in a new single-member ward with the parishes of Bramshaw and Minstead, while the revised Copythorne South parish ward would form part of a two-member

ward with the parishes of Ashurst & Colbury and Netley Marsh. The proposals for this part of the district were “positively favoured” by the parishes of Ashurst & Colbury and Minstead.

50 However, Bramshaw Parish Council stated a preference for forming part of a ward with the parishes which lie to its west, rather than remaining in a ward with Copythorne North and Minstead. The District Council considered alternative warding arrangements but stated that they would have involved the warding of a parish or an unacceptable level of electoral equality. Netley Marsh Parish Council stated a preference for remaining in a single-member ward, but the District Council did not “realistically expect that such a proposal would be acceptable to the Commission”. This is indeed the case, given the electoral inequality which would result.

51 Copythorne Parish Council stated a desire for the parish not to be divided between two district wards. The District Council considered ways in which this might be possible (for example by forming a two-member ward of Copythorne, Netley Marsh & Minstead); however, it concluded that “it would have caused problems in forming acceptable wards” in this part of the district.

52 The District Council’s proposed northern boundary between Copythorne North and Copythorne South parish wards appeared at first glance to be somewhat arbitrary. Therefore in consultation with the District Council we propose redrawing the boundary along the M27 road until it meets the District Council’s proposed boundary. This minor boundary amendment would affect 40 electors and would have a positive effect on electoral equality in both of the proposed wards.

53 We note the views of Bramshaw and Copythorne parish councils. However, we believe that the District Council has considered all viable options and has considered the impact of such a proposal on the district as a whole. Therefore, we are content that the proposals for this part of the district put forward by the District Council (albeit with a minor boundary modification) secure a substantially improved level of electoral equality without, as far as we can gauge, having an adverse effect on local community ties. Indeed, the parishes of Bramshaw and Copythorne will have similar warding arrangements to those which presently exist.

54 The number of electors per councillor in the proposed wards of Ashurst, Copythorne South & Netley Marsh and Bramshaw, Copythorne North & Minstead under a council size of 60 would vary from the average by 4 per cent and 5 per cent respectively (7 per cent and 5 per cent by 2004). As a consequence of these proposals we will be making recommendations for change to the parish wards of Copythorne, to reflect the proposed district wards. Please see paragraph 96 later in this chapter and Map A4 in Appendix A.

Brockenhurst, Forest South and Lyndhurst wards

55 The single-member wards of Brockenhurst and Lyndhurst are centrally located and comprise the parishes of the same names. Both wards are presently under-represented, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the average by 20 per cent and 7 per cent respectively (16 per cent and 4 per cent by 2004). The single-member Forest South ward which stretches from the centre to the south-eastern corner of the district, comprises the parishes of Beaulieu, Denny Lodge, East Boldre and Exbury & Lepe. The ward is over-represented, with an electoral variance of 24 per cent (26 per cent by 2004).

56 At Stage One the District Council proposed no change to the existing single-member Lyndhurst ward. It also proposed a two-member Brockenhurst & Forest South East ward, combining the existing Brockenhurst and Forest South wards. Under the District Council's scheme, the number of electors per councillor in the wards would vary from the average by 11 per cent and 1 per cent respectively (8 per cent and 2 per cent by 2004).

57 The proposals for this part of the district were "positively favoured" by the parishes of Brockenhurst, Denny Lodge and Lyndhurst during the District Council's own consultation. We have concluded that the proposals for this part of the district put forward by the District Council secure a substantially improved level of electoral equality without, as far as we can gauge, having an adverse effect on local community ties. Therefore we are content to adopt the District Council's proposals for the two-member wards of Brockenhurst & Forest South West and Lyndhurst, without amendment.

Marchwood, Totton Central, Totton North and Totton South wards

58 The single-member ward of Marchwood is located on the eastern side of the district between the town of Totton & Eling and the parish of Hythe & Dibden. The ward, which comprises the parish of the same name, is substantially under-represented. The number of electors per councillor varies from the average by 61 per cent and is projected to have the worst level of representation in the district at 84 per cent by 2004.

59 The town of Totton & Eling is the largest settlement in the district, and the electorate is forecast to increase by more than 1,800 by 2004. The three-member ward of Totton Central is substantially under-represented, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the average by 35 per cent (49 per cent by 2004). However, the three-member Totton North ward and the two-member Totton South ward are well represented, with an electoral variance of 1 per cent and equal to the average (2 per cent and equal to the average by 2004).

60 The District Council stated that there is a major housing development due for completion by 2002, which will significantly increase the electorate of Marchwood parish. Therefore the District Council, with support from Marchwood Parish Council, proposed increasing the current representation of the ward from one to two members, whilst retaining its existing boundaries.

61 The District Council originally consulted on the possibility of combining electors from the northern and central parts of Totton with the parishes of Ashurst & Colbury and Netley Marsh, as such a combination could achieve a good level of electoral equality. However, there was strong opposition from Totton & Eling Town Council, neighbouring parish councils and from District Councillors to any new warding arrangements which combined electors from the urban Totton & Eling area with electors from the rural parishes adjoining the town. In the light of these considerations, the District Council did not pursue this option.

62 Therefore, the District Council proposed that ten members should represent the town area divided into five two-member wards. The boundaries of these proposed new wards have been formulated in consultation with the Town Council, which, we understand, considers that they are the best solution for the town, taking into account community identity and the need for electoral equality. The existing Totton South ward would be retained on its current boundaries. The

remaining four new wards would be created from redrawing the boundaries between the existing Totton North and Totton Central wards.

63 We have concluded that the District Council's proposals for Marchwood and the town of Totton & Eling secure a substantially improved level of electoral equality without, as far as we can gauge, having an adverse effect on local community ties. Indeed, the District Council's proposals appear to have enhanced the community identity of this area, particularly with regards to the re-warding of the town of Totton & Eling. Therefore we are content to adopt the District Council's proposals for the two-member wards of Marchwood, Totton Central, Totton East, Totton North, Totton South and Totton West, without amendment.

64 Under the District Council's 60-member scheme, the number of electors per councillor in the wards would vary from the average by 17 per cent, 3 per cent, 4 per cent, 13 per cent, 3 per cent and 16 per cent respectively (5 per cent, 6 per cent, 6 per cent, 3 per cent, 4 per cent and 8 per cent by 2004). As a consequence of these proposals we will be making recommendations for change to the town wards of Totton & Eling, to reflect the proposed district wards. Please see paragraph 101 later in this chapter and Map A5 in Appendix A.

Blackfield & Langley, Dibden & Hythe North, Dibden Purlieu, Fawley Holbury and Hythe South wards

65 The parishes of Hythe & Dibden and Fawley are located on the eastern side of the district. There are currently three district wards contained within the parish of Hythe & Dibden. The three-member Dibden & Hythe North ward and the single-member Dibden Purlieu ward are under-represented. The number of electors per councillor vary from the average by 4 per cent and 12 per cent respectively (7 per cent and 4 per cent by 2004). The single-member Hythe South ward is over-represented, with an electoral variance of 15 per cent (17 per cent by 2004). There are two district wards contained within the parish of Fawley. The two-member Blackfield & Langley ward and the three-member Fawley Holbury ward are over-represented. The number of electors per councillor vary from the average by 13 per cent and 3 per cent respectively (18 per cent and 6 per cent by 2004).

66 In its submission, the District Council stated that the parishes of Hythe & Dibden and Fawley are relatively densely populated compared to much of the rest of the district. Immediately to the west of the settlements is the underdeveloped New Forest, from which Hythe & Dibden is separated by a busy by-pass. The parish of Denny Lodge, which stretches along the western boundary of Hythe & Dibden, and most of the western boundary of Fawley, is the largest parish in the district geographically, but has the lowest population density and no population 'centre'. This contrast between the 'Waterside' settlements and the sparsely populated Forest, and the physical boundary of the by-pass, meant that the Council's Working Party rejected at an early stage the possibility of including any of the Forest parishes to the west of the Waterside in a district ward based on a Waterside settlement. This would have meant that the Forest parishes were simply used as a 'make weight', to be dominated by the large parish or town which would make up the majority of the ward.

67 There was also considerable debate as to whether eleven members should represent the Hythe & Dibden and Fawley area or seven members for Hythe & Dibden and five members for Fawley. Either alternative would have enabled the District Council to propose a scheme with an electoral

variance of 10 per cent or less being achieved in each ward. However, the District Council proposed that six members should represent the Hythe & Dibden parish, four should represent Fawley parish and that a single-member ward comprising electors from the southern area of Hythe and the northern area of Fawley should be proposed.

68 The District Council “fully appreciated the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities and that a ward comprising part of one parish and part of another is not an ideal solution.” However, it also recognised that in this case this may be necessary in the interests of formulating the best overall proposal for the district, and that the majority of wards in rural areas combined electors from more than one parish in the interests of improving electoral equality.

69 The District Council stated that its “main consideration in proposing this solution was its recognition that the primary legislative objective of the review is to achieve electoral equality.” It considered that on balance this solution was preferable, as it resulted in a better than average level of electoral equality across the town and the parishes covering the eastern side of the district as a whole. While it accepted that a proposal involving a cross-boundary ward is not an ideal solution, it considered it more satisfactory than one which would result in Hythe & Dibden being substantially under-represented and Fawley substantially over-represented.

70 Therefore the District Council proposed that eleven members should represent the area covered by the two parishes. We understand that the proposed boundaries have been agreed in consultation with both Hythe & Dibden and Fawley parish councils, which considered that (subject to Hythe & Dibden’s objection in principle to a cross-boundary ward) they are “the best that can be formed”.

71 In the proposed two-member wards of Butts Ash & Dibden Purlieu, Dibden & Hythe East and Hythe West & Langdown (contained within the parish of Hythe and Dibden), the number of electors per councillor would vary from the average by 13 per cent, 1 per cent and 5 per cent respectively (9 per cent, 1 per cent and 9 per cent by 2004). In the two-member wards of Fawley, Blackfield & Langley and Holbury & North Blackfield (contained within the parish of Fawley), the number of electors per councillor would vary from the average by 8 per cent and 12 per cent respectively (3 per cent and 7 per cent by 2004). The single-member Furzedown & Hardley ward comprising part of the parishes of Hythe & Dibden and Fawley, would vary from the average by 8 per cent (7 per cent by 2004).

72 We acknowledge the views of Hythe & Dibden Parish Council regarding the proposed single-member ward of Furzedown & Hardley. However, we believe that the District Council has considered all the options and the proposals that it has recommended take into account electoral equality across the district, an approach that we commend. We have concluded that the proposals for this part of the district put forward by the District Council secure an improved level of electoral equality. Therefore we are content to adopt the District Council’s proposals for the two-member wards of Butts Ash & Dibden Purlieu, Dibden & Hythe East, Hythe West & Langdown, Fawley, Blackfield & Langley, Holbury & North Blackfield and the single-member ward of Furzedown & Hardley. As a consequence of these proposals we will be making recommendations for change to the parish wards of Fawley and Hythe & Dibden, to reflect the proposed district wards. Please see paragraphs 98 and 99 later in this chapter and the large map inserted in the back of this report.

Boldre, Hordle, Milford and Sway wards

73 These four wards are located in the south of the district. The single-member wards of Boldre and Sway, comprising the parishes of the same names, presently have varying degrees of electoral equality. Boldre ward is over-represented by 31 per cent (34 per cent by 2004) and Sway ward is under-represented by 17 per cent (18 per cent by 2004). The two-member ward of Hordle, comprising the parish of the same name is reasonably well represented. The number of electors per councillor varies from the average by 6 per cent, both initially and by 2004. The two-member Milford ward, comprising the parish of Milford-on-Sea is over-represented by 12 per cent (17 per cent by 2004).

74 During Stage One the District Council proposed combining the single-member wards of Sway and Boldre into a two-member ward. The only alternatives would have been modified single-member wards; this would involve dividing Sway parish between two wards, with the inclusion of 600 electors in a ward with Boldre, and the remainder of Sway forming a single-member ward. The Council concluded by stating a preference for not warding small parishes, “if there is a practicable alternative which achieves a good level of electoral equality”.

75 The District Council also proposed warding the parish of Hordle and proposed modified two-member wards of Hordle and Milford. During the District Council’s own consultation, Milford-on-Sea Parish Council stated that it did have links with the southern area of Hordle (Everton). The District Council contended that “the majority of the electorate of the parish live in Milford-on-Sea village, which is a considerable distance from the main settlements of either New Milton to the west or Lymington & Pennington to the east, but is geographically quite close to the Everton area of Hordle.” The District Council proposed that the area south of the A337 road was the only appropriate area of Everton to be included in a Milford ward.

76 The District Council acknowledged that the proposed Milford ward would have an electoral variance of 11 per cent by 2004, the only ward which would exceed an electoral variance of 10 per cent by 2004. However, it contended that “the A337 road is the main arterial route from Lymington to New Milton and is a busy road which is often difficult to cross. Although drawing a more northerly boundary so as to increase the electorate in Milford enough to reduce the imbalance to 10 per cent or less would be mathematically possible, it was considered that this would result in a wholly artificial boundary for the sake of identifying a few tens of electors. It would also have an adverse effect on the degree of electoral equality of Hordle ward.”

77 While we note the District Council’s comments on the proposed boundary, we considered an alternative boundary between the proposed wards of Hordle and Milford in an attempt to improve on the electoral variance of the only ward forecast to be above 10 per cent by 2004 (Milford). Our alternative which would pass to the north of the A337 Milford road would result in an electoral variance of 10 per cent, but would not provide as clear a boundary as that proposed by the District Council. However, our boundary would result in no ward in the district varying by more than 10 per cent by 2004, and we propose to consult on our recommended boundary between the wards of Hordle and Milford.

78 We have concluded that the proposals for this part of the district put forward by the District Council secure a substantially improved level of electoral equality without, as far as we can gauge having an adverse effect on local community ties. Therefore we are content to adopt the District

Council's proposals for the two-member Boldre & Sway ward and the two-member wards of Hordle and Milford, subject to the minor boundary modification noted above.

79 The number of electors per councillor in the wards would vary from the average by 4 per cent, 7 per cent and 5 per cent respectively (5 per cent, 7 per cent and 10 per cent by 2004). As a consequence of these proposals we will be warding the parish of Hordle for the first time, to reflect the proposed district wards. Please see paragraph 97 later in this chapter and the large map inserted at the back of the report.

Lymington Town and Pennington wards

80 The three-member Lymington Town ward and the two-member Pennington ward are located in the south of the district and are contained within the town of Lymington & Pennington. Both wards are relatively well represented at present, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the average by 3 per cent and 2 per cent respectively (3 per cent and 4 per cent by 2004).

81 At Stage One the District Council proposed that five members should continue to represent the town area, but proposed a re-configuration of the existing wards to reflect community identities. It also proposed a decrease in representation for Lymington ward from three to two members. The proposed single-member Buckland ward would be created from electors in the north of the existing Lymington Town ward and a small section of the existing Pennington ward. The District Council also proposed transferring some electors from the south west of the existing Lymington Town ward to the revised Pennington ward.

82 The District Council informed us that the boundaries of the proposed new wards which lie within Lymington & Pennington Town Council had been agreed in consultation with the Town Council. We also understand that the Town Council consider that the proposed wards are the best solution for the town, taking into account community identity and the need for electoral equality.

83 The wards in the town presently enjoy a good level of electoral equality under a 58-member council and this is forecast to continue. The District Council and Lymington & Pennington Town Council have proposed revised warding arrangements which provide for a similar level of electoral equality, while we have received no representations arguing for the retention of the existing arrangements. Therefore, we have concluded that the proposals for this part of the district put forward by the District Council secure a continued good level of electoral equality under a 60-member council without, as far as we can gauge, having an adverse effect on local community ties. Indeed, the District Council's proposals appear to have enhanced the community identity of the town. Therefore we are content to adopt the District Council's proposals for the new single-member Buckland ward and the modified two-member wards of Lymington Town and Pennington, without amendment.

84 Under the District Council's 60-member scheme, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed wards of Buckland, Lymington Town and Pennington would vary from the average by 4 per cent, 5 per cent and 5 per cent respectively (4 per cent, 4 per cent and 3 per cent by 2004). As a consequence of these proposals we will be making recommendations for change to the town wards of Lymington & Pennington, to reflect the proposed district wards. Please see paragraph 102 later in this chapter and the large map inserted at the back of the report.

Barton, Bashley, Becton and Milton wards

85 The town of New Milton is represented by four two-member wards and suffers from varying but poor degrees of electoral inequality. Barton and Milton wards are over-represented with the number of electors per councillor varying from the average by 19 per cent and 13 per cent respectively (20 per cent and 14 per cent by 2004). The wards of Bashley and Becton are under-represented, with an electoral variance of 44 per cent and 15 per cent respectively (47 per cent and 18 per cent by 2004).

86 At Stage One the District Council proposed that ten members should represent the town area, which should be divided into five two-member wards. The existing two-member Bashley ward in the north of the town, is one of the most under-represented wards in the district. Therefore, the District Council proposed dividing the existing ward, creating a new two-member Fernhill ward and a modified two-member Bashley ward. In the south of the town, the District Council proposed transferring some electors from the existing Becton ward to the wards of Barton and Milton.

87 The District Council informed us that New Milton Town Council had been fully consulted on the proposals and were content that they take into account the need for electoral equality and clearly reflect community identities within the town. We also received two representations from local residents of the town. They argued that the Ashley area of New Milton should be represented by its own town and district councillors, to reflect community identity and interests.

88 We have concluded that the proposals for this part of the district put forward by the District Council secure a substantially improved level of electoral equality without, as far as we can gauge, having an adverse effect on local community ties. Indeed, the District Council's proposals appear to have enhanced the community identity of the town. Therefore we are content to adopt the District Council's proposals for the two-member wards of Barton, Bashley, Becton, Fernhill and Milton, without amendment.

89 Under the District Council's 60-member scheme, the number of electors per councillor in the wards would vary from the average by 1 per cent, 1 per cent, 8 per cent, equal to the average and 1 per cent respectively (1 per cent, 1 per cent, 5 per cent, 2 per cent and equal to the average by 2004). As a consequence of these proposals we will be making recommendations for change to the town wards of New Milton, to reflect the proposed district wards. Please see paragraph 103 later in this chapter and the large map inserted at the back of the report.

Electoral Cycle

90 We received only one representation regarding the District Council's electoral cycle. The District Council itself stated a preference for retaining whole-council elections. At present, there appears to be no desire to move away from the present electoral cycle and we therefore propose no change to the cycle of whole-council elections for the District Council.

Conclusions

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

- (a) there should be an increase in council size from 58 to 60;
- (b) there should be 34 wards, one more than at present;
- (c) the boundaries of 29 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one ward;
- (d) there should be no change to the wards of Fordingbridge, Lyndhurst, Marchwood and Totton South.
- (e) elections should continue to be for the whole council.

92 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the District Council's proposals, but propose to depart from them in the following areas:

- (a) we propose amending the boundary between the proposed Hordle and Milford wards;
- (b) we propose amending the boundary between the proposed parish wards of Copythorne North and Copythorne South.

93 Figure 5 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1999 electorate figures and with forecast electorates for the year 2004.

Figure 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	1999 electorate		2004 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	58	60	58	60
Number of wards	33	34	33	34
Average number of electors per councillor	2,328	2,250	2,423	2,343
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	22	6	22	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	11	0	11	0

94 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for New Forest District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the district average from 22 to six. By 2004 no wards are forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district.

Draft Recommendation

New Forest District Council should comprise 60 councillors serving 34 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, Appendix A and the large maps inside the back cover. Elections should continue to be held for the whole Council.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

95 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Copythorne, Fawley, Hordle, Hythe & Dibden, Lymington & Pennington, New Milton, Ringwood and Totton & Eling to reflect the proposed district wards.

96 The parish of Copythorne is currently served by nine councillors representing two wards: Copythorne North parish ward returning three councillors and Copythorne South parish ward returning six councillors. As mentioned earlier, we propose modifying the boundary between the existing Copythorne North and Copythorne South parish wards, and propose that the revised wards should return four parish councillors and five parish councillors respectively.

Draft Recommendation

Copythorne Parish Council should comprise nine councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Copythorne North (returning four councillors) and Copythorne South (five). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A4 in Appendix A.

97 The parish of Hordle is represented by 11 councillors and is not warded at present. The District Council proposed that, in order to facilitate the proposals at district level, the parish be divided into two parish wards of Everton and Hordle. It proposed that Everton parish ward be represented by one parish councillor and Hordle parish ward be represented by 10 parish councillors.

Draft Recommendation

Hordle Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Everton parish ward (returning one parish councillor) and Hordle parish ward (returning 10 parish councillors). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted in the back of the report.

98 The parish of Fawley is currently served by 15 councillors, representing Fawley, Hardley/Holbury and Blackfield/Langley parish wards. In order to facilitate our proposals for revised district warding, we propose that Fawley should be represented by three revised parish wards. Hardley parish ward should return three parish councillors and Fawley, Blackfield & Langley and Holbury & North Blackfield parish wards should return six parish councillors respectively.

Draft Recommendation

Fawley Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Hardley parish ward (returning three parish councillors), Fawley, Blackfield and Langley parish ward (returning six parish councillors) and Holbury & North Blackfield parish ward (returning six parish councillors). The boundaries between the three parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted in the back of the report.

99 The parish of Hythe & Dibden is currently served by 17 councillors, representing Butts Ash, Dibden, Dibden Purlieu, Hythe North and Hythe South. In order to facilitate our proposals for revised district warding, we propose that Hythe & Dibden should be served by 13 councillors, representing seven parish wards. Furzedown and Langdown parish wards should return one parish councillor, Butts Ash parish ward should return three parish councillors and the parish wards of Dibden, Hythe East, Hythe West and Dibden Purlieu should each return two parish councillors.

Draft Recommendation

Hythe & Dibden Parish Council should comprise 13 parish councillors, instead of the current 17, representing seven wards: Furzedown and Langdown parish wards (each returning one parish councillor), Butts Ash parish ward (returning three parish councillors) and Dibden, Hythe East, Hythe West and Dibden Purlieu parish wards (each returning two parish councillors). The boundaries between the parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted in the back of the report.

100 The town of Ringwood is currently served by 14 councillors, representing Bisterne, Hangersley, Ringwood North and Ringwood South town wards. In order to facilitate our proposals for revised district warding, we propose that Ringwood should be represented by three revised town wards. Ringwood East town ward should return two town councillors and Ringwood North and Ringwood South town wards should return six town councillors respectively.

Draft Recommendation

Ringwood Town Council should comprise 14 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Ringwood East town ward (returning two town councillors) and Ringwood North and Ringwood South Town wards (returning six town councillors respectively). The boundaries between the three town wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Maps A2 and A3 in Appendix A.

101 The town of Totton & Eling is currently served by 16 town councillors, representing Totton Central, Totton North and Totton South town wards. In order to facilitate our proposals for revised district warding, we propose that Totton & Eling should be served by 20 town councillors representing four revised town wards and an unchanged Totton South town ward. Totton Central, Totton East, Totton North, Totton South and Totton West wards should return four town councillors respectively.

Draft Recommendation

Totton & Eling Town Council should comprise 20 town councillors, instead of the current 16, representing five wards: Totton Central, Totton East, Totton North, Totton South and Totton West town wards (returning four town councillors respectively), The boundaries between the five town wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map A5 in Appendix A.

102 The town of Lymington & Pennington is currently served by 14 town councillors, representing Lymington and Pennington town wards. In order to facilitate our proposals for revised district warding, we propose that Lymington & Pennington should be served by 15 town councillors representing three town wards. Buckland Town ward should return three town councillors and the revised Lymington and Pennington town wards should return six town councillors respectively.

Draft Recommendation

Lymington & Pennington Town Council should comprise 15 town councillors, instead of the current 14, representing three wards: Buckland town ward (returning three town councillors) and Lymington and Pennington town wards (returning six town councillors respectively). The boundaries between the five town wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted in the back of the report.

103 The town of New Milton is currently served by 18 councillors, representing Ballard, Barton, Bashley, Becton, Fernhill and Milton town wards. In order to facilitate our proposals for revised district warding, we propose that New Milton should be represented by five town wards. Bashley

town ward should return two town councillors and Barton, Becton, Fernhill and Milton town wards should return four town councillors respectively.

Draft Recommendation
New Milton Town Council should comprise 18 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Bashley town ward (returning two town councillors) and Barton, Becton, Fernhill and Milton town wards (returning four town councillors respectively). The boundaries between the five town wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted in the back of the report.

104 The parish of Rockbourne is currently served by five councillors and is not warded. At Stage One, Rockbourne Parish Council proposed that the number of councillors serving the parish should be increased to six. We have no objection to this request and include it as part of our draft recommendations.

Draft Recommendation
Rockbourne Parish Council should comprise six parish councillors, one more than at present.

105 We are not proposing any change to the electoral cycle of parish and town councils in the district.

Draft Recommendation
For parish and town councils, whole-council elections should continue to take place every four years, on the same cycle as that of the District Council.

106 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for New Forest and welcome comments from the District Council and others relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, electoral cycle, ward names, and parish and town council electoral arrangements. 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 New Forest

5 NEXT STEPS

107 We are putting forward draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for New Forest. Now it is up to the people of the area. We will take fully into account all representations received by 17 April 2000. 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 District Council, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission after the end of the consultation period.

108 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

Review Manager
New Forest 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

109 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

Draft Recommendations for New Forest: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for the New Forest area.

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the district and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail in Maps A2, A3, A4, A5 and the large map at the back of the report.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Ringwood town.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed warding of Ringwood town.

Map A4 illustrates the proposed warding of Copythorne parish.

Map A5 illustrates the proposed warding of Totton & Eling town.

The **large maps** inserted in the back of the report illustrate the existing and proposed warding arrangements for the areas of Fawley, Hordle, Hythe & Dibden, Lymington & Pennington, Milford-on-Sea and New Milton.

Map A1: Draft Recommendations for New Forest: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Warding of Ringwood Town

Map A3: Proposed Warding of Ringwood Town

Map A4: Proposed Warding of Copythorne Parish

Map A5: Proposed Warding of Totton & Eling Town

APPENDIX B

New Forest District Council's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Our draft recommendations detailed in Figures 1 and 2 differ from those put forward by the District Council only in four wards, where the Council's proposals were as follows:

Figure B1: New Forest District Council's Proposal: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Ashurst, Copythorne South & Netley Marsh	Copythorne South ward (part); Colbury ward (the parish of Ashurst & Colbury); Netley Marsh ward (the parish of Netley Marsh)
Bramshaw, Copythorne North & Minestead	Forest North West ward (part)
Hordle	Hordle ward (part)
Milford	Milford ward (the parish of Milford); Hordle ward (part)

Figure B2: New Forest District Council's Proposals: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Ashurst, Copythorne South & Netley Marsh	2	4,722	2,361	5	5,058	2,529	8
Bramshaw, Copythorne North & Minestead	1	2,096	2,096	-7	2,182	2,182	-7
Hordle	2	4,242	2,121	-6	4,396	2,198	-6
Milford	2	4,251	2,126	-6	4,180	2,090	-11

Source: Electorate figures are based on New Forest District 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 C

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. Section 13(3) provides that, so far as reasonably practicable, the first such review of any area should be undertaken not less than 10 years, and not more than 15 years, after this Commission's predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), submitted an initial electoral review report on the county within which that area, or the larger part of the area, was located. This timetable applies to districts within shire and metropolitan counties, although not to South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear¹. Nor does the timetable apply to London boroughs; the 1992 Act is silent on the timing of periodic electoral reviews in Greater London. Nevertheless, these areas will be included in the Commission's review programme. The Commission has no power to review the electoral arrangements of the City of London.

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:

- reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
- 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:

¹ The Local Government Boundary Commission did not submit reports on the counties of South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear.

- (i) the number of councillors;
- (ii) the need for parish wards;
- (iii) the number and boundaries of any such wards;
- (iv) the number of councillors to be elected for any such ward or, in the case of a common parish, for each parish; and
- (v) 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.