

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for North East Lincolnshire

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

May 2001

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of North East Lincolnshire.

Members of the Commission are:

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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for the towns of Cleethorpes and Grimsby is inserted inside the back cover of the report.



Local Government Commission for England

15 May 2001

Dear Secretary of State

On 16 May 2000 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of North East Lincolnshire under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in December 2000 and undertook a ten-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although some modifications have been made (see paragraph 119) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in North East Lincolnshire.

We recommend that North East Lincolnshire Council should be served by 42 councillors representing 15 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that the Council should hold elections by thirds, instead of every four years, as at present.

The Local Government Act 2000 contains provisions relating to changes to local authority electoral arrangements. However, until such time as Orders are made implementing those arrangements we are obliged to conduct our work in accordance with current legislation, and to continue our current approach to periodic electoral reviews.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Malcolm Grant'.

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of North East Lincolnshire on 16 May 2000. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 12 December 2000, after which we undertook a ten-week period of consultation.

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

We found that the existing electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in North East Lincolnshire:

- **in six of the 14 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and two 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 seven wards and by more than 20 per cent in three wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs (119 -120) are that:

- **North East Lincolnshire Council should have 42 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 15 wards, an increase of one;**
- **the boundaries of 12 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one, and two wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should take place by thirds, instead of every four years, as at present.**

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

- **In 13 of the proposed 15 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 the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 8 per cent from the average for the district in 2005.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an Order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 25 June 2001:

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

Figure 1: The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Croft Baker (Cleethorpes town)	3	Croft Baker ward (part); Haverstoe ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
2	East Marsh (Grimsby town)	3	Heneage ward (part); Marsh ward (part); North East ward	Map 2 and Large map
3	Freshney (Grimsby town)	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Freshney ward)	Map 2 and Large map
4	Haverstoe (Cleethorpes town)	3	Haverstoe ward (part); Humberston ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
5	Heneage (Grimsby town)	3	Heneage ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
6	Humberston & New Waltham	3	Humberston ward (part – the parishes of Humberston and New Waltham)	Map 2 and Large map
7	Immingham	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Habrough, Immingham and Stallingborough)	Map 2
8	Park (Grimsby town)	3	Park (Great Grimsby) ward (part); Scartho ward (part); South ward (part); Yarborough ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
9	Scartho (Grimsby town)	3	Park (Great Grimsby) ward (part); Scartho ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
10	Sidney Sussex (Cleethorpes town)	3	Croft Baker ward (part); Park (Cleethorpes) ward	Map 2 and Large map
11	South (Grimsby town)	3	Park (Great Grimsby) ward (part); South ward (part); Yarborough ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
12	Waltham	2	Wold Parishes ward (part – the parishes of Ashby-cum-Fenby, Brigsley and Waltham)	Map 2
13	West Marsh (Grimsby town)	2	Marsh ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
14	Wolds	2	Wold Parishes ward (part – the parishes of Aylesby, Barnoldby-le-Beck, Beelsby, Bradley, East Ravendale, Hatcliffe, Hawerby-cum-Beesby, Healing, Irby-upon-Humber, Laceby, West Ravendale and Wold Newton)	Map 2
15	Yarborough (Grimsby town)	3	South ward (part); Yarborough ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map

Notes: 1 The towns of Cleethorpes and Grimsby are unparished and comprise the 11 wards indicated above.

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

3 We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors.

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for North East Lincolnshire

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 Croft Baker (Cleethorpes town)	3	9,108	3,036	7	8,892	2,964	5
2 East Marsh (Grimsby town)	3	8,530	2,843	1	8,219	2,740	-3
3 Freshney (Grimsby town)	3	7,791	2,597	-8	7,766	2,589	-8
4 Haverstoe (Cleethorpes town)	3	8,344	2,781	-2	8,439	2,813	-1
5 Heneage (Grimsby town)	3	8,332	2,777	-2	8,227	2,742	-3
6 Humberston & New Waltham	3	8,088	2,696	-5	8,231	2,744	-3
7 Immingham	3	8,943	2,981	5	8,778	2,926	3
8 Park (Grimsby town)	3	9,156	3,052	8	8,909	2,970	5
9 Scartho (Grimsby town)	3	7,356	2,452	-13	9,028	3,009	6
10 Sidney Sussex (Cleethorpes town)	3	9,015	3,005	6	8,808	2,936	4
11 South (Grimsby town)	3	8,979	2,993	6	8,987	2,996	6
12 Waltham	2	5,557	2,779	-2	5,454	2,727	-4
13 West Marsh (Grimsby town)	2	5,595	2,798	-1	5,466	2,733	-3
14 Wolds	2	4,984	2,492	-12	5,401	2,701	-5
15 Yarborough (Grimsby town)	3	9,022	3,007	6	8,822	2,941	4
Totals	42	118,800	-	-	119,427	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,829	-	-	2,844	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on North East Lincolnshire 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 final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of North East Lincolnshire. We have now reviewed the new unitary authorities of East Riding of Yorkshire, Kingston-upon-Hull, North East Lincolnshire and North Lincolnshire 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 North East Lincolnshire. The last such reviews of the former Cleethorpes District Council and Great Grimsby District Council were undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in December 1975 on Cleethorpes District Council (Report No. 127) and August 1978 on Great Grimsby District Council (Report No. 288). The electoral arrangements of the new unitary authority, which came into existence on 1 April 1996, were put in place as part of the Structural Change Order which abolished the county of Humberside and its County Council.

3 In undertaking these reviews, we have had 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.

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the 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 have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (fourth edition published in December 2000), which 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, so far as practicable, 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 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. In unitary authorities the White Paper proposed elections by thirds. 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 and three-member wards in unitary authority areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral wards 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 Orders under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation and our current *Guidance*.

10 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 16 May 2000, when we wrote to North East Lincolnshire Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Humberside Police Authority, East Riding & Northern Lincolnshire Local Councils Association, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district, the Members of the European Parliament for the Yorkshire & Humber Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 21 August 2000. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

11 Stage Three began on 12 December 2000 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for North East Lincolnshire*, and ended on 19 February 2001. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

12 The district of North East Lincolnshire is situated on the south bank of the Humber Estuary. The area is served by the A180/M180, the Humber Bridge and Humberside International Airport. The district covers some 19,227 hectares and has a population density of approximately eight persons per hectare. Over the last four years there has been a small, but steady, decline in the electorate which may indicate falling population. The majority of the population is situated in the adjoining towns of Cleethorpes and Grimsby; these two towns are surrounded by 20 parishes covering the town of Immingham and the rural area of the Lincolnshire Wolds.

13 The electorate of the district is 118,800 (February 2000). Cleethorpes and Grimsby towns are unparished and comprise approximately 29 per cent and 55 per cent of the district's total electorate respectively. The Council has 42 members at present, who are elected from 14 three-member wards. The Council is elected as a whole every four years.

14 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'.

15 Since the last electoral reviews of Cleethorpes and Great Grimsby there has been an increase in the electorate in the area covered by North East Lincolnshire district, with around 3 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Freshney and Humberston wards.

16 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,829 electors, which the Council forecasts will increase to 2,844 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 six of the 14 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average and two wards by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalances are in Humberston and Wold Parishes wards where the councillors each represent 24 per cent more electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in North East Lincolnshire

Figure 3: 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 Croft Baker	3	7,250	2,417	-15	7,081	2,360	-17
2 Freshney	3	7,791	2,597	-8	7,766	2,589	-9
3 Haverstoe	3	8,561	2,854	1	8,355	2,785	-2
4 Heneage	3	8,421	2,807	-1	8,316	2,772	-3
5 Humberston	3	10,564	3,521	24	10,942	3,647	28
6 Immingham	3	8,943	2,981	5	8,778	2,926	5
7 Marsh	3	6,756	2,252	-20	6,590	2,197	-23
8 North East	3	7,280	2,427	-14	7,006	2,335	-18
9 Park (Cleethorpes)	3	8,180	2,727	-4	7,992	2,664	-6
10 Park (Great Grimsby)	3	8,737	2,912	3	8,503	2,834	0
11 Scartho	3	7,882	2,627	-7	9,538	3,179	12
12 South	3	7,894	2,631	-7	7,928	2,643	-7
13 Wold Parishes	3	10,541	3,514	24	10,855	3,618	27
14 Yarborough	3	10,000	3,333	18	9,777	3,259	15
Totals	42	118,800	-	-	119,427	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,829	-	-	2,844	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by North East Lincolnshire 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 2000, electors in Marsh ward were relatively over-represented by 20 per cent, while electors in Humberston ward were relatively under-represented by 24 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

17 During Stage One we received 113 representations, including three district-wide schemes. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for North East Lincolnshire*.

18 Our draft recommendations involved modifications to all but two of the existing wards, they achieved improvements in electoral equality, and provided a mixed pattern of two- and three-member wards across the district. Our draft recommendations were based on elements of the schemes submitted during Stage One by North East Lincolnshire Council, North East Lincolnshire Council Labour Group and the Liberal Democrat Group of North East Lincolnshire Councillors. We also proposed our own arrangements in two wards. We proposed that:

- North East Lincolnshire Council should be served by 42 councillors, as at present, representing 15 wards, one more than at present;
- the boundaries of 12 of the existing wards should be modified, while two wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- elections should take place by thirds, instead of every four years, as at present.

Draft Recommendation

North East Lincolnshire Council should comprise 42 councillors, serving 15 wards. The Council should hold elections by thirds.

19 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 13 of the 15 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 8 per cent from the average in 2005.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

20 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 18 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of North East Lincolnshire Council and the Commission.

North East Lincolnshire Council

21 North East Lincolnshire Council held a special meeting of the Council where they considered the Commission's draft recommendations for North East Lincolnshire. We were provided with the minutes of this meeting which "represent the Council's views on the recommendations contained in [our] report".

22 The Council supported the majority of our draft recommendations, however, they were opposed to our proposals in Cleethorpes, stating that the Labour Group's Stage One proposal for Croft Baker ward should be adopted. The Council did not support our proposed Wolds and Yarborough wards and also put forward a new name for Alexandra ward.

Labour Groups

23 North East Lincolnshire Local Government Labour Party made comments on three of our proposed wards, Alexandra, Croft Baker and Scartho. It proposed boundary modifications to each ward, as well as proposing that Alexandra ward should return three councillors, one more than under our draft recommendations. Consequently, North East Lincolnshire Council would have 43 members under its proposals.

24 Cleethorpes Branch of the Labour Party supported our draft recommendations for Humberston & New Waltham and Sidney Sussex wards. However, it put forward an alternative boundary to our draft recommendations between Croft Baker and Haverstoe wards, arguing that its proposed boundary would provide a better reflection of communities in both wards.

25 Marsh Ward Labour Party Branch stated that the existing electoral arrangements of Marsh and North East wards should be retained, with only one minor modification to the boundary between our proposed Heneage and North East wards. Its proposal would see Marsh ward retain three-members, one more than under our draft recommendations. Consequently, North East Lincolnshire Council would have 43 members under its proposals.

Liberal Democrat Groups

26 The North East Lincolnshire Council Liberal Democrat Group fully supported our draft recommendations stating that they "accept the necessity to create voting equality and therefore, on balance, fully support [our] recommendations".

27 Cleethorpes County Liberal Democrat Association stated that it “agreed that our draft [recommendations] for local boundary changes offered the better way forward and as a result would like to endorse these proposed changes”.

Parish Councils

28 Humberston Parish Council requested that “the unparished area of Humberston [ward] (the north of North Sea Lane) be included in Humberston ward along with the parished areas of Humberston and New Waltham ... and that an additional ward councillor is elected to cover the additional area”, this would make Humberston & New Waltham a four-member ward.

29 North East Lincolnshire Alliance of Parish Councils stated that the village of Great Coates, currently in Freshney ward, should be transferred into Wold Parishes ward which should retain all other existing boundaries and return four councillors. The Parish Councils of Ashby-cum-Fenby, Barnoldby-le-Beck, Healing and Waltham all opposed our draft recommendations for the wards of Waltham and Wolds, stating that the existing boundaries of Wold Parishes ward be retained, with the number of councillors being increased from three to four.

30 Immingham Town Council made a query concerning the implementation of elections by thirds; it had no further comments to make on our draft recommendations.

Other Representations

31 A further five representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from local councillors and residents. Councillor Barker, member for Marsh ward, supported “having 42 councillors serving 15 wards and for the Council to hold elections by thirds”, however, he proposed renaming Alexandra ward, West Marsh. He also stated that he could not support the proposal for a four-member Wold Parishes ward and instead put forward an alternative configuration of parishes in the rural area. Councillor Mills, member for Wold Parishes ward, stated that the existing boundaries of Wold Parishes ward should be retained but that the representation should be increased from three members to four, stating that Wold Parishes ward “is an exception”.

32 A resident of Cleethorpes supported the proposal put forward by the Cleethorpes branch of the Labour Party to modify the boundary between Croft Baker and Haverstoe wards. He also proposed renaming our proposed New Clee ward, East Marsh and expressed support for Immingham ward to remain unchanged. A resident of Immingham stated his opposition to our proposed ward name of New Clee. A resident of the proposed Sidney Sussex ward endorsed our draft recommendations, stating that “changing the electoral cycle is an excellent idea, which hopefully will help to make councillors more accountable to their electors”.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

33 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for North East Lincolnshire 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”.

34 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 also must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken.

35 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.

36 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, such an objective 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 absolute electoral equality and only then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity and interests. Regard must 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

37 At Stage One the Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of 0.5 per cent from 118,800 to 119,427 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expected most of the growth to be in Scartho ward, although a significant amount was also expected in Humberston ward. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. The three political groups on the Council agreed with the electorate forecasts. However, during Stage One, the North East Lincolnshire Local Government Labour Party projected an increase in the electorate of 1 per cent, to 120,116 by 2005, but did not provide details outlining where its projections differed to those of the Council. We sought clarification from North East Lincolnshire Council in light of these alternative electorate projections and were not persuaded to move away from the Council’s electorate forecast. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that forecasting electorates is an

inexact science and, having given consideration to the Council's figures, we were content that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

38 We received no comments on the Council's electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates presently available.

Council Size

39 The Commission's starting point in a PER 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.

40 North East Lincolnshire Council currently has 42 members. During Stage One the Council proposed a council of 42 members, as at present, which received support from the North East Lincolnshire Conservative groups and the North East Lincolnshire Labour groups. However, the Liberal Democrat Group of North East Lincolnshire Councillors proposed an increase in council size of one, from 42 to 43, in order to retain a pattern of three-member wards across the towns of Cleethorpes and Grimsby.

41 In our draft recommendations report we considered the proposals based on both a 42- and a 43-member council. As already explained, the Commission's starting point in a PER is to assume that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government. We received a number of schemes based on a council size of 42 members, which would result in some improvements to electoral equality, while reflecting the statutory criteria. A council size of 42 also provided the correct distribution of councillors across the different areas of the district. We therefore proposed no change to the current council size.

42 During Stage Three the Marsh Ward Labour Party Branch stated that North East Lincolnshire Council should have 43 members, in order to facilitate a three-member Marsh ward. Under a council size of 42, the unparished area of Cleethorpes and Grimsby is entitled to 32 members, therefore a pattern of three-member wards is not possible. In order to retain a three-member Marsh ward and provide the correct distribution of councillors the Marsh Ward Labour Party Branch proposed an increase in the total council size of one, to 43. This proposal was supported by the North East Lincolnshire Local Government Labour Party. As stated in our draft recommendations, in the absence of any argumentation to demonstrate why the current council size is no longer appropriate, or that effective and convenient local government cannot be provided in Cleethorpes and Grimsby on a non-uniform pattern of three- or two-member wards, we do not consider it justifiable to increase the council size to 43.

43 Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received during Stage One and Stage Three, we have concluded that the current council size of 42 members provides effective and convenient local government for the electorate of North East Lincolnshire Council, while facilitating a scheme which provides high levels of electoral equality across the district.

Electoral Arrangements

44 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including the district-wide schemes from North East Lincolnshire Council, North East Lincolnshire Council Labour Group and North East Lincolnshire Local Government Labour Party, as well as the proposals from the North East Lincolnshire Council Conservative Group, Cleethorpes Conservative Association, Great Grimsby Conservative Association and the Liberal Democrat Group of North East Lincolnshire Councillors. From these representations, some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations.

45 When formulating our draft recommendations we considered carefully all proposals put forward and concluded that the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria would be met by a scheme based on elements of the proposals submitted by North East Lincolnshire Council, North East Lincolnshire Council Labour Group and the Liberal Democrat Group of North East Lincolnshire Councillors. However, in two wards, Park (Great Grimsby) and Wold Parishes we put forward our own arrangements.

46 We are pleased to note that the North East Lincolnshire Liberal Democrat Group and the Cleethorpes County Liberal Democrat Association supported our draft recommendations in their entirety and that North East Lincolnshire Council and Councillor Barker, member for Marsh ward, supported the majority of our draft recommendations. We have considered carefully the representations received requesting that we reconsider our draft recommendations.

47 In response to our draft recommendations report, a number of Parish Councils proposed four-member Humberston and Wold Parishes wards. The Commission believes that wards with a number of councillors in excess of three could result in an unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate. In March 2000 officers from the Commission briefed representatives from the Parish Councils of North East Lincolnshire and informed them that any proposal for the creation of four-member wards would need to be supported by strong evidence that illustrated why a four-member ward would be the only practicable solution for the representation of an area. This is also clearly stated in our *Guidance* and was outlined in our draft recommendations report.

48 We do not consider that any of the representations received during Stage One or Stage Three of the review provided us with sufficient evidence as to why we should make an exception in the case of North East Lincolnshire and create four-member wards. We have also noted that North East Lincolnshire Council voted against the creation of a four-member ward.

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

- (a) Freshney, Heneage, Marsh and North East wards;
- (b) Park (Great Grimsby), Scartho, South and Yarborough wards;
- (c) Croft Baker, Haverstoe, Humberston and Park (Cleethorpes) wards;
- (d) Immingham and Wold Parishes wards.

50 Details of our final 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.

Freshney, Heneage, Marsh and North East wards

51 These four wards are situated in the north and east of Grimsby town, which itself lies in the north of the district. The wards of Freshney, Heneage, Marsh and North East are all over-represented by 8 per cent, 1 per cent, 20 per cent and 14 per cent respectively (9 per cent, 3 per cent, 23 per cent and 18 per cent by 2005).

52 During Stage One North East Lincolnshire Council proposed no change to Heneage ward. It proposed that the village of Great Coates, currently situated in Freshney ward, be transferred into a ward with part of Wold Parishes ward. To provide good electoral equality in a modified Freshney ward, no longer including the village of Great Coates, it proposed transferring electors currently in Yarborough ward, into Freshney ward. The Council also proposed a modification to the boundary between the wards of Marsh and North East. It proposed that the railway line and the eastern edge of the Royal Dock should be used as the boundary, with electors being transferred from Marsh ward into North East ward. It stated that this would provide a clearly defined boundary while improving electoral equality in both wards. The Council proposed that Marsh ward should be represented by two councillors. It also put forward new names for the existing wards of Marsh and North East, proposing Alexandra and New Clee respectively. Under the Council's Stage One proposals the wards of Alexandra, Heneage and New Clee would all have a councillor:elector ratio 1 per cent below the district average (4 per cent, 3 per cent and 5 per cent respectively by 2005). Freshney ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 2 per cent above the district average (equal to the district average by 2005).

53 At Stage One the North East Lincolnshire Council Conservative Group supported the Council's proposals for the wards of Heneage and North East. However, it put forward two options for Freshney ward, one which included Great Coates in Freshney ward and one which included the village in a Wold parishes ward; the group noted that "opinion in Great Coates is divided". The Conservative Group supported the Council's proposed boundary between Marsh ward and North East ward; however, it put forward a new Alexandra ward, to include the remainder of Marsh ward with electors from the north of the existing Yarborough ward. These proposals were supported by the Great Grimsby Conservative Association. Under this scheme the wards of Heneage and New Clee would have the same electoral variances as the Council's scheme. Alexandra ward would have an electoral variance of 2 per cent (4 per cent by 2005). Under the Conservative Group's Option A and B, Freshney ward would have electoral variances of 20 per cent and 8 per cent respectively (19 per cent and 9 per cent by 2005).

54 The Cleethorpes Conservative Association also proposed that Great Coates village should be transferred out of Freshney ward and included in a rural Wolds ward. It agreed with the Council's proposals for the wards of Marsh, Heneage and Yarborough.

55 North East Lincolnshire Council Labour Group supported the Council's proposal to include the village of Great Coates in a ward with the Wold parishes, but it also proposed that the electors west of Oakwood Drive and Wybers Wood First School be included in a Wold parishes ward. It also proposed including electors currently in Marsh ward in a modified Freshney ward. The

remainder of the existing Marsh ward would be included in a new St James ward with electors in the north of Park (Great Grimsby) ward and the north of Yarborough ward. The Labour Group supported the Council's proposal to use the railway line as the boundary between Marsh ward and North East ward but proposed one minor modification to the boundaries of Heneage and North East wards. It proposed that Marsh ward should be represented by two members, while Freshney, Heneage and North East wards should continue to return three councillors each. Finally, it supported the Council's proposal to rename North East ward New Clee, and that Marsh ward be renamed, suggesting St James as the new ward name.

56 North East Lincolnshire Local Government Labour Party put forward the same proposals as the Labour Group for Freshney ward and similar proposals for Marsh ward. However, it proposed that a greater number of electors be transferred into Marsh ward from both Park (Great Grimsby) and Yarborough wards. Its proposals were identical to the Council's proposals for Heneage and North East wards.

57 At Stage One the Liberal Democrat Group argued for a pattern of three-member wards across the urban area and supported the Council's proposals for Heneage and North East wards. However, it proposed that the existing electoral arrangements for Freshney ward be retained. The Liberal Democrats supported the Council's proposed boundary between Marsh and North East wards but proposed that the remainder of Marsh ward should be included in a new Alexandra ward with electors situated in the north of the existing Yarborough ward. Under these proposals the wards of Alexandra, Freshney, Heneage and New Clee would have electoral variances of 1 per cent, 6 per cent, 2 per cent and 2 per cent respectively (2 per cent, 7 per cent, equal to the district average and 2 per cent by 2005).

58 North East Lincolnshire Alliance of Parish Councils and Healing Parish Council supported the proposal to include Great Coates in a Wold parishes ward. Councillor Barker, member for Marsh ward, supported the Council's proposed boundary between Marsh and North East wards but opposed the proposal to reduce the number of councillors representing Marsh ward from three members to two. He proposed that the Scunthorpe to Cleethorpes railway line should be crossed to include electors from Park or Yarborough ward in order to secure Marsh ward's current level of representation. A resident of Great Coates opposed any proposal to include the village of Great Coates in a rural ward. A resident of Cleethorpes stated that the existing Freshney ward should be retained. The same resident also commented on the Council's proposals for Marsh ward, stating that it should retain three members and that the southern boundary should be extended to include electors from the existing Yarborough ward. Two residents of Grimsby proposed that Cromwell Road and Dudley Street should be used as the boundary between Marsh and Yarborough wards.

59 When formulating our draft recommendations we looked carefully at the proposals to include the village of Great Coates in a rural Wold Parishes ward and the arguments that Great Coates has a strong community identity of its own. However, having visited the area, we considered that the electors of Great Coates have stronger community links with the electors of Freshney ward than they do with electors in the parishes of Wold Parishes ward, from whom they are separated by a considerable geographical distance. We also considered the subsequent need to include in Freshney ward electors from Marsh or Yarborough wards, if Great Coates village no longer formed part of Freshney ward and concluded that the electors of Freshney ward have stronger

community links with the electors of Great Coates than they do with electors of Marsh ward or Yarborough ward. We concluded that the Liberal Democrat Group's Stage One proposals for Freshney ward offered effective and convenient local government while retaining strong community identity in the area and we therefore endorsed them as part of our draft recommendations.

60 Under a council size of 42 members, the urban, unparished area of Grimsby and Cleethorpes (including Great Coates village) is entitled to 32 councillors. It was therefore impossible to retain a pattern of three-member wards across the unparished area, as requested by the Liberal Democrats. Having visited the area we concluded that the Council's proposed two-member Alexandra ward represented the most appropriate balance between achieving electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Our proposed ward used the Scunthorpe to Cleethorpes railway line as a strong, clear and easily definable boundary and resulted in the number of electors per councillor being 1 per cent below the district average (3 per cent by 2005). We also proposed adopting the Council's suggested ward name of Alexandra. We noted the alternative arrangements put forward by the Conservative groups, the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor Barker and three local residents for this area but did not believe such proposals would best reflect community identity in the area. We also considered, having looked at the urban area as a whole, that the Council's proposed Alexandra ward provided the most suitable two-member ward because of the good level of electoral equality and strong, clear boundaries achieved.

61 There was general consensus regarding the proposed warding arrangements for Heneage and New Clee. We adopted the majority of these proposals but recommended that the boundary between these wards be amended to run along the northern edge of Hardy Recreation Ground and then north along the middle of Humberston Road, to provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Under our draft recommendations the ward of New Clee would have a councillor:elector ratio 1 per cent above the district average (3 per cent below by 2005). Alexandra, Freshney and Heneage wards would have councillor:elector ratios 1 per cent, 8 per cent and 2 per cent below the district average respectively (3 per cent, 8 per cent and 3 per cent by 2005).

62 At Stage Three we received seven submissions concerning these four wards. North East Lincolnshire Council stated that it approved of our draft recommendations for these four wards subject to one minor modification. It put forward a new ward name of West Marsh to replace our proposed name of Alexandra.

63 Marsh Ward Labour Party Branch put forward alternative proposals for our proposed Alexandra and New Clee wards. It stated that there should be "no change to the present Marsh ward and that the only change to the present North East ward be the inclusion (as recommended) of part of Heneage ward". This would involve an increase in the council size to 43 members as Marsh ward would return 3 members under its proposals. It put forward arguments of deprivation in the ward and the fact that the current boundaries had been in place since 1974. This proposal had the full support of the North East Lincolnshire Local Government Labour Party.

64 North East Lincolnshire Alliance of Parish Councils stated that Great Coates village, currently in Freshney ward, should be included in a four-member Wold Parishes ward as the

village “retains a strong rural character ... its inclusion in the Wold Parishes ward would, therefore, appear logical”.

65 Councillor Barker, member for Marsh ward, stated that although he was “disappointed that a three-member ward cannot be made” from parts of Marsh and Yarborough wards he was “happy to accept and support a two-member ward”. He did, however, put forward West Marsh as a “better and more recognisable name” than our proposed name of Alexandra.

66 A resident of Immingham was opposed to our proposed ward name of New Clee, stating that “to impose this name on an area of Grimsby is historically and practically confusing”. A resident of Cleethorpes also opposed our proposed ward name of New Clee stating that “a more historically accurate name for the ward would be East Marsh”.

67 We have considered carefully all representations received during Stage Three concerning these four wards. As outlined earlier in the chapter, and in our draft recommendations, we are not proposing an increase in council size to 43 members or a pattern of three-member wards in this area. If we were to revert to the existing arrangements of three-member wards for Marsh and North East, as proposed by Marsh ward Labour Party Branch and North East Lincolnshire Local Government Labour Party, we would have to introduce a two-member ward in another part of the unparished area. We are still of the opinion that, when considering the area as a whole, our proposed two-member Alexandra ward offers the strongest boundaries and highest levels of electoral equality available and we were pleased to note that such a proposal commanded some local support. Consequently we propose endorsing our draft recommendations as final for the boundaries and levels of representation of Alexandra and New Clee wards. However, we have noted the opposition to these proposed ward names, therefore, we propose renaming Alexandra ward as West Marsh and New Clee ward as East Marsh, as proposed locally.

68 We are proposing to endorse our draft recommendations for Freshney and Heneage wards as final. We received no opposition during Stage Three to our proposals for Heneage ward. We have looked again at the proposal to include Great Coates in a ward with the Wold parishes, as proposed by the North East Lincolnshire Alliance of Parish Council’s. However, due to the lack of any further evidence, and the support of North East Lincolnshire Council for our proposals, we have not been convinced that Great Coates should be transferred out of Freshney ward.

69 Our final recommendations, for all four of these wards, would provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations and are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Park (Great Grimsby), Scartho, South and Yarborough wards

70 These four wards are situated in the centre and south of Grimsby town, which itself lies in the north of the district. The wards of Scartho and South both currently have councillor:elector ratios 7 per cent below the district average (12 per cent above and 7 per cent below respectively by 2005). Park (Great Grimsby) and Yarborough wards currently have councillor:elector ratios 3 per cent and 18 per cent above the district average respectively (equal to and 15 per cent above the district average by 2005).

71 At Stage One North East Lincolnshire Council proposed that these four wards should continue to be represented by three councillors each. The Council proposed transferring electors from Yarborough ward into Freshney ward and those electors in the Stephen Crescent area, currently in Yarborough ward, into South ward. It proposed that the electors north of Cambridge Road, currently in South ward, should be transferred into Yarborough ward as this would “create a better southern boundary,” and that Scartho Road should be used as the boundary between Park (Great Grimsby) ward and South ward. The Council proposed that the electors to the east of Chelmsford Avenue and north of Laceby Road, should be transferred into Park (Great Grimsby) ward and that the existing boundary between Park (Great Grimsby) ward and the wards of Heneage, Marsh and Yarborough be retained. However, it proposed that the Edge Avenue estate, currently in Scartho ward, should be included in Park (Great Grimsby) ward and that the electors of Scartho Top, currently in Park (Great Grimsby) ward, should be transferred into Scartho ward. A number of respondents proposed that Park (Great Grimsby) ward should be renamed Park. The proposals for these four wards were supported by the Cleethorpes Conservative Association. Under these proposals the wards of Park, Scartho and South would have a councillor:elector ratio 2 per cent, 13 per cent and 3 per cent below the district average respectively (5 per cent below, 6 per cent above and 3 per cent below by 2005). Yarborough ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 4 per cent above the district average (1 per cent by 2005).

72 The Conservative Group supported transferring the electors situated to the north of the existing Yarborough ward into Marsh ward. It proposed transferring electors from the existing South ward into Yarborough ward and Park (Great Grimsby) ward. It put forward the transfer of the majority of polling district PG6, currently in Park (Great Grimsby) ward, into South ward, with the exception of the electors in 142 to 198 Scartho Road, who would be included in Scartho ward. It proposed no other changes to the boundaries of Scartho ward. However, it also stated a preference for a four-member Scartho ward, but proposed a three-member ward as “an interim arrangement”. These proposals were supported by Great Grimsby Conservative Association. Under the Conservative Group’s Stage One proposals, the wards of Park, Scartho, South and Yarborough would have electoral variances of 3 per cent, 6 per cent, 16 per cent and 1 per cent respectively (7 per cent, 13 per cent, 15 per cent and 3 per cent by 2005).

73 The North East Lincolnshire Council Labour Group proposed that the electors south of Laceby Road, currently in Yarborough ward, should be transferred into a rural ward with the parishes of Bradley and Laceby and that electors currently in Yarborough ward should be transferred into its proposed St James ward. It also proposed that South ward should comprise the existing ward with the addition of electors currently in Park (Great Grimsby) and Yarborough wards. It proposed that the northern polling districts of Park (Great Grimsby) ward should be transferred into Marsh ward and that the Edge Avenue Estate, currently in Scartho ward, should be included in Park (Great Grimsby) ward. It proposed that Scartho, South and Yarborough wards continue to return three councillors each, however Park ward should be represented by two councillors, a reduction of one.

74 North East Lincolnshire Local Government Labour Party supported the proposals of North East Lincolnshire Council Labour Group for Scartho and South wards. Its proposals for Park (Great Grimsby) ward were similar to those put forward by the Labour Group except that a greater number of electors from Park (Great Grimsby) ward would be transferred into Marsh

ward. It also proposed similar boundaries to those put forward by the Labour Group for Yarborough ward, although it proposed transferring more electors into Marsh ward.

75 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed that electors situated in the north of the existing Yarborough ward should be transferred into Marsh ward. It also proposed that electors currently in South ward be included in revised Yarborough and Park wards. The Group proposed that the remainder of South ward be included in a ward with electors situated in the south of the existing Park (Great Grimsby) ward and the Edge Avenue Estate, currently in Scartho ward. Under these proposals for a 43-member scheme, the wards of Park, Scartho, South and Yarborough would have resulted in electoral variances of 1 per cent, 13 per cent, 4 per cent and 2 per cent respectively (4 per cent, 6 per cent, 5 per cent and 1 per cent by 2005). The electoral variances would have been higher in the proposed wards of Park, South and Yarborough under a 42-member scheme, in 2005, but would have been lower in Scartho ward.

76 Scartho Preservation Society opposed any proposal to transfer the Edge Avenue estate out of Scartho ward, for reasons of community identity, and proposed that the new housing development of Scartho Top should be included in a neighbouring ward, as an alternative solution. It also proposed that the electors south of Sutcliffe Avenue currently in Park (Great Grimsby) ward, excluding the electors of Scartho Top, should be included in Scartho ward. Councillor Vickers, member for Scartho ward, supported this proposal. Three residents of Scartho proposed that the Scartho Top development should be transferred out of Scartho ward, as opposed to the Edge Avenue Estate, which they argued was an established part of Scartho.

77 When formulating our draft recommendations we proposed adopting the Council's modified Scartho ward. We carefully considered the arguments for transferring the Scartho Top development into a revised South ward, however, having visited the area, we noted the boundary between the Scartho Top development and the rear of the properties on the Nunsthorpe Estate, currently in South ward, is very strong and that there is no access road linking the properties. We considered creating two two-member wards to cover the existing Scartho ward and Park ward polling district PG6 (which covers the south of the existing ward), however, we did not consider such a proposal would accurately reflect the community of Scartho. Consequently, we concluded that the Council's proposal that the electors of the Edge Avenue Estate should be included in a modified Park (Great Grimsby) ward would provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, and subject to a minor modification (affecting no electors) proposed it form part of our draft recommendations.

78 We based our draft recommendations for South ward on the Labour Group's proposals, albeit with one minor modification. We agreed with the proposals to unite the Nunsthorpe estate in one ward, for reasons of community identity. However, we proposed re-aligning the boundary to the rear of the properties to unite electors on both sides of Laceby Road in a single ward.

79 We put forward our own proposals for Park (Great Grimsby) ward. We concluded that the ward should comprise the remainder of the existing ward and the electors of the Edge Avenue Estate, currently in Scartho ward, and the electors east of Marshall Avenue and Clifton Road, currently in Yarborough ward. This proposal retained the majority of the existing ward while uniting communities in Park ward and neighbouring wards. We adopted the proposal to rename

Park (Great Grimsby) ward, Park. In Yarborough ward we adopted the Labour Group's proposal for its eastern boundary, with two minor modifications, we proposed retaining all other existing Yarborough ward boundaries. We concluded that all four of these wards should each be represented by three councillors. All of the boundaries we put forward in this area were locally derived and we considered that our draft recommendations offered high levels of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. Under our draft recommendations, Scartho ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 13 per cent below the district average (6 per cent above by 2005). The wards of Park, South and Yarborough would have councillor:elector ratios 8 per cent, 6 per cent and 6 per cent above the district average respectively (5 per cent, 6 per cent and 4 per cent by 2005).

80 At Stage Three we received two submissions concerning these four wards. North East Lincolnshire Council supported our draft recommendations for Park, Scartho and South wards but opposed the modified Yarborough ward. The Commission's attention was drawn to a boundary anomaly between the proposed South and Yarborough wards by officers at North East Lincolnshire Council, where our proposed boundary would divide the small housing development being constructed at the end of Westhill Road.

81 North East Lincolnshire Local Government Labour Party stated that it had "re-examined" its original proposals for Scartho ward. It suggested that the Edge Avenue Estate should be retained in Scartho ward with the new development of Scartho Top being transferred into Park (Great Grimsby) ward. It stated that the housing in the Edge Avenue Estate was the same "type" as the housing in the rest of Scartho ward and this would "maintain the social equality and identity" in the area.

82 We have given careful consideration to the representations received during Stage Three. We have re-examined the northern boundary of Scartho ward and the proposal by North East Lincolnshire Local Government Labour Party to include the Edge Avenue Estate in Scartho ward and the Scartho Top development, in Park ward. However, we have not been convinced that the electors of Scartho Top have stronger community links with the electors of Park ward, than the electors of the Edge Avenue Estate, who we included in Park ward under our draft recommendations. We were also pleased to note that North East Lincolnshire Council and the Liberal Democrat Group generally supported our proposals. Consequently, we propose endorsing our draft recommendations for Scartho ward as final.

83 We have received no further comments on our proposals for Park and South wards and consequently propose endorsing our draft recommendations for these two wards as final. Although North East Lincolnshire Council opposed our proposals for Yarborough ward it did not propose an alternative and, as we have received no further comments on this ward, we also propose endorsing our draft recommendations as final for Yarborough ward, subject to the minor boundary amendment with South ward which would tie the boundary to ground detail and include all the electors of Westhill Road in South ward.

84 Our final recommendations for all four of these wards would provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Croft Baker, Haverstoe, Humberston and Park (Cleethorpes) wards

85 These four wards are situated in Cleethorpes town which lies in the north-east of the district. The wards of Croft Baker and Park (Cleethorpes) currently have councillor:elector ratios 15 per cent and 4 per cent below the district average respectively (17 per cent and 6 per cent by 2005). Haverstoe and Humberston wards have councillor:elector ratios 1 per cent and 24 per cent above the district average respectively (2 per cent below and 28 per cent above by 2005).

86 During Stage One North East Lincolnshire Council proposed that all four of these wards should retain three councillors each. It proposed transferring the electors north of the Humberston parish boundary from Humberston ward into Haverstoe ward. Humberston ward would consequently comprise the parishes of Humberston and New Waltham in their entirety. The Council proposed that the electors north of Taylors Avenue and west of Trinity Road, currently in Haverstoe ward, be transferred into Croft Baker ward to improve electoral equality and to provide a stronger boundary. It also proposed transferring the electors north of Clee Road, High Street and Isaacs Hill, currently in Croft Baker ward, into Park (Cleethorpes) ward, to improve electoral equality. The Council proposed no further boundary modifications to the boundaries of Park (Cleethorpes) ward. It proposed that Humberston ward be renamed Humberston & New Waltham, reflecting the two constituent parishes and that Park (Cleethorpes) ward be renamed Sidney Sussex, “to reflect a local connection and to avoid any confusion”. Under these proposals the wards of Croft Baker, Haverstoe, Humberston & New Waltham and Sidney Sussex would all have had councillor:elector ratios above the district average by 3 per cent, 3 per cent, 5 per cent and 6 per cent respectively (equal to the district average, 3 per cent, 5 per cent and 3 per cent by 2005).

87 The North East Lincolnshire Council Conservative Group, Cleethorpes Conservative Association, Great Grimsby Conservative Association and the Liberal Democrat Group of North East Lincolnshire Councillors supported North East Lincolnshire Council’s Stage One proposals for these four wards in full.

88 North East Lincolnshire Council Labour Group supported the Council’s proposals for Humberston ward but it put forward a different boundary between Croft Baker ward and Haverstoe ward, transferring the electors north of Queen’s Parade and Taylors Avenue and east of The Lindsey Upper School, currently in Haverstoe ward, into Croft Baker ward. It stated that this alternative would provide an easily recognisable boundary while including the central part of Cleethorpes in Croft Baker ward. The Labour Group proposed that the electors north of Princes Road, currently in Croft Baker ward, should be included in Park (Cleethorpes) ward, to improve electoral equality. The Labour Group proposed that each of these four wards should return three councillors. It supported the proposal to rename Humberston ward and Park (Cleethorpes) ward, Humberston & New Waltham and Sidney Sussex respectively. Under the Labour Group’s Stage One proposals Haverstoe ward would have had a councillor:elector ratio equal to the district average both initially and in 2005. The wards of Croft Baker and Sidney Sussex would have councillor:elector ratios 8 per cent and 4 per cent above the district average respectively (5 per cent and 1 per cent by 2005). Humberston & New Waltham ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 5 per cent below the district average (4 per cent by 2005).

89 The North East Lincolnshire Local Government Labour Party supported the Council's proposal for Humberston ward and the Labour Group's proposal for Park (Cleethorpes) ward. It proposed an alternative boundary between Croft Baker and Haverstoe wards, proposing that the electors west of Trinity Road and part of polling district HA3 (situated to the west of Haverstoe ward) should be transferred from Haverstoe ward into Croft Baker ward which, it stated, would reunite the "older parts of the town". It proposed that these four wards should be represented by three councillors each.

90 During Stage One we also received 81 proforma letters from residents of Cleethorpes proposing modifications to Croft Baker ward, similar in nature to those put forward by the North East Lincolnshire Council Labour Group. They proposed that the electors to the east of Thrunscoc Road and north of Queen's Parade should be transferred from Haverstoe ward to Croft Baker ward. They also proposed that the electors north of Princes Road be transferred from Croft Baker ward into Park (Cleethorpes) ward. Two residents of Humberston stated their opposition to any proposal to transfer part of the existing Humberston ward into Haverstoe ward, as put forward in all other submissions received.

91 When formulating our draft recommendations, we proposed adopting North East Lincolnshire Council's proposals for all four of these wards. The proposal for a modified Humberston & New Waltham ward received support from all submissions, with the exception of two residents in Humberston. We considered that to adopt the existing parish boundary of Humberston parish as the new district ward boundary, between Haverstoe and Humberston & New Waltham wards, would offer a strong, recognisable boundary, while improving electoral equality.

92 We also noted that the Council's and Labour Group's Stage One proposals for the boundary between Croft Baker and Haverstoe wards offered similar levels of electoral equality. However, we concluded that Taylors Avenue, as proposed by the Council, provided a stronger boundary than Brian Avenue, the Labour Group's proposed boundary. We further noted that the Council's proposed Croft Baker ward would unite the electors in Brian Avenue and Sandringham Road in the same ward. Having decided to adopt the Council's proposed southern boundary for Croft Baker ward we also endorsed its proposals for the northern boundary, as this provided higher levels of electoral equality than the boundary put forward by the Labour Group. Given the comparatively low levels of electoral equality in the wards of Croft Baker and Haverstoe, 9 per cent and 17 per cent respectively (11 per cent and 17 per cent by 2005), we did not adopt the proposals put forward from residents of Cleethorpes. We also adopted the proposal to rename Park (Cleethorpes) ward, as Sidney Sussex. Under our draft recommendations Croft Baker, Haverstoe and Sidney Sussex wards would have councillor:elector ratios 3 per cent, 3 per cent and 6 per cent above the district average respectively (equal to the district average, 4 per cent above and 4 per cent above by 2005). Humberston & New Waltham ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 5 per cent below the district average (3 per cent by 2005).

93 At Stage Three we received five representations concerning these four wards. North East Lincolnshire Council stated that it approved our draft recommendations for Humberston & New Waltham ward. However, the Council passed an amendment (18 members for and 15 members against) "that the Labour Group's submission for Croft Baker ward be agreed as the Council's

submission”. Consequently, having opposed our proposed Croft Baker ward, the Council voted not to approve our proposals for Haverstoe and Sidney Sussex wards (by 18 votes to 15 and 17 votes to 16 respectively).

94 North East Lincolnshire Local Government Labour Party stated that Queens Parade/Taylor's Avenue (proposed by the North East Lincolnshire Labour Group during Stage One) forms a “more natural boundary” between Croft Baker and Haverstoe wards and that “the age and type of housing in the Queens Parade area is compatible with that of the main part of Croft Baker ward”. Cleethorpes Branch of the Labour Party stated that it fully supported our draft recommendations for Humberston & New Waltham and Sidney Sussex wards. It stated that the unparished area of the existing Humberston ward “has never been part of Humberston parish, all the streets have a Cleethorpes address” and that our draft recommendations are “a clear and logical solution”. It also proposed that the boundary between Croft Baker and Haverstoe wards should run along Queens Parade/Taylor's Avenue (as proposed by the North East Lincolnshire Labour Group during Stage One) as it would be clear and better reflect the community interest of Belvoir Park and Middlethorpe.

95 The proposals put forward by the North East Lincolnshire Local Government Labour Party and the Cleethorpes Branch of the Labour Party would provide the same levels of electoral equality as under the Stage One submission from the North East Lincolnshire Labour Group, outlined earlier in this section.

96 Humberston Parish Council proposed a four-member Humberston ward to include “the unparished area of Humberston to the north of North Sea Lane” and the parished areas of Humberston and New Waltham, as under the existing arrangements. A resident of Cleethorpes stated that he fully supported the submission of the Cleethorpes Branch of the Labour Party, because “their revised boundary between Croft Baker and Haverstoe wards provides a better solution in terms of community interests”.

97 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to move away from our draft recommendation and modify the proposed boundary between Croft Baker and Haverstoe wards. When formulating our draft recommendations we noted that the proposals put forward by the Council and the Labour Group provided similar levels of electoral equality, we therefore proposed adopting the Council's proposal due to the strength of Taylor's Avenue as a boundary. However, during Stage Three we have been convinced by the arguments put forward by Cleethorpes Branch of the Labour Party, which would command some local support, that our proposals do not best reflect community identities, consequently we propose adopting the Cleethorpes Branch of the Labour Party's proposals, to better reflect community identities. However, we propose modifying this boundary, to unite the electors of Brian Avenue in Croft Baker ward, as this would not adversely affect the levels of electoral equality. Our proposed boundary is illustrated on the large map inserted at the back of this report. North East Lincolnshire Council did not approve of our draft recommendations for Sidney Sussex ward, however, it did not outline any alternative proposals and as we have received no further comments on this ward we propose endorsing our draft recommendations for Sidney Sussex ward as final.

98 We have carefully considered the proposal put forward by Humberston Parish Council. As outlined earlier in the chapter, in our *Guidance* and in our draft recommendations, the Commission considers that four-member wards could result in an unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate. To retain the existing boundaries for a three-member Humberston & New Waltham ward would result in an electoral variance of 24 per cent, 28 per cent by 2005. We consider such a high electoral variance is unjustifiable, especially when a viable alternative proposal is available. We also understand that Humberston Parish Council supported North East Lincolnshire Council's proposal, which we adopted in our draft recommendations at Stage One. Therefore, we are not proposing a four-member Humberston & New Waltham ward as requested by Humberston Parish Council.

99 Under our final recommendations both Humberston and Sidney Sussex wards have the same levels of electoral equality as under our draft recommendations. However, under our final recommendations, Croft Baker ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 7 per cent above the district average (5 per cent by 2005) and Haverstoe ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 2 per cent below the district average (1 per cent below by 2005). Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Immingham and Wold Parishes wards

100 The ward of Immingham is situated in the north-west of the district and covers the rural parishes of Habrough and Stallingborough and the more urban parish of Immingham. Wold Parishes ward covers over 50 per cent of the area of the district and is made up of 15 parishes of the rural Lincolnshire Wolds. Immingham and Wold Parishes wards currently have councillor:elector ratios 5 per cent and 24 per cent above the district average respectively (5 per cent and 27 per cent by 2005).

101 At Stage One North East Lincolnshire Council proposed retaining the existing electoral arrangements of Immingham ward. It proposed that the parishes of Aylesby, Beelsby, Bradley, Hatcliffe, Healing, Irby-upon-Humber and Laceby, currently part of Wold Parishes ward, be included in a new two-member Wolds ward with the village of Great Coates, currently in Freshney ward. The parishes of Ashby-cum-Fenby, Barnoldby-le-Beck, Brigsley, East Ravendale, Waltham, West Ravendale and Wold Newton would form a new two-member Waltham ward. Under the Council's Stage One proposals the wards of Immingham and Waltham would have councillor:elector ratios 5 per cent and 6 per cent above the district average respectively (3 per cent in both wards by 2005). Wolds ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 3 per cent below the district average (6 per cent above by 2005).

102 North East Lincolnshire Council Conservative Group proposed a modified Immingham ward coterminous with the parish of Immingham. It proposed two different options for Wold Parishes ward. The Conservative Groups Option A proposals would have resulted in the wards of Immingham, Waltham and Wolds having electoral variances of 32 per cent, 6 per cent and 17 per cent respectively (29 per cent, 3 per cent and 13 per cent by 2005). Under Option B the electoral variances would have been 32 per cent, 6 per cent and 7 per cent respectively (29 per cent, 3 per cent and 13 per cent by 2005). This submission was supported by Great Grimsby

Conservative Association. Cleethorpes Conservative Association partly supported the Conservative Group's scheme.

103 North East Lincolnshire Labour Group supported the Council's proposal to retain the existing arrangements in Immingham ward. It proposed that the parishes of Aylesby, Barnoldby-le-Beck, Beelsby, Bradley, Healing, Irby-upon-Humber and Laceby should form a new three-member North Wold ward with electors of polling district FR2 (Great Coates village and the north west of Wybers Wood housing estate), currently in Freshney ward, and part of Yarborough ward. It proposed that the remaining parishes of Wold Parishes ward be included in a ward represented by two councillors. Under these proposals Immingham ward would provide the same levels of electoral equality as under the Council's proposals. North Wold ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 19 per cent below the district average (13 per cent by 2005) and Wold Parishes ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 3 per cent above the district average (equal to the district average by 2005).

104 North East Lincolnshire Local Government Labour Party's proposals for Wold Parishes ward were similar to those of the Labour Group, except that Beelsby parish would be included in a ward with the southern parishes, rather than the northern parishes as proposed by the Labour Group.

105 The Liberal Democrat Group supported the Council's proposal to retain the existing arrangements for Immingham ward. It proposed dividing the existing Wold Parishes ward into two two-member wards, with Ashby-cum-Fenby, Barnoldby-le-Beck, Brigsley and Waltham parishes forming a new Waltham ward. The remainder of the existing Wold Parishes ward would comprise a new Wolds ward. Under these proposals Immingham and Waltham wards would have councillor:elector ratios 8 per cent and 5 per cent above the district average respectively (5 per cent and 2 per cent by 2005), and Wolds ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 14 per cent below the district average (7 per cent by 2005). The electoral variances would be lower in the proposed wards of Immingham and Waltham under a 42-member scheme, both initially and in 2005, but higher in the proposed Wolds ward.

106 The parish councils of Ashby-cum-Fenby, Barnoldby-le-Beck, Irby-upon-Humber and Waltham stated that the boundaries of Wold Parishes ward should remain unchanged and that the ward should return four councillors, an increase of one. Healing Parish Council and the North East Lincolnshire Alliance of Parish Councils also proposed that Wold Parishes ward should be represented by four councillors but indicated that they would accept the inclusion of Great Coates village in Wold Parishes ward. Laceby Parish Council proposed dividing Wold Parishes ward into two two-member wards. Immingham Town Council stated that the ward of Immingham should retain its existing electoral arrangements and Habrough Parish Council stated that they had no comments to make as they understood the electoral arrangements of Immingham ward would not be changed.

107 A resident of Cleethorpes stated that "due to under-representation in Wold Parishes [ward] there should be two two-member wards created". A resident of Habrough opposed the Conservative Group's proposal to include the parishes of Habrough and Stallingborough in a Wold Parishes ward, stating that the existing arrangements should be retained.

108 In the light of the strength of local support for retaining the existing electoral arrangements of Immingham ward and the good levels of electoral equality which exist currently and in 2005, we proposed retaining the existing arrangements for Immingham ward, as part of our draft recommendations.

109 Having decided to retain the village of Great Coates in Freshney ward, as discussed earlier in the chapter, we noted that the existing Wold Parishes ward is entitled to four councillors; however, the Commission considers wards with a number of councillors in excess of three could result in an unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate. Therefore we concluded that the electors of Wold Parishes ward would best be represented by two two-member wards, as proposed by the Liberal Democrat Group, Laceby Parish Council and a resident of Cleethorpes. We based our draft recommendations on the Liberal Democrats' proposal but proposed including Barnoldby-le-Beck parish in the proposed Wolds ward rather than Waltham ward. Under our draft recommendations Immingham ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 5 per cent above the district average (3 per cent by 2005). The wards of Waltham and Wolds would have councillor:elector ratios 2 per cent and 12 per cent below the district average respectively (4 per cent and 5 per cent by 2005).

110 At Stage Three we received 10 submissions concerning these two wards. North East Lincolnshire Council supported our recommendations for Immingham and Waltham wards. However, it opposed our recommendations for Wolds ward, although the council voted against the retention of the existing ward boundaries and a four-member ward (21 votes to eight with three abstentions).

111 The North East Lincolnshire Alliance of Parish Councils and the parish councils of Ashby-cum-Fenby, Barnoldby-le-Beck, Healing and Waltham opposed our Wold Parishes ward, proposing a four-member Wold Parishes ward. The North East Lincolnshire Alliance of Parish Councils further proposed that the village of Great Coates be included in a modified Wold parishes ward. Ashby-cum-Fenby Parish Council opposed our proposed Waltham ward, stating that itself and "Brigsley village, certainly have far more in common with other members of the Wold Parishes ward than they do with Waltham". Immingham Town Council made no comment on our draft recommendations.

112 Councillor Barker, member for Marsh ward, stated that he "could not support ... the Wolds ward [having] four members rather than two wards with two" members each. He proposed transferring the electors of Stallingborough parish into our proposed Wolds ward, from Immingham ward, stating that "the Wolds ward would have almost 6000 voters and a good case to have three members because of its size and spread out nature". Councillor Mills, member for Wold Parishes ward, supported the proposal for a four-member Wold Parishes ward. He stated that "it is essential that the villages and country areas are effectively represented ... to give effective accountability this ward is an exception". A resident of Cleethorpes stated that he "supports the Commission's proposals for the Immingham ward to remain unchanged".

113 We considered carefully the representations received during Stage Three. We do not intend adopting the proposal for a four-member Wold Parishes ward. As outlined earlier in the chapter, our *Guidance* and our draft recommendations, the Commission considers that four-member wards could result in an unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate. During Stage Three we only received one alternative warding proposal for this area that meets our criteria on ward representation, as laid out in our *Guidance*. This proposal came from Councillor Barker, however,

after examining his proposals we concluded that we were unable to adopt them, as the electorate in the area covered by the existing wards of Immingham and Wold Parishes is entitled to only seven councillors, while Councillor Barker's proposals were for eight councillors in this area. We have noted North East Lincolnshire Council's opposition to a four-member Wold Parishes ward and the general support of the Liberal Democrat Group for our draft recommendations. Considering the general support for our draft recommendations and the lack of a suitable alternative warding arrangement for this area put forward at Stage Three, we propose endorsing our draft recommendations for Immingham, Waltham and Wolds wards as final, as we consider that they continue to strike the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

114 Our final recommendations for all of these three wards would provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Electoral Cycle

115 At Stage One we received six representations regarding the Council's electoral cycle. The Council itself proposed that elections should be held by thirds, as opposed to the current system of whole council elections. It stated that this would enable "the electorate to participate in the democratic process on a more regular basis". It also stated that this would make councillors more accountable to the public while ensuring stability and minimum "disruption to council policy". This proposal was supported by North East Lincolnshire Council Conservative Group, North East Lincolnshire Local Government Labour Party, Cleethorpes Conservative Association, Great Grimsby Conservative Association and Scartho Preservation Society. During Stage One we received no representations proposing the retention of whole council elections.

116 When formulating our draft recommendations we considered carefully all representations received regarding the electoral cycle and during Stage One there appeared to be a majority view that the electoral cycle of North East Lincolnshire Council should be changed. We, therefore, proposed the introduction of elections by thirds.

117 At Stage Three North East Lincolnshire Council reiterated its desire to hold elections by thirds. We also received the general support of the North East Lincolnshire Council Liberal Democrat Group and Councillor Barker, member for Marsh ward. We also received a submission from a resident of Cleethorpes who stated that "changing the electoral cycle is an excellent idea, which hopefully will help to make councillors more accountable to their electors".

118 During Stage Three we have noted the general level of support for our proposal to change the electoral cycle to elections by thirds, and the lack of any support for the existing system of whole council elections. Therefore, we are confirming our draft recommendation as final.

Conclusions

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

- we propose modifying our proposed boundary between Croft Baker and Haverstoe wards to better reflect communities, as proposed by the Cleethorpes branch of the Labour Party;
- we propose renaming our proposed wards of Alexandra and New Clee as, West Marsh and East Marsh respectively, to better reflect the areas the proposed wards would comprise.

120 We conclude that, in North East Lincolnshire:

- a council of 42 members should be retained;
- there should be 15 wards, one more than at present;
- the boundaries of 12 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one ward;
- elections should be held by thirds, as opposed to the current system of whole council elections every four years.

121 Figure 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2000 and 2005 electorate figures.

Figure 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	42	42	42	42
Number of wards	14	15	14	15
Average number of electors per councillor	2,829	2,829	2,844	2,844
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	6	2	7	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	2	0	3	0

122 As Figure 4 shows, our final recommendations for North East Lincolnshire Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the district average from six to two. By 2005 no ward is forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district.

Final Recommendation

North East Lincolnshire Council should comprise 42 councillors serving 15 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 hold elections by thirds.

Map 2: The Commission’s Final Recommendations for North East Lincolnshire

6 NEXT STEPS

123 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in North East Lincolnshire and submitted our final recommendations to the Secretary of State, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992.

124 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 25 June 2001.

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

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

APPENDIX A

Draft Recommendations for North East Lincolnshire (December 2000)

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of only two wards, where our draft proposals are set out below. The only other changes from draft to final recommendations, which are not included in Figures A1 and A2, is that we propose to rename Alexandra ward as West Marsh and New Clee ward as East Marsh.

Figure A1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Croft Baker (Cleethorpes town)	Croft Baker ward (part); Haverstoe ward (part)
Haverstoe ward (Cleethorpes town)	Haverstoe ward (part); Humberston ward (part)

Figure A2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: 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 %
Croft Baker (Cleethorpes town)	3	8,706	2,902	3	8,503	2,834	0
Haverstoe (Cleethorpes town)	3	8,746	2,915	3	8,828	2,943	4

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by North East Lincolnshire 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. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

APPENDIX B

Code of Practice on Written Consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, 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.

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.

Figure B1: 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