

Final recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements  
for Maldon in Essex

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

*November 2000*

## FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Maldon in Essex.

Members of the Commission are:

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Professor Michael Clarke CBE (Deputy Chairman)  
Peter Brokenshire  
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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Burnham-on-Crouch and Maldon towns is inserted inside the back cover of the report.





## Local Government Commission for England

28 November 2000

Dear Secretary of State

On 30 November 1999 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Maldon under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in May 2000 and undertook an eight-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 one modification has been made (see paragraph 106) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Maldon.

We recommend that Maldon District Council should be served by 31 councillors representing 17 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 continue to be elected together every four years.

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 the District 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 Maldon on 30 November 1999. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 16 May 2000, after which we undertook an eight-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 Maldon:

- **in 15 of the 20 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and eight wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2004 electoral equality 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 15 wards and by more than 20 per cent in eight wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 106-108) are that:

- **Maldon District Council should have 31 councillors, one more than at present;**
- **there should be 17 wards, instead of 20 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 17 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of three, and three wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

These 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 15 of the proposed 17 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**

- **Electoral equality is expected to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by less than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2004.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Burnham-on-Crouch, Heybridge and Maldon;**
- **new warding arrangements for the parishes of Mayland and Tollesbury;**
- **an increase in the number of councillors for Burnham-on-Crouch Town Council and Heybridge and St Lawrence parish councils.**

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 8 January 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

|    | <b>Ward name</b>        | <b>Number of councillors</b> | <b>Constituent areas</b>   | <b>Map reference</b> |
|----|-------------------------|------------------------------|--|----------------------|
| 1  | Althorne                | 2                            | Althorne ward (the parishes of Althorne and Latchingdon); The Maylands ward (part – the proposed Maylandsea parish ward of Mayland parish); Purleigh ward (part – Mundon parish) | Maps 2 and A2        |
| 2  | Burnham-on-Crouch North | 2                            | Burnham-on-Crouch North ward; Burnham-on-Crouch South ward (part)  | Map 2 and large map  |
| 3  | Burnham-on-Crouch South | 2                            | Burnham-on-Crouch South ward (part)  | Map 2 and large map  |
| 4  | Great Totham            | 2                            | Great Totham ward (the parishes of Great Braxted and Great Totham); Goldhanger ward (part – Little Totham parish)  | Map 2                |
| 5  | Heybridge East          | 2                            | <i>Unchanged</i> (the modified East parish ward and the proposed Basin parish ward of Heybridge parish)  | Maps 2 and A5        |
| 6  | Heybridge West          | 2                            | <i>Unchanged</i> (West parish ward of Heybridge parish)  | Maps 2 and A5        |
| 7  | Maldon East             | 1                            | Maldon East ward (part); Maldon South ward (part)  | Map 2 and large map  |
| 8  | Maldon North            | 2                            | Maldon East ward (part); Maldon North West ward (part); Maldon South ward (part)   | Map 2 and large map  |
| 9  | Maldon South            | 2                            | Maldon South ward (part); Maldon East ward (part)  | Map 2 and large map  |
| 10 | Maldon West             | 2                            | Maldon North West ward (part); Maldon South ward (part)  | Map 2 and large map  |
| 11 | Mayland                 | 2                            | The Maylands ward (part – the proposed Mayland parish ward of Mayland parish); St Lawrence ward (part – the parishes of St Lawrence and Steeple)                                 | Maps 2 and A2        |
| 12 | Purleigh                | 2                            | Purleigh ward (part – Purleigh parish); Cold Norton ward (the parishes of Cold Norton, North Fambridge and Stow Maries)  | Map 2                |
| 13 | Southminster            | 2                            | <i>Unchanged</i> (Southminster parish)   | Map 2                |
| 14 | Tillingham              | 1                            | Tillingham ward (the parishes of Bradwell-on-Sea and Tillingham); St Lawrence ward (part – Asheldham and Dengie parishes)  | Map 2                |
| 15 | Tollesbury              | 1                            | Tollesbury ward (part – the proposed East parish ward of Tollesbury parish)  | Maps 2, A3 and A4    |
| 16 | Tolleshunt D'Arcy       | 2                            | Tolleshunt D'Arcy ward (the parishes of  | Maps 2, A3           |

| <b>Ward name</b>             | <b>Number of councillors</b> | <b>Constituent areas</b>   | <b>Map reference</b> |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|--|----------------------|
|                              |                              | Tolleshunt D'Arcy and Tolleshunt Knights); Tollesbury ward (part – the proposed West parish ward of Tollesbury parish); Goldhanger ward (part – the parishes of Goldhanger and Tolleshunt Major) | and A4               |
| 17 Wickham Bishops & Woodham | 2                            | Wickham Bishops ward (the parishes of Little Braxted and Wickham Bishops); Woodham ward (the parishes of Hazeleigh, Langford, Ulting, Woodham Mortimer and Woodham Walter)                       | Map 2                |

*Notes: 1 The whole of Maldon district is parished.*

*2 Map 2 and Appendix A, including the large map at the back of this report, illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.*

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Maldon

| 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 Althorne                   | 2                     | 3,018             | 1,509                             | 5                       | 2,877             | 1,439                             | 3                       |
| 2 Burnham-on-Crouch North    | 2                     | 2,884             | 1,442                             | 0                       | 2,795             | 1,398                             | 0                       |
| 3 Burnham-on-Crouch South    | 2                     | 3,104             | 1,552                             | 8                       | 2,913             | 1,457                             | 4                       |
| 4 Great Totham               | 2                     | 2,832             | 1,416                             | -1                      | 2,756             | 1,378                             | -2                      |
| 5 Heybridge East             | 2                     | 2,828             | 1,414                             | -1                      | 2,596             | 1,298                             | -7                      |
| 6 Heybridge West             | 2                     | 2,405             | 1,203                             | -16                     | 2,761             | 1,381                             | -1                      |
| 7 Maldon East                | 1                     | 1,425             | 1,425                             | -1                      | 1,390             | 1,390                             | -1                      |
| 8 Maldon North               | 2                     | 2,843             | 1,422                             | -1                      | 2,796             | 1,398                             | 0                       |
| 9 Maldon South               | 2                     | 3,017             | 1,509                             | 5                       | 2,754             | 1,377                             | -2                      |
| 10 Maldon West               | 2                     | 3,081             | 1,541                             | 7                       | 2,873             | 1,437                             | 3                       |
| 11 Mayland                   | 2                     | 2,676             | 1,338                             | -7                      | 2,760             | 1,380                             | -1                      |
| 12 Purleigh                  | 2                     | 2,635             | 1,318                             | -8                      | 2,645             | 1,323                             | -6                      |
| 13 Southminster              | 2                     | 2,663             | 1,332                             | -7                      | 2,897             | 1,449                             | 3                       |
| 14 Tillingham                | 1                     | 1,631             | 1,631                             | 14                      | 1,503             | 1,503                             | 7                       |
| 15 Tollesbury                | 1                     | 1,581             | 1,581                             | 10                      | 1,486             | 1,486                             | 6                       |
| 16 Tolleshunt D'Arcy         | 2                     | 3,008             | 1,504                             | 5                       | 2,998             | 1,499                             | 7                       |
| 17 Wickham Bishops & Woodham | 2                     | 2,856             | 1,428                             | 0                       | 2,626             | 1,313                             | -6                      |
| <b>Totals</b>                | <b>31</b>             | <b>44,487</b>     | <b>-</b>                          | <b>-</b>                | <b>43,426</b>     | <b>-</b>                          | <b>-</b>                |
| <b>Averages</b>              | <b>-</b>              | <b>-</b>          | <b>1,435</b>                      | <b>-</b>                | <b>-</b>          | <b>1,401</b>                      | <b>-</b>                |

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

Note: 1 The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

2 The total number of electors in 1999 are marginally different from those in Figure 4 (by 27 electors) due to rounding in Maldon town. This has a negligible effect on electoral variances and the average

*number of electors per councillor.*





# 1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Maldon in Essex. We have now reviewed 12 districts in Essex 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 was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Maldon. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in November 1975 (Report No.89). The electoral arrangements of Essex County Council were last reviewed in November 1980 (Report No. 401). We intend reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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:
  - (1) reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
  - (2) 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 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 have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (third edition published in October 1999), 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, ie in year one half of the district council would be elected, in year two half the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities.

10 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/00 PER programme, including the Essex districts, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the October 1999 *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 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, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in the two-tier district areas, and our current *Guidance*.

11 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 30 November 1999, when we wrote to Maldon District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Essex County Council, Essex Police Authority, the local authority associations, Essex Association of Local Councils, parish and town councils in the district, the Member of Parliament with constituency interests in the district, 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 28 February

2000. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations

12 Stage Three began on 16 May 2000 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Maldon in Essex*, and ended on 10 July 2000. 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

13 The district of Maldon is a largely rural area covering some 140 square miles, with over 60 miles of coastline. The district currently has a population of approximately 55,100. It is situated 40 miles to the north-east of London via the A12 and A414 with its coastline extending to the rivers Blackwater, Crouch and Chelmer. It includes the historic towns of Maldon and Burnham-on-Crouch. The district contains 33 parishes, and is totally parished.

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 The electorate of the district is 44,460 (February 1999). The Council presently has 30 members who are elected from 20 wards, seven of which are relatively urban in Burnham-on-Crouch, Maldon and Heybridge, with the remainder being predominantly rural. Two of the wards are each represented by three councillors, six are each represented by two councillors and 12 are single-member wards. The Council is elected together every four years.

16 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Maldon district, with around 39 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments, most notably in the Maldon and Heybridge areas.

17 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,482 electors, which the District Council forecasts will reduce to 1,448 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 15 of the 20 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, eight wards by more than 20 per cent and four wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Heybridge East ward, where the councillor represents 91 per cent more electors than the district average.

*Map 1: Existing Wards in Maldon*

Figure 3: 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 Althorne                | 1                     | 1,858             | 1,858                             | 25                      | 1,730             | 1,730                             | 20                      |
| 2 Burnham-on-Crouch North | 1                     | 2,334             | 2,334                             | 57                      | 2,249             | 2,249                             | 55                      |
| 3 Burnham-on-Crouch South | 3                     | 3,654             | 1,218                             | -18                     | 3,459             | 1,153                             | -20                     |
| 4 Cold Norton             | 1                     | 1,629             | 1,629                             | 10                      | 1,652             | 1,652                             | 14                      |
| 5 Goldhanger              | 1                     | 1,278             | 1,278                             | -14                     | 1,199             | 1,199                             | -17                     |
| 6 Great Totham            | 2                     | 2,531             | 1,266                             | -15                     | 2,476             | 1,238                             | -14                     |
| 7 Heybridge East          | 1                     | 2,828             | 2,828                             | 91                      | 2,596             | 2,596                             | 79                      |
| 8 Heybridge West          | 2                     | 2,405             | 1,203                             | -19                     | 2,761             | 1,381                             | -5                      |
| 9 Maldon East             | 2                     | 2,181             | 1,091                             | -26                     | 2,288             | 1,144                             | -21                     |
| 10 Maldon North West      | 3                     | 3,218             | 1,073                             | -28                     | 3,179             | 1,060                             | -27                     |
| 11 Maldon South           | 2                     | 4,941             | 2,471                             | 67                      | 4,346             | 2,173                             | 50                      |
| 12 Purleigh               | 1                     | 1,291             | 1,291                             | -13                     | 1,265             | 1,265                             | -13                     |
| 13 St Lawrence            | 1                     | 1,233             | 1,233                             | -17                     | 1,154             | 1,154                             | -20                     |
| 14 Southminster           | 2                     | 2,663             | 1,332                             | -10                     | 2,897             | 1,449                             | 0                       |
| 15 The Maylands           | 1                     | 2,528             | 2,528                             | 71                      | 2,683             | 2,683                             | 85                      |
| 16 Tillingham             | 1                     | 1,421             | 1,421                             | -4                      | 1,301             | 1,301                             | -10                     |
| 17 Tollesbury             | 2                     | 2,103             | 1,052                             | -29                     | 2,006             | 1,003                             | -31                     |
| 18 Tolleshunt D'Arcy      | 1                     | 1,509             | 1,509                             | 2                       | 1,559             | 1,559                             | 8                       |
| 19 Wickham Bishops        | 1                     | 1,629             | 1,629                             | 10                      | 1,511             | 1,511                             | 4                       |
| 20 Woodham                | 1                     | 1,226             | 1,226                             | -17                     | 1,115             | 1,115                             | -23                     |
| <b>Totals</b>             | <b>30</b>             | <b>44,460</b>     | <b>-</b>                          | <b>-</b>                | <b>43,426</b>     | <b>-</b>                          | <b>-</b>                |
| <b>Averages</b>           | <b>-</b>              | <b>-</b>          | <b>1,482</b>                      | <b>-</b>                | <b>-</b>          | <b>1,448</b>                      | <b>-</b>                |

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Maldon 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 Tollesbury ward were relatively over-represented by 29 per cent,

*while electors in Heybridge East ward were significantly under-represented by 91 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.*

### 3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

18 During Stage One we received 14 representations, including a district-wide scheme from Maldon District Council. 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 Maldon in Essex*.

19 Our draft recommendations were based on the District Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality, and provided a pattern of two-member wards for the majority of the district with three single-member wards in Maldon East, Tillingham and Tollesbury. However, we moved away from the District Council's scheme in a number of areas, affecting eight wards, in Burnham-on-Crouch, Maldon, Althorne, Mayland, Southminster and Tillingham. We proposed that:

- Maldon District Council should be served by 31 councillors, compared with the current 30, representing 17 wards, three less than at present;
- the boundaries of 18 of the existing wards should be modified, while two wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- there should be new warding arrangements for the parishes of Burnham-on-Crouch, Heybridge, Maldon, St Lawrence and Tollesbury.

#### **Draft Recommendation**

Maldon District Council should comprise 31 councillors, serving 17 wards. The whole council should continue to be elected every four years.

20 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 16 of the 17 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2004.



## 4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

21 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 49 representations were received. An additional 169 proforma letters opposing our draft recommendations in the Tollesbury area were also received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Maldon District Council and the Commission.

### **Maldon District Council**

22 The District Council generally supported our draft recommendations, but opposed our recommendation to include Asheldham parish in Southminster ward. It reiterated its Stage One proposal to retain Asheldham in a ward with Dengie, with which it has strong links, noting in particular that the two parishes share a parish council.

### **Parish Councils**

23 During Stage Three we received representations from seven parish councils. The parish councils of Heybridge and Purleigh expressed support for our draft recommendations. Little Braxted Parish Council requested that, if the Commission was unable to recommend the retention of the current arrangements in this area, the parish should be linked with Great Braxted and Great Totham, rather than with Wickham Bishops and the Woodhams.

24 Mayland Parish Council opposed our recommendation to place the Maylandsea area of Mayland parish in a modified Althorne ward, with the remainder of the parish forming part of a modified two-member Mayland ward with the parishes of St Lawrence and Steeple. It argued that the 1975 electoral review, undertaken by the LGBC, had united the Mayland and Maylandsea areas in order to reflect the identities and interests of the local community, that there was little affinity between Mayland and the parishes with which it was proposed to be linked. It put forward an alternative scheme for the district. Mundon Parish Council also objected to our proposals to link it with the Maylandsea area. It asserted that there was no rational argument for the proposals which, it stated, did not recognise local community ties.

25 Tollesbury Parish Council wrote to object to our proposal for the area. It stated that the village is a “well-defined community, historically and geographically, of unique character with specific areas of concern”. It also expressed concern that future councillors may not be from the village.

26 Tillingham Parish Council wrote to query the mapping of our draft recommendation for the area.

### **Other Representations**

27 A further 41 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from local political groups, local organisations, councillors and residents. We also received 169 proforma letters opposing our draft recommendations for Tollesbury.

28 The Tollesbury Association, The Tollesbury Branch of the Maldon & East Chelmsford Conservative Association (henceforth referred to as the Tollesbury Conservative Association) and Councillor McGhee all opposed the draft recommendations for Tollesbury. They argued that the current electoral arrangements should be retained, given that the village forms a single coherent unit and is geographically separate from the remainder of the district.

29 Councillor Cooper (member for Purleigh and Mundon) opposed our draft recommendations, arguing that “community identity is more important than each ward member representing (within 10 per cent) the same number of electors”. Councillor Cooper also stated that Tollesbury and The Maylands should not be divided and that Mundon parish should remain with Purleigh.

30 Councillor Mrs Channer supported the views of Mayland Parish Council and reiterated the views expressed during Stage One opposing the division of Mayland parish between the wards of Althorne and Mayland. We also received a representation from a resident of Mayland opposing the division of the parish.

31 The St Lawrence Residents' Association opposed the draft recommendations for the Dengie peninsula, arguing that given its “historical and geographical connections [it] should remain an electoral unit”. It supported the alternative warding proposal put forward by a local resident (as noted below).

32 We received two further representations from residents of St Lawrence parish, opposing our draft recommendations for this area and arguing that the parish should remain in a ward with the remainder of the Dengie peninsular.

33 Finally, we received 32 representations from residents of Tollesbury opposing our recommendation to place part of the village in a new Tolleshunt D'Arcy ward.

## 5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

34 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Maldon 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”.

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

36 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.

37 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 also be had to five-year forecasts of change in electorates.

### **Electorate Forecasts**

38 At Stage One the District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting a decrease in the electorate of some 2 per cent from 44,460 to 43,426 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. Although the electorate is expected to decline in the Maldon South and Burnham-on-Crouch areas, some growth is expected in Heybridge West and Southminster wards. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

39 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**

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

41 Maldon District Council is at present served by 30 councillors. At Stage One the District Council proposed a small increase in council size from 30 to 31. It stated that this would create the best solution "to retain and foster community identity, especially in the rural areas". Maldon & East Chelmsford Labour Party submitted proposals to the District Council for a council of 32 members, although it did not provide reasons to support this proposal.

42 In our draft recommendations report we considered all the representations before adopting the District Council's proposals based on a council size of 31 members.

43 During Stage Three we did not receive any comments objecting to the proposed council size and we therefore confirm it as final.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

44 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we considered carefully all the representations received at Stage One, including the district-wide scheme from the District Council. From these representations, some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations.

45 The Council's proposals enjoyed a degree of consensus on the District Council and were consulted on locally. They would provide for improved levels of electoral equality throughout the district and attempted to reflect the established communities in the area. We recognised the improved electoral equality achieved by the District Council's scheme, compared to the existing arrangements. However, we sought to build on these proposals in order to put forward electoral arrangements which would achieve even better electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. In particular, we proposed minor boundary modifications to the Council's scheme in Burnham-on-Crouch and Maldon, between the proposed wards of Althorne and Mayland. We further proposed that Asheldham parish should be included in a modified Southminster ward, rather than retained in Tillingham ward, as proposed by the District Council.

46 At Stage Three the District Council accepted our proposals for the wards of Althorne, Mayland and the towns of Burnham-on-Crouch and Maldon. It, however, continued to support the retention of Asheldham parish in Tillingham ward. We also received representations opposing our recommendations, specifically for the wards of Tollesbury, St Lawrence and

Maylands. 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:

- (1) The town of Burnham-on-Crouch (two wards)
- (2) Maldon (three wards);
- (3) Heybridge (East and West) wards;
- (4) Cold Norton and Purleigh wards;
- (5) Althorne, St Lawrence, Southminster, The Maylands and Tillingham wards;
- (6) Great Totham, Wickham Bishops and Woodham wards;
- (7) Goldhanger, Tollesbury and Tolleshunt D'Arcy wards.

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

### **Burnham-on-Crouch (two wards)**

48 Burnham-on-Crouch town is situated in the south-eastern corner of the district and is currently served by two wards: Burnham-on-Crouch North and Burnham-on-Crouch South, coterminous with North and South parish wards of Burnham-on-Crouch parish. The number of electors represented by the single councillor for Burnham-on-Crouch North ward is 57 per cent above the district average (55 per cent in 2004), while the three councillors for Burnham-on-Crouch South ward each represent 18 per cent fewer electors than the average (20 per cent in 2004).

49 At Stage One, the District Council, together with Burnham-on-Crouch Town Council, proposed that the boundary between the two existing wards be revised to achieve a better electoral balance, by transferring all the properties to the east of Station Road, as far as Devonshire Road and Arcadia Road, moving 589 electors from South ward to North ward, using the railway line partially as the boundary between the two. Each ward would then be served by two councillors. Under these proposals the number of electors represented by each councillor would be 2 per cent above the district average in Burnham-on-Crouch North ward (1 per cent in 2004) and 7 per cent above in Burnham-on-Crouch South ward (3 per cent in 2004).

50 Maldon & East Chelmsford Labour Party wrote to the District Council proposing that the town be re-warded into two new wards, Burnham East and Burnham West, although it did not provide any detailed ward boundary proposals.

51 Having considered the representations for Burnham-on-Crouch town, we generally adopted the councils' recommendations, subject to a minor amendment to the boundary in the Arcadia Road area, to follow the back of the houses (numbers 2-44), transferring 39 fewer electors from South ward to North ward. Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per

councillor would be equal to the district average in Burnham-on-Crouch North ward (unchanged in 2004) and 8 per cent above in Burnham-on-Crouch South ward (4 per cent above in 2004).

52 During Stage Three the District Council expressed support for these proposals. No other comments were received. Given the support of the District Council and in the absence of any apparent opposition to the proposals, we confirm them as final. The levels of electoral equality would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our final recommendations for Burnham-on-Crouch town are shown on the large map at the back of the report.

### **Maldon (three wards)**

53 Maldon town is located in the heart of the district and is currently served by three wards, Maldon East, Maldon North West and Maldon South, coterminous with the three wards of Maldon parish. Maldon East and Maldon South wards elect two councillors each, while Maldon North West ward is served by three councillors. The number of electors represented by each councillor is 26 per cent below the average in Maldon East ward (21 per cent in 2004), 28 per cent below in Maldon North West ward (27 per cent in 2004) and 67 per cent above in Maldon South ward (50 per cent in 2004).

54 As part of its Stage One proposal, the District Council, in consultation with Maldon Town Council, proposed that the town be re-warded into four wards, served by two councillors each, except for Maldon East ward which would elect a single councillor. Under these proposals the number of electors represented by each councillor would be 1 per cent above the district average in Maldon East ward (unchanged in 2004), 1 per cent below in Maldon North ward (equal to the average in 2004), 4 per cent above in Maldon South ward (3 per cent below in 2004) and 7 per cent above in Maldon West ward (3 per cent above in 2004). Maldon & East Chelmsford Labour Party wrote to the District Council proposing a minor amendment between Maldon East and Maldon North wards “to ensure community cohesion”.

55 Having considered carefully the representations received for Maldon town we adopted the District Council’s proposals as part of draft recommendations, subject to retaining the whole of the existing southern boundary between Maldon East and Maldon South wards (involving 26 electors) on Mundon Road, providing a clearer boundary, as opposed to following the backs of the properties in Chichester Way and Tennyson Road. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent below the district average in Maldon East ward (unchanged in 2004) and 5 per cent above in Maldon South ward (2 per cent below in 2004).

56 At Stage Three the District Council supported the draft recommendations for Maldon. No other representations were received. We have, therefore, decided to confirm our draft recommendations for the town of Maldon as final. Electoral equality would be the same as under

our draft recommendations. These proposals are shown on the large map at the back of the

report.

### **Heybridge (East and West) wards**

57 Heybridge is served by two wards; Heybridge East and Heybridge West, coterminous with the parish wards of the same name. The wards are located immediately to the north of Maldon town and are served by a single councillor and two councillors respectively. Heybridge East ward is significantly under-represented, with 91 per cent more electors than the district average (79 per cent in 2004), while Heybridge West ward is relatively over-represented, with 19 per cent fewer electors than the average (5 per cent in 2004).

58 At Stage One, the District Council proposed allocating an additional councillor to Heybridge East ward, but proposed no other change to either ward, arguing that their boundaries were “clear cut and already accepted”, with “no easy way of sub-dividing them”. Under its proposals the number of electors represented by each councillor would be 1 per cent below the district average in Heybridge East ward (7 per cent in 2004) and 16 per cent below in Heybridge West ward (1 per cent in 2004). These proposals were supported by Heybridge Parish Council. Maldon & East Chelmsford Labour Party also wrote to the District Council in support of these proposals.

59 Having considered the Council's proposals in this area, and the other comments received at that time, we adopted them as part of our draft recommendations. We noted the general support for the proposed wards and while acknowledging the degree of electoral imbalance in the short term in Heybridge West ward, considered that any further improvement in immediate electoral equality would be at the expense of equality in 2004, given future development.

60 During Stage Three, these recommendations were supported by the District Council and by Heybridge Parish Council. In the light of this support and in the absence of any other comments on the proposals we confirm our draft recommendations for Heybridge as final. Electoral equality would be the same as under our draft recommendations. The proposed ward boundaries in Heybridge are shown on Maps 2 and A5.

### **Cold Norton and Purleigh wards**

61 These two wards are located in the south-west of the district and are each served by a single councillor. Cold Norton ward comprises the three parishes of Cold Norton, North Fambridge and Stow Maries; the number of electors represented by the councillor for the ward is 10 per cent above the district average (14 per cent in 2004). Purleigh ward comprises the parishes of Mundon and Purleigh and the number of electors represented by the councillor is 13 per cent below the average (unchanged in 2004).

62 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that Cold Norton ward be extended to include

Purleigh parish, to form a new two-member Purleigh ward. Under these proposals the number of electors represented by each councillor would be 8 per cent below the district average in Purleigh ward (6 per cent in 2004). Mundon parish would be included in a ward with Maylandsea (discussed later).

63 Maldon & East Chelmsford Labour Party wrote to the District Council proposing a different ward configuration for this area. It proposed a new two-member Latchingdon ward, incorporating the existing Cold Norton ward, Latchingdon parish and 18 electors from the southern part of Purleigh parish, with no further changes to Purleigh ward. Under these arrangements, assuming a council size of 32, the number of electors represented by each councillor would be 8 per cent below the district average in both Latchingdon and Purleigh wards (both unchanged in 2004). Councillor Cooper, member for Purleigh ward, considered that Purleigh and Mundon parishes should remain together because of their long association and close affinity. He also felt that two-member wards were more suitable for built-up areas. Stow Maries Parish Council proposed no change to the existing wards, while two residents from St Lawrence proposed no change to Althorne ward. Purleigh Parish Council wrote to the Council accepting the proposals for its area. Mundon Parish Council wrote to the District Council opposing the Council's proposals for its area for community reasons. Instead it proposed two new wards, one comprising Purleigh, Mundon and Stow Maries parishes, and the other comprising Cold Norton and North Fambridge parishes.

64 We considered carefully all the representations received for this area and considered that the Council's proposals achieved good electoral equality, while also adequately reflecting the statutory criteria. We noted that a ward comprising the parishes of Purleigh, Mundon and Stow Maries would be detached, with no connection between the parishes of Purleigh and Stow Maries. As stated in our *Guidance*, we do not consider that this would secure convenient and effective local government. In addition, we considered that the proposal by the Labour Party to create a Purleigh parish ward of only 18 electors, to be included in a modified Latchingdon ward, would not provide a good reflection of the statutory criteria in this instance. We therefore adopted the District Council's proposed Purleigh ward as part of our draft recommendations.

65 At Stage Three, the District Council accepted the Commission's proposals for these wards. Purleigh Parish Council also wrote in support of the draft recommendation for the area. Mundon Parish Council opposed the recommendation to place the parish with the Maylandsea area, stating that, geographically, there was no "rational argument for being grouped with Maylandsea". It stated that the parish should remain in Purleigh ward and should be represented by one councillor. Councillor Cooper also stated that the parish of Mundon should remain with Purleigh. We received a number of representations opposing the recommendation to ward the parish of Mayland, which are discussed in the next section.

66 We have received a number of conflicting submissions concerning this area, with support for our recommendations being expressed by the District Council and Purleigh Parish Council and opposition from Mundon Parish Council and a number of district councillors. We have reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the views expressed and have looked

again at the possible alternatives for this area.

67 Under a 31 member council, the number of electors per councillor in an unchanged Purleigh ward would be 15 per cent below the average (10 per cent below in 2004). We note that placing Mundon parish in the proposed two-member Purleigh ward (which would also include Cold Norton ward) would result in higher levels of electoral inequality than under our draft recommendations (12 per cent initially, 16 per cent in 2004). We also note that we have received some support for our draft recommendations and are concerned that this alternative proposal has not been developed locally and has not been consulted on. We also note that it would not truly reflect the views of Mundon Parish Council, which considered that it should remain within the single-member Purleigh ward. We are not therefore adopting this proposal as part of our final recommendations.

68 We have considered carefully the representations received during the consultation period. Given that our draft recommendations were based on the Council's Stage One proposals which were subject to wide consultation, enjoy cross-party support and received some local support during consultation, we continue to consider that these proposals represent the most appropriate balance between the requirement both to secure electoral equality and reflect the statutory criteria and we are therefore confirming our draft recommendations as final. Our final recommendations are shown on Maps 2 and A2.

### **Althorne, St Lawrence, Southminster, The Maylands and Tillingham wards**

69 These five wards are situated to the east of the district and are each served by a single councillor, except for Southminster ward which elects two councillors. The number of electors per councillor in Althorne ward, which comprises the parishes of Althorne and Latchingdon, is 25 per cent above the district average (20 per cent by 2004). In St Lawrence ward, comprising the four parishes of Asheldham, Dengie, St Lawrence and Steeple, the number of electors represented by the councillor is 17 per cent below the district average (20 per cent in 2004). Southminster ward, comprising the parish of the same name, is over-represented by 10 per cent (the number of electors per councillor is forecast to be equal to the average in 2004 due to development). The Maylands ward, comprising Mayland parish, is significantly under-represented, with 71 per cent more electors than the average (increasing to 85 per cent in 2004). Tillingham ward, comprising the parishes of Bradwell-on-Sea and Tillingham, has 4 per cent fewer electors than the average (10 per cent in 2004).

70 At Stage One, the District Council proposed a new two-member Althorne ward, with its boundary extended to include Mundon parish and 852 electors from the western part of Mayland parish (the Maylandsea area). The remainder of Mayland parish would be included in a new two-member Mayland ward with the parishes of St Lawrence and Steeple (currently in St Lawrence ward); and the two remaining parishes in St Lawrence ward, Asheldham and Dengie would be included in a modified Tillingham ward. No change was proposed to Southminster ward. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent above the average in

Althorne ward (2 per cent by 2004), 6 per cent below the district average in Mayland ward (1 per cent below in 2004), 14 per cent above in Tillingham ward (7 per cent above in 2004) and 7 per cent below in Southminster ward (3 per cent above in 2004).

71 Maldon & East Chelmsford Labour Party wrote to the District Council, submitting alternative proposals for this area. It proposed the merger of St Lawrence (less Steeple parish) and Tillingham wards to form a new two-member Tillingham ward; a new single-member Althorne ward, comprising the parishes of Althorne and Steeple, together with 25 electors from the southern part of Mayland parish; and a two-member Mayland ward, covering the remainder of Mayland parish. It also proposed no change to Southminster ward. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent below the district average in Althorne ward (9 per cent below in 2004), 10 per cent below in Mayland ward (2 per cent below in 2004), 4 per cent below in Southminster ward (7 per cent above in 2004) and 17 per cent below in Tillingham ward (21 per cent below in 2004).

72 Mayland Parish Council opposed the Council's proposals for the Mayland area, as it considered the area had nothing in common with the areas to which it would be linked, and instead proposed no change to The Maylands ward. These views were reiterated by Councillor Mrs Channer, member for The Maylands ward. Steeple Parish Council supported the proposal from Councillor Mrs Brock, member for St Lawrence ward, for a new single-member ward comprising Steeple and St Lawrence parishes, and the rural part of Mayland parish (Old Mayland); and another single-member ward covering the remainder of Mayland parish. Two residents of St Lawrence objected to being included in a ward with Mayland, and instead preferred to be in a ward with similar-sized parishes within the Dengie Peninsular.

73 St Lawrence Parish Council wrote to the District Council objecting to being included in the same ward as Mayland parish, citing community identity reasons. Instead it proposed a new ward, comprising St Lawrence, Steeple and Bradwell-on-Sea parishes; a new ward comprising Tillingham, Dengie and Asheldham parishes and part of Southminster parish; and no change to The Maylands ward. Dengie Hundred Group of Parish Councils (which represents most of the parishes in the southern part of the district) also wrote to the District Council opposing the changes to the wards in the Dengie area. In particular it was concerned that the inclusion of parts of Mayland parish in different district wards would break up communities. Althorne Parish Council wrote to the Council accepting the proposals for its area, while two residents from St Lawrence proposed no change to Althorne ward. Two further representations opposing the warding of Mayland parish were forwarded by the District Council.

74 In the light of the concerns expressed by respondents during Stage One, we investigated other possible warding arrangements, but found no alternative to the Council's proposals in this area that would simultaneously address the relatively high imbalances while reflecting the statutory criteria from a district-wide perspective. We therefore considered that the Council's proposals for this part of the district achieved good levels of electoral equality, while adequately reflecting the statutory criteria, and therefore adopted them as part of our draft recommendations. However, we proposed a minor change, which would transfer Asheldham parish from

Tillingham ward to Southminster ward to improve electoral equality. We noted that Asheldham and Dengie parishes are jointly represented by a parish council, but wished to consult on proposals which would achieve improved levels of electoral equality. We also proposed an amendment to the boundary between Althorne and Mayland wards by running part of the boundary behind the backs of the houses on The Drive (numbers 86-112), thereby transferring 23 electors to Althorne ward to keep similar properties together in one ward, as we felt this would better reflect community identity. Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Althorne ward would be 5 per cent above the average (3 per cent in 2004), 7 per cent below in Mayland ward (1 per cent below in 2004), 3 per cent below in Southminster ward (7 per cent above in 2004) and 6 per cent above in Tillingham ward (equal to the average in 2004).

75 At Stage Three we received comments on these proposals from the District Council, Mayland Parish Council, the St Lawrence Residents' Association, two district councillors and four local residents. The District Council supported the draft recommendations for the wards of Maylands and St Lawrence, including the minor boundary amendment to its initial proposals for a boundary between Althorne and Mayland wards. However, it reiterated its Stage One proposal that Asheldam parish should form part of the revised Tillingham ward, rather than Southminster ward, on the grounds that Asheldam had a similar rural character to the rest of the Tillingham ward, that Asheldham and Dengie share a parish council and that there is an obvious physical separation between Asheldham and Southminster. Tillingham Parish Council did not make specific comments on the draft recommendations.

76 Mayland Parish Council opposed our recommendations for the area, stating that at the last review the Mayland and Maylandsea areas were joined in a ward on the grounds that this would "reflect the identities and interests of the local community". It instead proposed that the parishes of Steeple, St Lawrence and Asheldham should form a single-member ward, that the parishes of Bradwell, Tillingham and Dengie should form a new single-member ward and the current arrangements for The Maylands ward should be retained. The St Lawrence Residents' Association also opposed our draft recommendations and supported the alternative warding arrangement put forward by two local residents (described later). Councillor Mrs Channer considered that reverting to the pre-1975 situation would be "a very damaging and retrograde step for the whole community", while Councillor Cooper stated that The Maylands should not be divided. Two local residents opposed our recommendations, one highlighting the fact that Mayland and Maylandsea could be classed as urban areas, while Steeple and St Lawrence were more rural in character.

77 We received an alternative warding arrangement from two local residents who considered that the recommendations did not reflect the statutory criteria. They argued that Mayland and Maylandsea are more built up than the surrounding rural villages and that the requirements of the rural villager would not be properly represented". They proposed that the current arrangements should be retained for Althorne and the Mayland wards and that the wards of St Lawrence and Tillingham be combined in a new two-member ward. Under a council size of 31, these proposals would result in electoral variances of 20 per cent in Althorne ward, 7 per cent in Mayland ward

and 14 per cent in Tillingham ward.

78 As described earlier, our prime objective is, so far as reasonably practicable and consistent with the statutory criteria, to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we also have regard to the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the identities and interests of local communities. In a number of cases these different criteria point in opposite directions and we therefore attempt to adopt proposals which provide an appropriate balance between competing factors. We considered the District Council's proposals for The Maylands and St Lawrence provided significantly better electoral equality in the area than the existing arrangements and, as they had been consulted on locally, decided to adopt them as part of our draft recommendations with the modifications outlined earlier. In particular, retaining the current arrangements in The Maylands ward would give an electoral variance of 76 per cent, rising to 92 per cent by 2004 which we considered incompatible with the aims of the PER.

79 During Stage Three we received submissions stating that our draft recommendations in this area would not reflect community identity. We have therefore considered the alternative electoral arrangements put forward by local residents. While the alternative proposals received would result in low levels of electoral inequality in Maylands ward, they would not address the variances in Althorne and Tillingham ward. When seeking to address the electoral imbalances in any district, we cannot look at any one area in isolation, but have to consider the consequential effects that proposals in one area would have on another in terms of improving electoral equality and reflecting the statutory criteria. We consider that these high levels of electoral inequality are unacceptable given that there is an alternative warding arrangement which has been generated and consulted on locally by the District Council.

80 We have therefore concluded that our draft recommendations for Althorne and The Maylands, while not reflecting exactly the community arguments put forward during Stage Three, provide the best balance currently available between electoral equality and community identity. Our proposals form part of a district-wide scheme which has been the subject of consultation locally and would result in the number of electors per councillor in the wards of Althorne and Maylands being 5 per cent above the average and 7 per cent below the average respectively (3 per cent above and 1 per cent below the average by 2004). We therefore confirm them as final.

81 We have noted the District Council's comments regarding Asheldham parish and the further evidence it submitted during Stage Three. Retaining Asheldham parish in a ward with other Dengie peninsular parishes also formed part of the alternative proposals from the local residents of St Lawrence, supported by the St Lawrence Residents' Association, and other respondents. This alternative warding pattern would result in the number of electors per councillor in the

revised Tillingham ward being 14 per cent above the average initially (7 per cent above by 2004), and 7 per cent below the average in Southminster (3 per cent above in 2004).

82 Given the further argumentation received during Stage Three, the evidence of local support for the alternative proposals and the levels of electoral equality achieved, particularly under the 2004 figures, we propose amending our draft recommendations for the wards of Southminster and Tillingham, to include the parish of Asheldham in the latter ward.

83 Our final recommendations for these wards are shown on Map 2, with detailed mapping of the proposed boundary between the wards of Mayland and Althorne shown on Map A2.

### **Great Totham, Wickham Bishops and Woodham wards**

84 The wards of Wickham Bishops and Woodham are each served by a single councillor, while Great Totham ward elects two councillors. Great Totham ward comprises the parishes of Great Braxted and Great Totham; the number of electors represented by each councillor is 15 per cent below the district average (14 per cent in 2004). Wickham Bishops ward comprises the parishes of Little Braxted and Wickham Bishops, and the councillor represents 10 per cent more electors than the average (4 per cent in 2004). Woodham ward comprises the five parishes of Hazeleigh, Langford, Ulting, Woodham Mortimer and Woodham Walter; the number of electors represented by the councillor is 17 per cent below the average (23 per cent in 2004).

85 At Stage One of the review, the District Council proposed extending Great Totham ward to include Little Totham parish (currently in Goldhanger ward, detailed later); and that Wickham Bishops and Woodham wards should be merged to form a new two-member Wickham Bishops ward. Under these proposals the number of electors represented by each councillor would be 1 per cent below the district average in Great Totham ward (2 per cent below in 2004) and equal to the average in Wickham Bishops ward (6 per cent below in 2004). Wickham Bishops Parish Council agreed with the Council's proposals for its area.

86 Maldon & East Chelmsford Labour Party wrote to the District Council supporting the new Wickham Bishops ward. However, it put forward alternative proposals for the rest of the area: a new Great Totham ward would comprise Great Totham parish, together with Goldhanger and Little Totham parishes (currently in Goldhanger ward); and a new Tolleshunt D'Arcy ward would comprise Great Braxted parish (currently in Great Totham ward), Tolleshunt Major parish (currently in Goldhanger ward) and Tolleshunt D'Arcy parish (currently in Tolleshunt D'Arcy ward). Under these proposals, assuming a council size of 32, the number of electors per councillor would be 10 per cent above the average in Great Totham ward (8 per cent above in 2004), 12 per cent above in Tolleshunt D'Arcy ward (10 per cent above in 2004) and 3 per cent above in Wickham Bishops ward (3 per cent below in 2004).

87 Langford & Ulting Parish Council opposed the merger of Wickham Bishops and Woodham wards, preferring instead two single-member wards – one covering the small rural parishes and the other covering the larger urbanised Wickham Bishops area. Little Braxted Parish Council also opposed the merger, and instead preferred Wickham Bishops ward to be linked with Great Braxted and Great Totham parishes.

88 The District Council also forwarded representations from Great Totham and Wickham Bishops parish councils, both agreeing with the Council's proposals for their respective areas. Representations were also forwarded by the District Council from Councillor Bass in his capacity as both member for Great Totham ward and member for Tollesbury county division. He agreed with the proposals for the areas he represents, although he considered that the proposed two-member Wickham Bishops ward may create problems of community identity. He also proposed that the ward should be renamed Wickham Bishops & Woodham.

89 Having considered carefully all the representations received for this part of the district we adopted the Council's proposals as part of our draft recommendations, but, as proposed by Councillor Bass, we proposed that Wickham Bishops ward should be renamed Wickham Bishops & Woodham to reflect the communities involved.

90 At Stage Three, the District Council supported our draft recommendations for these wards, including the alternative ward name. Little Braxted Parish Council wrote stating that if the Commission is "unable to retain the status quo... members feel very strongly that a link with Great Braxted and Great Totham would be far preferable to one with Wickham Bishops and the Woodhams, the latter being quite remote from this parish". No other comments on this area were received.

91 Although we acknowledge the opposition from Little Braxted Parish Council, we note that the proposals would retain the existing links between Wickham Bishops and Little Braxted, which currently form a single ward. These proposals were put forward by the District Council following consultation, were initially supported by a number of the parish councils in the area and would provide for improved levels of electoral equality. Placing Little Braxted parish in the modified Great Totham ward would result in the number of electors per councillor being 3 per cent above the district average and 4 per cent below in Wickham Bishops & Woodham (2 per cent above and 10 per cent below by 2004). These higher levels of electoral equality cannot be justified in terms of the other statutory criteria. In the absence of widespread opposition to this proposal and in light of the support of the District Council we confirm our draft recommendations for these wards as final.

92 Our final recommendations are shown on Map 2.

### **Goldhanger, Tollesbury and Tolleshunt D'Arcy wards**

93 These three wards are located in the north of the district. Tollesbury ward elects two councillors, while the other two wards are each served by a single councillor. Goldhanger ward comprises the parishes of Goldhanger, Little Totham and Tolleshunt Major, and the number of electors represented by the councillor is 14 per cent below the district average (17 per cent in 2004). Tollesbury ward comprises the parish of the same name and each councillor represents 29 per cent fewer electors than the district average (31 per cent in 2004). Tolleshunt D'Arcy ward

comprises Tolleshunt D’Arcy and Tolleshunt Knights parishes, and the number of electors represented by the councillor is 2 per cent above the average (8 per cent in 2004).

94 To achieve more equitable representation in the area, the Council proposed that Tollesbury ward be split into two, with the eastern part of the ward (1,581 electors) forming a revised single-member Tollesbury ward. The remainder of Tollesbury ward (522 electors), together with Tolleshunt D’Arcy and Goldhanger wards (less Little Totham parish, which would be included in the revised Great Totham ward, detailed earlier) would form a revised single-member Tolleshunt D’Arcy ward. Under the Council’s proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 10 per cent above the average in Tollesbury ward (6 per cent in 2004) and 5 per cent above in Tolleshunt D’Arcy ward (7 per cent in 2004).

95 Maldon & East Chelmsford Labour Party wrote to the Council, submitting an alternative configuration for this area. It proposed a new Great Totham ward comprising the parishes of Goldhanger, Great Totham and Little Totham; a new Tollesbury ward comprising Tollesbury and Tolleshunt Knights parishes; and a new Tolleshunt D’Arcy ward comprising the parishes of Great Braxted, Tolleshunt D’Arcy and Tolleshunt Major. Under these proposals, assuming a council size of 32, the number of electors per councillor would be 10 per cent above the district average in Great Totham ward (8 per cent in 2004), 1 per cent above in Tollesbury ward (4 per cent in 2004) and 12 per cent above in Tolleshunt D’Arcy ward (10 per cent in 2004).

96 Five residents of Tollesbury wrote directly to us opposing the inclusion of parts of Tollesbury in different district wards for community identity reasons. The District Council also forwarded three representations relating to this area. Goldhanger Parish Council proposed no change to Goldhanger ward, but if change was necessary, suggested that the Council’s proposed Tolleshunt D’Arcy ward be renamed Goldhanger, as it is the oldest settlement in the ward. Councillor Long, member for Tolleshunt D’Arcy ward, proposed that the ward be called Tolleshunts (as it includes “the three Tolleshunts”). A resident of Tollesbury opposed the splitting of Tollesbury as he considered it was “a strong, established community”.

97 After due consideration of the representations received and acknowledging the views expressed regarding the inclusion of parts of Tollesbury parish in different district wards, we concluded that the warding of the parish was unavoidable if reasonable electoral equality was to be achieved. Moreover, we found that its position on the edge of the district restricts the number of available options for the ward that would both improve electoral equality and meet the statutory criteria. Therefore, in view of our proposals elsewhere in the district, we adopted the Council’s proposed wards in this area as part of our draft recommendations, subject to a minor modification (affecting no electors), to include the whole of Bohuns Hall in Tollesbury ward. Additionally, we adopted the Council’s proposed ward name of Tolleshunt D’Arcy, as it is an

existing ward name, and there was no evidence of significant local desire that it should be renamed.

98 During Stage Three we received a number of representations concerning this area. The

District Council supported our draft recommendations. The Tollesbury Conservative Association, the Tollesbury Association, Tollesbury Parish Council, two district councillors and 33 residents wrote in opposition to our proposals to divide the parish between district wards. We also received 169 proforma letters opposing this recommendation.

99 The Tollesbury Conservative Association argued that as Tollesbury is situated on the edge of the area it “should demand special consideration”. The Parish Council stated that the area has a strong sense of local identity and is a well-defined community and that the existing arrangements should be maintained. These views were echoed by the Tollesbury Association, which noted that the village is “between two and four miles from the villages with which it is proposed to link a quarter of it”.

100 Councillor McGhee considered that “there are sometimes exceptional reasons why some areas should be allowed a greater deviation from the basic figures required in order to preserve village identity and community spirit”. He also referred to the village’s isolated location. Many of the representations received concerning this area referred to the village as a single coherent unit. Other respondents did not view the aim of achieving electoral equality as feasible and referred to the differing community identities of Tollesbury and Tolleshunt D’Arcy. One local resident proposed that, as a second preference after retaining the status quo, Tollesbury and Tolleshunt Knights could form a two-member ward, with Tolleshunt D’Arcy, Goldhanger and Tolleshunt Major forming a single-member ward.

101 We acknowledge the local opposition to this proposal and the views expressed on community identity. However, our role is to balance the often conflicting criteria of electoral equality and community identity while providing convenient and effective local government. In weighing up these criteria in Maldon and in particular the Tollesbury area, we have considered the degree of electoral inequality which would arise if the current arrangements were retained as proposed by a number of respondents. Under a council size of 31, the number of electors per councillor in Tollesbury ward would be 27 per cent below the average, 5 per cent above the average in Tolleshunt D’Arcy and 11 per cent below the average in Goldhanger ward. The proposal put forward by a local resident to include Tolleshunt Knights parish with Tollesbury would result in the number of electors per councillor being 2 per cent below the average in this ward. However in the modified Goldhanger ward, to additionally include the parishes of Tolleshunt D’Arcy and Tolleshunt Major would mean that this figure would be 20 per cent above the average (1 per cent above and 19 per cent above by 2004). This is compared to imbalances of 10 per cent and 5 per cent (7 per cent and 6 per cent in 2004) under our draft recommendations. We also do not consider that a geographically large three-member ward in this area comprising the proposed wards of Tollesbury and Tolleshunt D’Arcy, would meet the aims of the review.

102 Although we accept the comments concerning community identity put forward throughout the review, we consider that, on balance, they do not justify such dramatic levels of electoral inequality. We further note that our proposals were developed by the District Council, and form part of a district-wide scheme which we consider provides the most appropriate balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria over the district as a whole. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations in this area as final. Our final recommendations are

shown on Maps 2, A3 and A4.

## **Electoral Cycle**

103 At Stage One we received no proposals in relation to the electoral cycle of the district. Accordingly, we made no recommendation for change to the present system of whole-council elections every four years.

104 Again, during Stage Three, no comments concerning the electoral cycle of the district were received and we therefore confirm our draft recommendation as final.

## **Conclusions**

105 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided to endorse our draft recommendations as final, subject to amending the boundary between Southminster and Tillingham ward.

106 We conclude that, in Maldon:

- there should be an increase in council size from 30 to 31;
- there should be 17 wards, three fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 17 of the existing wards should be modified;
- the Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

107 Figure 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1999 and 2004 electorate figures.

Figure 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

|  | 1999 electorate      |                       | 2004 forecast electorate |                       |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
|  | Current arrangements | Final recommendations | Current arrangements     | Final recommendations |
| Number of councillors  | 30                   | 31                    | 30                       | 31                    |
| Number of wards  | 20                   | 17                    | 20                       | 17                    |
| Average number of electors per councillor                              | 1,482                | 1,435                 | 1,448                    | 1,401                 |
| Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average | 15                   | 2                     | 15                       | 0                     |
| Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average | 8                    | 0                     | 8                        | 0                     |

108 As Figure 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 15 to two, with no wards varying by more than 20 per cent from the district average. This level of electoral equality would improve further in 2004, with all wards varying by less than 10 per cent from the average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

**Final Recommendation**

Maldon District Council should comprise 31 councillors serving 17 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

**Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements**

109 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, in our draft recommendations report we proposed consequential changes to the warding arrangements for the parishes of Burnham-on-Crouch, Maldon, Mayland and Tollesbury to reflect the proposed district wards.

110 No further comments were received from the District Council or the Parish Council in relation to our proposals for Burnham-on-Crouch parish, and in the light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for parish warding in Burnham-on-Crouch as final.

**Final Recommendation**

Burnham-on-Crouch Town Council should comprise 10 councillors, one more than at present, representing two wards, North and South, each returning five councillors. The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the areas, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

111 No further comments were received from the District Council or the Parish Council in relation to our proposals for Maldon, and in light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for parish warding in Maldon as final.

**Final Recommendation**

Maldon Town Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing four wards; East (returning two councillors), North and South (each returning four councillors) and West (returning five councillors).The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the areas, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

112 During Stage Three the District Council did not make specific comments on the parish warding proposals for Mayland parish. The Parish Council stated that it did “not believe that such a scheme is fair and equitable to the electorate of the parish. It is our view that the present arrangement where the whole electorate of the parish can have a say in the election of all members of the council should be retained”. As stated earlier in the report, however, we have decided to confirm our recommendations for district warding for Mayland as final, and therefore in accordance with Schedule 11 of the Local Government Act 1972, we propose that Mayland parish be divided into two wards, on the same boundary as the proposed district wards, for parish electoral purposes. We therefore also confirm our draft recommendation for parish warding in Mayland as final.

**Final Recommendation**

Mayland Parish Council should comprise nine councillors, as at present, representing two wards, Mayland (returning six councillors) and Maylandsea (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the areas, as illustrated and named on the Map A2 in Appendix A.

113 During Stage Three the District Council did not make specific comments on the parish warding proposals for Tollesbury parish. The Parish Council stated that it did “warding for the parish is totally unnecessary, all councillors have the best interests of the whole village at heart and there would be no benefit at all in creating unnatural boundaries”. As stated earlier in the report, however, we have decided to confirm our recommendations for district warding for Tollesbury as final, and therefore in accordance with Schedule 11 of the Local Government Act 1972, we propose that Tollesbury parish should be divided into two wards, on the same boundary as the proposed district wards, for parish electoral purposes. We therefore also confirm our draft recommendation for parish warding in Tollesbury as final.

#### **Final Recommendation**

Tollesbury Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, representing two wards, East (returning eight councillors) and West (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the areas, as illustrated and named on Map A3 in Appendix A.

114 No further comments were received from the District Council in relation to our proposals for Heybridge parish. However, Heybridge Parish Council expressed support for our draft recommendations as they affected the parish. In the light of this and the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for parish warding in Heybridge as final.

#### **Final Recommendation**

Heybridge Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, three more than at present, representing three wards; West (returning six councillors), East (returning five councillors) and Basin (returning one councillor). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the areas, as illustrated and named on Map A5 in Appendix A.

115 At Stage One the Council also proposed that both St Lawrence and Steeple parish councils

should increase their council size from five to seven. However, Steeple Parish Council expressed its desire to retain the current council size. St Lawrence Parish Council agreed with the proposed increase. As part of our draft recommendations we therefore proposed no change to the size of Steeple Parish Council, but proposed that St Lawrence Parish Council be increased in size.

116 No further comments were received on these proposals during Stage Three and we confirm our draft recommendation for an increase in the number of parish councillors for St Lawrence as final.

**Final Recommendation**

St Lawrence Parish Council should comprise seven parish councillors, instead of the current five. The parish should not be warded.

117 In our draft recommendations report we proposed that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the district, and are confirming this as final.

**Final Recommendation**

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

*Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Maldon*

## 6 NEXT STEPS

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

119 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 8 January 2001.

120 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

### **Final Recommendations for Maldon: Detailed Mapping**

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

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

**Map A2** illustrates the proposed warding of Mayland parish.

**Maps A3 and A4** illustrate the proposed warding of Tollesbury parish.

**Map A5** illustrates the proposed re-warding of Heybridge parish.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the proposed warding arrangements for Burnham-on-Crouch and Maldon towns.

*Map A1: Final Recommendations for Maldon: Key Map*

*Map A2: Proposed Warding of Mayland Parish*

*Map A3: Proposed Warding of Tollesbury Parish*

*Map A4: Proposed Warding of Tollesbury Parish*

*Map A5: Proposed Re-Warding of Heybridge Parish*

## APPENDIX B

### Draft Recommendations for Maldon

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.

*Figure B1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Constituent Areas*

| Ward name    | Constituent areas   |
|--------------|---|
| Southminster | Southminster ward (the parish of Southminster); St Lawrence ward (part -the parish of Asheldham)                        |
| Tillingham   | St Lawrence ward (part - the parish of Dengie); Tillingham ward (part - the parishes of Bradwell-on-Sea and Tillingham) |

*Figure B2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: 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 % |
|--------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Southminster | 2                     | 2,771             | 1,386                             | -3                      | 2,994             | 1,497                             | 7                       |
| Tillingham   | 1                     | 1,523             | 1,523                             | 6                       | 1,406             | 1,406                             | 0                       |

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

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