

Final recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements  
for Southampton in Hampshire

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

*July 2000*

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the city of Southampton in Hampshire.

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Southampton is inserted inside the back cover of this report.





## Local Government Commission for England

25 July 2000

Dear Secretary of State

On 20 July 1999 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Southampton under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in January 2000 and undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We are confirming our draft recommendations as final, with minor modifications to the boundaries of five wards. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Southampton.

We recommend that Southampton City Council should be served by 48 councillors representing 16 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 elections should continue to take place by thirds.

The Local Government Bill, containing legislative proposals for a number of changes to local authority electoral arrangements, is currently being considered by Parliament. However, until such time as new legislation is in place 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 City 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 Southampton on 20 July 1999. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 18 January 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 Southampton:

- **in three of the 15 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the city;**
- **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 five wards and by more than 20 per cent in one ward.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 94-95) are that:

- **Southampton City Council should have 48 councillors, three more than at present;**
- **there should be 16 wards, instead of 15 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all 15 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In all of the proposed 16 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 6 per cent from the city average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 2 per cent from the average for the city in 2004.**

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 4 September 2000:

**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>
1	Bargate	3	Bargate ward (part)
2	Bassett	3	Bassett ward (part); Coxford ward (part); Shirley ward (part)
3	Bevois	3	Bargate ward (part); St Lukes ward (part)
4	Bitterne	3	Bitterne ward (part); Sholing ward (part)
5	Bitterne Park	3	Bitterne Park ward (part); Harefield ward (part); Peartree ward (part)
6	Coxford	3	Coxford ward (part); Redbridge ward (part)
7	Freemantle	3	Freemantle ward (part); Bargate ward (part); Millbrook ward (part); St Lukes ward (part)
8	Harefield	3	Harefield ward (part); Bitterne ward (part); Bitterne Park ward (part)
9	Millbrook	3	Millbrook ward (part); Freemantle ward (part); Redbridge ward (part)
10	Peartree	3	Peartree ward (part); Bitterne ward (part); Sholing ward (part); Woolston ward (part)
11	Portswood	3	Portswood ward (part); St Lukes ward (part)
12	Redbridge	3	Redbridge ward (part); Coxford ward (part); Millbrook ward (part)
13	Shirley	3	Shirley ward (part); Freemantle ward (part); Redbridge ward (part)
14	Sholing	3	Sholing ward (part); Bitterne ward (part); Peartree ward (part); Woolston ward (part)
15	Swaythling	3	Bassett ward (part); Bitterne Park ward (part); Portswood ward (part)
16	Woolston	3	Woolston ward (part)

*Notes: 1 The whole city is unparished.*

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Southampton

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 Bargate	3	9,746	3,249	-6	10,801	3,600	1
2 Bassett	3	10,723	3,574	3	10,655	3,552	0
3 Bevois	3	9,958	3,319	-4	10,816	3,605	2
4 Bitterne	3	10,275	3,425	-1	10,506	3,502	-1
5 Bitterne Park	3	10,214	3,405	-2	10,494	3,498	-1
6 Coxford	3	10,931	3,644	5	10,826	3,609	2
7 Freemantle	3	10,293	3,431	-1	10,806	3,602	2
8 Harefield	3	10,519	3,506	1	10,466	3,489	-2
9 Millbrook	3	10,646	3,549	3	10,730	3,577	1
10 Peartree	3	10,200	3,400	-2	10,463	3,488	-2
11 Portswood	3	10,369	3,456	0	10,745	3,582	1
12 Redbridge	3	10,463	3,488	1	10,551	3,517	-1
13 Shirley	3	10,477	3,492	1	10,702	3,567	1
14 Sholing	3	10,446	3,482	1	10,486	3,495	-1
15 Swaythling	3	10,459	3,486	1	10,687	3,562	0
16 Woolston	3	10,213	3,404	-2	10,568	3,523	-1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>165,932</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>170,302</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,457</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,548</b>	<b>-</b>

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

2 The total electorate figures for 1999 and 2004 differ marginally from those contained in Figure 3, which has a negligible impact on electoral variances.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the city of Southampton in Hampshire. We have now reviewed the 11 districts in Hampshire and Portsmouth and Southampton city councils 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 Southampton. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in May 1975 (Report No.105). Since undertaking that review the city of Southampton has become a unitary authority (1 April 1997).

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

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

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

5 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties*, 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 configurations 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. Our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable, having regard to our statutory criteria. 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, or 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. The proposals are now being taken forward in a Local Government Bill, published in December 1999, and are currently being considered by Parliament.

10 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/00 PER programme, including the Hampshire districts and Portsmouth and Southampton city councils, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in our *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.

11 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 20 July 1999, when we wrote to Southampton City Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Hampshire County Council, Hampshire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Hampshire Local Councils Association, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the city and the Members of the European Parliament for the South East region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the City Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 25 October 1999. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

12 Stage Three began on 18 January 2000 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Southampton in Hampshire*, and ended on 13 March 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 city of Southampton covers an area of approximately 4,880 hectares and has a population of 214,859. It was granted unitary status in 1997. The M27 to the north and the coast to the south form strong boundaries to the city. Southampton is a major commercial port and a significant regional centre of industry, and is also the site of several large developments including the West Quay development in the city's main commercial area. The city has good communication links, being served by rail and road links to London and the rest of the UK, as well as the nearby international airport and ferry links to the Isle of Wight. There are no parish councils in the city.

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 city 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 city is 165,916 (February 1999). The Council presently has 45 members who are elected from 15 wards, all of which are represented by three councillors. The Council is elected by thirds.

16 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Southampton city, with around 5 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments.

17 At present, each councillor represents an average of 3,687 electors, which the City Council forecasts will increase to 3,784 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 three of the 15 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the city average. The worst imbalance is in Bitterne ward, where the councillor represents 16 per cent fewer electors than the city average.

*Map 1: Existing Wards in Southampton*



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 Bargate	3	12,714	4,238	15	14,025	4,675	24
2 Bassett	3	12,390	4,130	12	12,531	4,177	10
3 Bitterne	3	9,254	3,085	-16	9,265	3,088	-18
4 Bitterne Park	3	11,728	3,909	6	11,906	3,969	5
5 Coxford	3	11,751	3,917	6	11,516	3,839	1
6 Freemantle	3	10,654	3,551	-4	11,076	3,692	-2
7 Harefield	3	10,116	3,372	-9	10,086	3,362	-11
8 Millbrook	3	10,008	3,336	-10	10,075	3,358	-11
9 Peartree	3	10,745	3,582	-3	11,051	3,684	-3
10 Portswood	3	10,985	3,662	-1	11,480	3,827	1
11 Redbridge	3	10,361	3,454	-6	10,509	3,503	-7
12 Shirley	3	9,988	3,329	-10	10,057	3,352	-11
13 Sholing	3	11,906	3,969	8	12,179	4,060	7
14 St Lukes	3	11,610	3,870	5	12,437	4,146	10
15 Woolston	3	11,706	3,902	6	12,108	4,036	7
<b>Totals</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>165,916</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>170,301</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,687</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,784</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Southampton City 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 city. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1999, electors in Bitterne ward were relatively over-represented by 16 per cent, while electors in Bargate ward were relatively under-represented by 15 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.



### 3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

18 During Stage One we received 18 representations, including three city-wide schemes from Southampton City Council, Southampton City Council Conservative Group and Southampton Liberal Democrat Party. In the light of these representations and the evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Southampton in Hampshire*.

19 Our draft recommendations were based on the City Council's proposals for the area to the east of the River Itchen, and on the Liberal Democrats' proposals for the area to the west, which achieved substantial improvements in electoral equality, and provided a pattern of three-member wards across the city. We modified the Liberal Democrats' proposals in two areas, affecting the wards of Bassett, Coxford and Swaythling, to provide further improvements to electoral equality. Our main draft recommendations were that:

- Southampton City Council should be served by 48 councillors, three more than at present, representing 16 wards, one more than at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified.

**Draft Recommendation**

Southampton City Council should comprise 48 councillors, serving 16 wards. Elections should continue to take place by thirds.

20 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in all of the 16 wards varying by no more than 6 per cent from the city average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 2 per cent from the average in 2004.



## 4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

21 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 23 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Southampton City Council and the Commission.

### **Southampton City Council**

22 The City Council stated that it unanimously accepted the draft recommendations subject to four minor boundary amendments, affecting the wards of Bargate, Bevois, Bitterne Park, Portswood and Swaythling. The City Council's proposed amendments would have a negligible impact on the overall level of electoral equality contained in our draft recommendations.

### **The Conservatives**

23 The City Council Conservative Group, Southampton Itchen Conservative Association and Southampton Test Conservative Association ('the Conservatives') supported the draft recommendations. Romsey Conservative Association stated that it supported the draft recommendation which retained Bassett ward.

### **The Liberal Democrats**

24 Southampton Liberal Democrats Local Party and the Liberal Democrat Group on Southampton City Council ('the Liberal Democrats') supported the Commission's draft recommendations, subject to the four minor boundary amendments proposed by the City Council. Additionally, the Liberal Democrats specifically stated that they supported our additional modifications to those proposals which we had received during Stage One.

### **Other Representations**

25 We received a further 17 submissions during Stage Three from a local residents' association, the chairman of a local residents' association, a local councillor and 18 residents of the city, a number of whom made joint submissions. Sholing Community Action Forum expressed concern regarding the draft recommendations for amendments to the boundaries of Sholing ward, and particularly opposed the proposal to transfer an area in the east of the ward to Bitterne ward. Two local residents also opposed the draft recommendations for Sholing ward. Councillor Lloyd, member for Harefield ward, opposed our proposal to transfer the Milbury Crescent area from Bitterne ward to Harefield ward.

26 Professor Griffiths, chairman of East Bassett Residents' Association, considered that the proposal to retain Bassett ward would command support locally. Ten local residents supported the draft recommendations for Bassett ward, while two residents objected to Southampton City Council's Stage One proposal to abolish Bassett ward. Three residents expressed support for the draft recommendations, one of whom hoped that "a result of this rearrangement will be that parts of Southampton [which] currently are represented by the MP for Romsey will again be represented by a Southampton MP". One resident of Shirley considered that the Commission should "get together with the Post Office so that community and postal addresses are the same".

## 5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

29 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.

30 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**

31 At Stage One the City Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 3 per cent from 165,916 to 170,301 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expected this growth to be relatively evenly distributed across the city, with the most noticeable increases in Bargate ward (1,311 electors) and St Lukes ward (827 electors). The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the City Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries was obtained.

32 At Stage One, a resident of the city queried the electorate forecasts for Woolston ward, considering that the projections were too high. However, having sought further clarification from the City Council, we were content that their forecasts for the Woolston area were reasonable. We accepted that forecasting electorates is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the City Council's figures, were content that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

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

## **Council Size**

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

35 Southampton City Council presently has 45 members. At Stage One the City Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats each proposed a council of 48 members. The City Council argued that such an increase was justified as "a 16 ward proposal provides better geographical distribution, more adequately satisfies the community tie issue and [achieves] better electoral balance". It also indicated that consideration had been given to the impact which such an increase in council size would have upon the council's internal management structures. Each of the three groups who proposed city-wide schemes also argued that such an increase was justified in view of the additional responsibilities taken on by councillors since Southampton City Council became a unitary authority in 1997.

36 Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 48 members. While we noted that we are cautious about increases in council size, the fact that such an increase commands cross-party support, and facilitates schemes giving excellent electoral equality and which generally appear to reflect community identities well, persuaded us that such an increase was appropriate.

37 During Stage Three we received no further proposals or evidence regarding council size. Therefore, we are confirming our draft recommendation for a council size of 48 as final.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

38 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we considered carefully the three city-wide schemes which were received at Stage One from the City Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. We were grateful for the positive approach taken by the respondents, who



each submitted detailed city-wide proposals for change to the proposed electoral arrangements. From these representations some considerations emerged which informed us when preparing our draft recommendations.

39 We noted, in particular, the areas of agreement between the three city-wide schemes. As outlined above, there was a consensus for an increase in council size from 45 to 48, with each scheme proposing a pattern of entirely three-member wards, as at present. Moreover, each of the three schemes proposed that the River Itchen (and the River Itchen Navigation Canal) should be utilised as a ward boundary throughout its entire length, with six wards falling to the east of the river and 10 to the west, the correct allocation given the relative numbers of electors in each area. All three schemes also proposed a Swaythling ward, although they differed on the precise boundaries for such a ward.

40 We noted that each of the three city-wide schemes would secure substantial improvements to electoral equality across the city when compared with the current arrangements. However, we also noted that they differed in the precise boundaries proposed in some areas, and we noted the arguments put to us about community identities in the city. We tried to reflect such considerations in formulating our draft recommendations, although we noted that there was no consensus locally on the precise boundaries of such communities.

41 We therefore sought to reflect such consensus as existed between the various schemes for warding arrangements in particular areas of the city. In the areas where such agreement did not exist we tried to utilise the proposals which would achieve the greatest improvements to electoral equality while, we judged, reflecting the other statutory criteria. We also put forward our own modifications where we considered that all three schemes could be improved upon.

42 Noting the generally strong support for much of our draft recommendations, we have reviewed them in the light of the further evidence and representations received during Stage Three. For city warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Peartree, Sholing and Woolston wards;
- (b) Bitterne, Bitterne Park and Harefield wards;
- (c) Bassett, Portswood and Shirley wards;
- (d) Coxford, Millbrook and Redbridge wards;
- (e) Bargate, Freemantle and St Lukes wards.

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

## **Peartree, Sholing and Woolston wards**

44 The three wards of Peartree, Sholing and Woolston are situated in the extreme south-east of the city. Currently, the number of electors per councillor is 3 per cent below the city average in Peartree ward (remaining the same in 2004), 8 per cent above in Sholing ward (7 per cent above in 2004) and 6 per cent above in Woolston ward (7 per cent above in 2004).

45 At Stage One the City Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats all made identical proposals for a modified Woolston ward. Noting that the city boundary formed the eastern and southern boundaries of the ward, while the western boundary is the River Itchen, they all proposed that the northern boundary should follow Portsmouth Road, Manor Road South and the railway line. They stated that such an arrangement would improve electoral equality while reflecting local community identities. Under this proposal the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent below the city average in Woolston ward (1 per cent below in 2004).

46 The City Council and the Liberal Democrats also submitted the same proposals for modifying Sholing and Peartree wards. In addition to the proposed modifications to the northern boundary between the modified Woolston ward and these wards, they each proposed that an area around Sullivan Road should be transferred from Sholing ward to Bitterne ward. They also proposed that Sholing ward should be further modified to include part of Bitterne ward around Chatsworth Road, while its western boundary should be modified to follow Station Road, Middle Road and Rosoman Road. In addition to these modifications, they each proposed that the northern boundary of Peartree ward should be modified to follow Maybray King Way, Bitterne Road West and the railway line. They each stated that their proposals would improve electoral equality while reflecting local community identities.

47 Under the City Council's and the Liberal Democrats' proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent below the city average in Peartree ward (unchanged in 2004) and 1 per cent above the city average in Sholing ward (1 per cent below the average in 2004).

48 The Conservatives alternatively proposed that, in addition to the modification to the northern boundary of Woolston ward (described earlier), Sholing ward should be amended to transfer an area around the south of Middle Road to Peartree ward, while an area around the north of Middle Road would form part of Bitterne ward. The Conservatives proposed that Peartree ward should be modified further to transfer an area around Chessel Crescent to Bitterne ward, while an area around Bullar Road would form part of a modified Bitterne Park ward. Under the Conservatives' proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent below the city average in Peartree ward (unchanged in 2004) and 2 per cent below the city average in Sholing ward (also unchanged in 2004).

49 A resident of the city opposed the Stage One proposals for a modified Woolston ward, stating in particular that the further use of the railway line, which was proposed under all three city-wide schemes, would not reflect existing local community identities.

50 We carefully considered the views which we received in this area at Stage One. With regard to the proposal for Woolston ward, we noted the views of the resident regarding the unsuitability of the proposed northern boundary of the ward. However, we stated that in conducting this review we were unable to have regard to any area in isolation but must consider the impact which any modification would have upon the wider area. Therefore, in view of the agreement between all of the city-wide schemes which we had received, we put forward the proposed Woolston ward as part of our draft recommendations. With regard to the proposed Peartree and Sholing wards, we noted that both the City Council's and the Liberal Democrats' proposals and those of the Conservatives would achieve significant improvements to electoral equality. However, we considered that the proposals put forward by the City Council and the Liberal Democrats would provide the better balance between the need to secure improvements to electoral equality and the statutory criteria, while facilitating our proposals for neighbouring wards. We therefore adopted their proposals as part of our draft recommendations.

51 At Stage Three Southampton City Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats all supported our draft recommendations for this area. Sholing Community Action Forum expressed concern at the proposed changes to Sholing ward contained in our draft recommendations, as it considered that they did not take account of topography or community identity. It particularly opposed the draft recommendation to transfer part of Sholing ward to Bitterne ward and the proposal to extend Sholing ward to the north of Deacon Road. Instead Sholing Community Action Forum proposed that Bitterne ward should be extended to include part of Sholing ward in the Middle Road area. A resident of Sholing supported these proposals, while another resident opposed the draft recommendations for Sholing ward.

52 We have given careful consideration to the views which we have received during Stage Three and in particular to the comments with regard to our draft recommendations for Sholing ward. We have considered the alternative proposal for warding arrangements in this area put to us by Sholing Community Action Forum but note that it would not achieve as good electoral equality as under our draft recommendations and, in our opinion, the arguments put forward for such a change do not provide a sufficiently better reflection of the statutory criteria to justify such a warding arrangement. Moreover, such proposals would not provide warding arrangements which would be compatible with our proposals for the wider area. Consequently, in view of the general support which we have received from other respondents during Stage Three, and in the absence of other viable proposals, we are confirming our draft recommendations for the wards of Peartree, Sholing and Woolston as final. Our final recommendations are shown on the large map at the back of this report.

### **Bitterne, Bitterne Park and Harefield wards**

53 These three wards are located in the east of the city. Bitterne and Harefield wards lie wholly to the east of the River Itchen, while Bitterne Park ward straddles the river. The number of electors per councillor is currently 16 per cent below the city average in Bitterne ward (18 per

cent in 2004), 6 per cent above in Bitterne Park ward (5 per cent in 2004) and 9 per cent below the city average in Harefield ward (11 per cent in 2004).

54 At Stage One the City Council and the Liberal Democrats submitted the same proposals for Bitterne ward. In addition to the modifications proposed to the boundaries with Peartree and Sholing wards (described earlier), they each proposed that Bath Close, Bramwell Court, Court Close and Milbury Crescent should be transferred from Bitterne ward to Harefield ward. They both stated that their proposals would reflect local community identities. Under their proposed boundary modification the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent below the city average, both at present and in 2004.

55 The City Council also proposed that, in addition to modifications to the southern boundaries of Harefield and Bitterne Park wards (described earlier), the River Itchen and the Itchen Navigation should form the western and northern boundaries of Bitterne Park ward, while the city boundary would form the eastern boundary of both Bitterne Park and Harefield wards. The Council proposed that the boundary between the two wards should follow Glenfield Avenue, Mousehole Lane, Neva Road, Avon Road, Witts Hill, Wakefield Road, Meggeson Avenue and Cutbush Lane. It considered that its proposals would reflect local community identities. Under the City Council's proposal, the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent below the city average in Bitterne Park ward (the same in 2004) and 1 per cent above in Harefield ward (2 per cent below in 2004).

56 The Liberal Democrats' proposals for Bitterne Park and Harefield wards only differed from the City Council's proposals in one area, where a slightly different boundary between the two wards was proposed. They considered that their proposal would generally reflect local community identities, although they noted that it would divide Townhill Park between Bitterne Park and Harefield wards. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals the number of electors per councillor would be the same as under the City Council's proposals.

57 The Conservatives proposed that, in addition to their changes to Peartree and Sholing wards, the northern boundary of Bitterne ward should be modified to include an area around Angel Close, currently in Harefield ward. The Conservatives also proposed that the River Itchen should form the northern and western boundaries of Bitterne Park ward. They proposed that the boundary between their proposed Bitterne Park and Harefield wards should follow Midanbury Lane, Thorold Road, Avon Road, Witts Hill, Vanguard Road, to the east of Lytham Road and Onibury Road, then run to the north of Hazelwood Road before joining the city boundary. Under the Conservatives' proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent above the city average in Bitterne ward (equal to the average in 2004), 3 per cent below in Bitterne Park ward (unchanged in 2004) and 1 per cent above in Harefield ward (2 per cent below in 2004).

58 In our draft recommendations report we stated that we had given careful consideration to the three schemes for this area. While we noted that each would secure substantial improvements to the existing arrangements, we judged that the City Council's proposals would achieve the best

level of electoral equality between the three wards, while utilising well-defined boundaries and providing the best reflection of existing community identities. We therefore adopted the City Council's proposals for the wards of Bitterne, Bitterne Park and Harefield as part of our draft recommendations.

59 At Stage Three, in addition to the proposed changes to the boundary between Bitterne and Sholing ward, detailed above, we also received a proposal from Councillor Lloyd, member for Harefield ward, who opposed the proposal to transfer the Milbury Crescent area from Bitterne ward to Harefield ward, instead proposing that if it was necessary to extend Harefield ward then it would be more appropriate to retain the area bounded by Cobden Avenue, Midanbury Lane and Witts Hill in Harefield ward. The City Council proposed a minor amendment to transfer the White Swan public house from Bitterne Park ward to Swaythling ward. This proposal was supported by the Liberal Democrats, who considered that this would better reflect local community identities.

60 We have given careful consideration to Councillor Lloyd's proposed alternative arrangement for Harefield ward. While we note his opposition to the modifications which we have put forward in this area, in conducting this review we are unable to look at any single area in isolation but must have regard to the impact which any changes would have upon the wider area. In this case we note that Councillor Lloyd's proposals would have a detrimental impact on electoral equality, particularly in Bitterne Park ward, and we do not consider that there is sufficient evidence or support for the changes proposed in this area to justify the greater inequality, or indeed for change to the draft recommendations. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendation for Bitterne, Bitterne Park and Harefield wards as final, subject to the minor amendment to the boundary between Bitterne Park and Swaythling wards put forward by the City Council and the Liberal Democrats, which would have a negligible effect on electoral equality in the two wards concerned. Our final recommendations are shown on the large map at the back of this report.

### **Bassett, Portswood and Shirley wards**

61 The three wards of Bassett, Portswood and Shirley are situated generally in the centre and north of the city. The number of electors per councillor is currently 12 per cent above the city average in Bassett ward (10 per cent above in 2004), 1 per cent below in Portswood ward (1 per cent above in 2004) and 10 per cent below in Shirley ward (11 per cent below in 2004).

62 At Stage One each of the three city-wide schemes included proposals for a new Swaythling ward in the north-east of the city, although each proposed different boundaries for the ward. Specifically, the City Council divided the existing Bassett ward between the proposed wards of Hampton Park, Lordswood, Shirley and Swaythling. It proposed that the new Swaythling ward should comprise that part of Bitterne Park ward lying to the north of the River Itchen and the Navigation Canal, together with an eastern part of Bassett ward. An additional part of the existing Bassett ward would be combined with the north of Portswood ward and part of St Lukes ward to form a new Hampton Park ward. Shirley ward would be modified to include part of Bassett

ward and Freemantle ward. The remainder of Bassett ward, together with part of Coxford ward and part of Shirley ward would form a new Lordswood ward.

63 The City Council considered that its proposals for these wards would generally improve electoral equality while reflecting community identities and utilising clearly identifiable boundaries. Under its proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent above the city average in Hampton Park ward (1 per cent in 2004), 7 per cent above in Lordswood ward (2 per cent in 2004), 2 per cent above in Shirley ward (1 per cent in 2004) and 3 per cent above in Swaythling ward (2 per cent in 2004).

64 The Conservatives' Stage One submission stated that "it is most important to retain the community and the identity of Bassett and therefore Bassett ward remains, although with a more westerly orientation". Consequently, the Conservatives proposed that Bassett ward should be modified in the west to include an area around Seymour Road together with the Southampton General Hospital site (currently in Shirley ward) and an area around the Hollybrook Cemetery (currently in Coxford ward). In the east they proposed that the boundary of Bassett ward should be modified further to follow Dahlia Road, part of Honeysuckle Road, Lilac Road, then run to the east of Courtland Gardens and Bassett Green, then west along Bassett Green Road, before joining the city boundary to the east of Monks Wood Close. The remainder of the existing Bassett ward would be combined with that part of Bitterne Park ward that lies to the north of the River Itchen and the Navigation Canal, and part of Portswood ward to the north of, and including the whole of, Broadlands Road, to form a new Swaythling ward. The Conservatives proposed that Portswood ward should be further modified to include an area around Tennyson Road (currently in St Lukes ward). They also proposed that, in addition to the modification to the boundary of Shirley ward detailed earlier, the remainder of Shirley ward which lies to the north of Winchester Road should form part of Millbrook ward. In the south the boundary of Shirley ward would be extended to include an area around Atherley Road (currently in Freemantle ward).

65 Under the Conservatives' proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent above the city average in Bassett ward (2 per cent below in 2004), 1 per cent below in Portswood ward (1 per cent above in 2004), 3 per cent above in Shirley ward (2 per cent above in 2004) and 1 per cent below the city average in Swaythling ward (unchanged in 2004).

66 The Liberal Democrats made a similar proposal to that put forward by the Conservatives, to extend Bassett ward to the west, although they did not propose transferring Southampton General Hospital from Shirley ward to Bassett ward. They proposed that the eastern boundary of the ward should follow Tulip Road, part of Honeysuckle Road, Daisy Road, Bluebell Road, a footpath through Daisy Dip and then across Bassett Green to join the city boundary. A new Swaythling ward would comprise the remaining part of Bassett ward, together with that part of Bitterne Park ward which lies to the north of the River Itchen and the Navigation Canal, and a similar area of Portswood ward to that included in the Conservatives' submission. The Liberal Democrats proposed that Portswood ward should be further modified to include a similar area of St Lukes ward around Tennyson Road to that proposed by the Conservatives, and a further area of St Lukes

ward north of Westwood Road. In addition to the modifications detailed earlier, they proposed that Shirley ward should be amended to include part of Freemantle ward, north of Raymond Road, together with the area of Millbrook ward east of the Romsey Road. The Liberal Democrats stated that their proposals would improve electoral equality while better reflecting local community identities. They particularly opposed the City Council's proposals for Hampton Park, Lordswood and Swaythling wards, as they considered that these would not be as good a reflection of community identities.

67 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent above the average in Bassett ward (2 per cent in 2004), 1 per cent above the average in Portswood ward (equal to the average in 2004), 1 per cent above in Shirley ward (unchanged in 2004) and equal to the average in Swaythling ward (unchanged in 2004).

68 The late Michael Colvin MP, member for Romsey, Romsey Conservative Association, Southampton Test Conservative Association, Councillor Samuels and three residents of the city opposed the proposal to divide Bassett ward between four other wards, as proposed by the City Council. In particular, Mr Colvin considered that "Bassett has a strong and independent identity of its own and the need to retain the social and geographical identity of [its] community is extremely important". One resident of the area supported the City Council's proposals, stating in particular that its proposed Lordswood ward would better reflect community identities than the existing arrangements.

69 In our draft recommendations report we gave careful consideration to the views concerning the three existing wards in this area, and to the proposals for Bassett ward in particular. We noted that each of the three schemes had included proposals for a Swaythling ward in the north-east of the city, although with differing boundaries. In the light of this consensus and the good reflection of the statutory criteria achieved through such a proposal, we considered that we should include a new Swaythling ward as part of our draft recommendations. However, in looking at the proposals for Bassett ward we shared the concerns expressed by the Conservatives and others regarding the City Council's proposal to divide the area between four neighbouring wards. Having considered the evidence and visited the area, we judged that Bassett ward reflected a coherent community. Therefore, in formulating our draft recommendations for both this and the surrounding wards, we investigated the balance between the improved electoral equality across the area and the statutory criteria, and decided to adopt the Liberal Democrats' proposals for the four wards of Bassett, Portswood, Shirley and Swaythling as part of our draft recommendations, subject to two amendments to further reflect community identities. First, we proposed that the northern part of the boundary between Bassett and Swaythling wards should reflect the Conservatives' proposals, thereby transferring the Bassett Green area to Bassett ward. Second, we proposed that the area around Arcadia Close should be retained in Coxford ward as it would appear to have closer links with this area than with Bassett ward.

70 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the city average in Bassett ward (equal to the average in 2004), equal to the average in

Portswood ward (1 per cent above in 2004), 1 per cent above in Shirley ward (both now and in 2004) and 1 per cent above in Swaythling ward (equal to the average in 2004).

71 At Stage Three we received representations from Romsey Conservative Association, Professor Griffiths, chairman of East Bassett Residents' Association, and 10 local residents who each supported the draft recommendations for Bassett ward. Two residents specifically objected to the City Council's Stage One proposals. In addition to the City Council's proposal to modify the south-eastern boundary of Swaythling ward, detailed earlier, it also proposed a minor modification to the boundary between Bevois and Portswood wards, which would not affect any electors. We received no other comments specifically relating to our proposals for the wards of Bassett, Portswood, Shirley and Swaythling.

72 We have given careful consideration to the views which we have received concerning this area. In view of the general support which we have received for our draft recommendations for the wards of Bassett, Portswood, Shirley and Swaythling we are confirming them as final, subject to amending the boundary between Bitterne Park and Swaythling wards, as detailed earlier, and amending the boundary between Bevois and Portswood wards, as proposed by the City Council. Our final recommendations for these wards are shown on the large map at the back of this report.

### **Coxford, Millbrook and Redbridge wards**

73 These three wards lie in the west of the city. The number of electors per councillor is 6 per cent above the city average in Coxford ward (1 per cent in 2004), 10 per cent below in Millbrook ward (11 per cent in 2004) and 6 per cent below in Redbridge ward (7 per cent in 2004).

74 At Stage One the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats submitted identical proposals for Coxford and Redbridge wards. In addition to the modifications to Coxford ward detailed earlier, each proposed that its western boundary should be modified to follow Alder Road at the southern end (thereby transferring part of Redbridge ward to Coxford ward), and Romsey Road at the northern end (thereby transferring part of Coxford ward to Redbridge ward). They each proposed a further modification to Redbridge ward to transfer the area to the south-east of First Avenue from Redbridge ward to Millbrook ward. They each stated that their proposals would respect existing community ties in the area concerned. Under their proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent above the city average in Coxford ward (1 per cent in 2004) and 1 per cent above the city average in Redbridge ward (1 per cent below in 2004).

75 As detailed earlier, the Conservatives proposed that Millbrook ward should be extended to include that part of Shirley ward lying to the north of Winchester Road and west of Southampton General Hospital, Tremona Road and Dale Road. The Conservatives also proposed modifying the eastern boundary of Millbrook ward. Under the Conservatives' proposal the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent above the average in Millbrook ward (2 per cent in 2004).



76 The Liberal Democrats proposed that, in addition to the modification to the boundary with Redbridge ward (detailed earlier), the boundary between Millbrook ward and Shirley ward should be modified in the north to follow the centre of Romsey Road. They also proposed that the boundary between Millbrook and Freemantle wards should be modified to follow Beatrice Road, Randolph Street, Edward Road, Foundry Lane, Millbrook Road West and Millbrook Point Road. They argued that such a configuration would unify the Regents Park and Lower Shirley communities. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposal the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the city average in Millbrook ward (1 per cent in 2004).

77 In addition to the modifications to the boundary of Coxford ward (detailed earlier) the City Council proposed that its southern boundary should be amended to follow Colne Avenue, Green Lane, Romsey Road and Winchester Road, thereby transferring an area of Redbridge ward to Coxford Ward. The Council also proposed that Redbridge ward should be further modified to include the area of Millbrook ward generally to the south of Romsey Road and to the west of Tebourba Way, while the area of Redbridge ward to the east of First Avenue would be transferred to Millbrook ward. The remaining part of Millbrook ward would then be included in a modified Freemantle ward, which would have a more westerly orientation. Under its proposal the eastern boundary of Freemantle ward would follow Shirley Road, part of Payne's Road, Park Road, Cracknore Road and then head generally south to the city boundary. The City Council stated that its proposals would secure good improvements to electoral equality while reflecting local community identities and interests. Under the City Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the city average in Coxford ward (2 per cent above in 2004), 3 per cent above in Freemantle ward (equal to the average in 2004) and 2 per cent above the city average in Redbridge ward (1 per cent above in 2004).

78 Additionally at Stage One, two residents of the city considered that Millbrook ward should be retained. One resident of the city supported the City Council's proposal to divide Millbrook ward between Coxford, Freemantle and Redbridge wards.

79 In our draft recommendations report we noted that all three schemes would achieve substantial improvements to existing levels of electoral equality in the three wards concerned. However, our proposals for neighbouring areas prevented us from adopting the City Council's proposals for these wards. Moreover, we found that there was consensus between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats regarding their proposals for Coxford and Redbridge wards, which utilised well-defined boundaries and, we judged, reflected local community identities. We therefore adopted the proposals from the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives for Coxford and Redbridge wards as part of our draft recommendations, subject to the amendment to Coxford ward detailed earlier. In the case of Millbrook ward, we proposed adopting the Liberal Democrats' proposal as part of our draft recommendations, as we considered that it would offer the best balance between the need to improve electoral equality and the other statutory criteria, while facilitating our proposals for the wider area.

80 Under our draft recommendations for Coxford, Millbrook and Redbridge wards the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent above, 3 per cent above and 1 per cent above the city average respectively (2 per cent above, 1 per cent above and 1 per cent below the average respectively in 2004).

81 At Stage Three we received no further proposals relating to these three wards and we have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations for this area as final. Our final recommendations are shown on the large map at the back of this report.

### **Bargate, Freemantle and St Lukes wards**

82 These three wards are situated in the centre and south of the city, with Bargate ward containing much of the city's main commercial area. The average number of electors per councillor is 15 per cent above the city average in Bargate ward (24 per cent in 2004), 4 per cent below in Freemantle ward (2 per cent in 2004) and 5 per cent above in St Lukes ward (10 per cent above in 2004).

83 At Stage One the City Council proposed a new ward, to be named Polygon, comprising the eastern part of the existing Freemantle ward, part of St Lukes ward lying to the south of Southampton Common, and the western part of Bargate ward. The Council proposed that Bargate ward should then be modified to include part of St Lukes ward, and that St Lukes ward should be further modified so that The Avenue would form its western boundary, while its northern boundary would follow part of the Southampton to Portsmouth railway line and some of the adjoining roads in the area. The River Itchen would form the ward's eastern boundary. Under the Council's proposals Bargate ward would be renamed Town, while St Lukes ward would be renamed Bevois.

84 Under the City Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 6 per cent below the city average in Bevois ward (2 per cent below in 2004), 5 per cent below in Polygon ward (equal to the average in 2004) and 8 per cent below the city average in Town ward (2 per cent above in 2004).

85 The Conservatives proposed that Bargate ward should be modified to cover an identical area to that proposed by the City Council, although they proposed that it should retain its existing name. In addition to the modification to the boundary between Freemantle and Millbrook wards (detailed earlier), and the modification to the boundary between Freemantle ward and the ward to the east (as under the City Council's proposal for Town ward), the Conservatives proposed that the northern boundary of Freemantle ward should be modified. They also proposed that, in addition to the modifications to the southern boundary of St Lukes ward, its eastern boundary should be modified to follow Bevois Hill and Portswood Road. The Conservatives generally stated that their proposals reflected existing community ties, while utilising well-defined ward boundaries.

86 Under the Conservatives' proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent below the city average in Bargate ward (2 per cent above in 2004), equal to the average in Freemantle ward (1 per cent above in 2004) and equal to the average in St Lukes ward (3 per cent above in 2004).

87 The Liberal Democrats proposed that, in addition to the modification to the boundary between Freemantle and Millbrook wards detailed earlier, the Evelyn Crescent area (currently in Freemantle ward) should be transferred to Shirley ward, while the boundary with St Lukes ward should be modified to follow The Avenue. The western boundary of Bargate ward should be modified to follow Southern Road and Solent Road (thereby transferring an area of Bargate ward to Freemantle ward), while its northern boundary should follow the rear of Carlton Road, Bedford Place, London Road, Brunswick Place, Charlotte Place, St Andrews Road, Northam Road, a section of railway line and Longcroft Street (thereby transferring an area of Bargate ward to St Lukes ward). The Liberal Democrats proposed that St Lukes ward should be further modified so that the area to the north of Westwood Road and the area around Woodside Road would be transferred to Portswood ward. They also proposed that St Lukes ward should be renamed Bevois, as they argued that "the conversion of St Lukes Church to a Sikh temple has removed the sole surviving landmark bearing the former ward name". Furthermore they argued that their proposed wards would reflect community ties locally. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 6 per cent below the city average in Bargate ward (2 per cent above in 2004), 4 per cent below in Bevois ward (1 per cent above in 2004) and 1 per cent below the city average in Freemantle ward (2 per cent above in 2004).

88 We received one further submission at Stage One regarding this area from the Southampton Labour Party stating that "the name Bargate may be more appropriate than the name Town as proposed in the City Council submission".

89 In formulating our draft recommendations in this area we gave careful consideration to the views which we had received. In particular, we noted the agreement between the City Council and the Conservatives regarding the proposals for Bargate ward. However, we were concerned at the level of inequality which would continue to exist in this ward under their proposals. Furthermore, we considered that the Liberal Democrats' proposals both for Bargate ward and for neighbouring wards would achieve a more equitable distribution of electorate while, we judged, reflecting the other statutory criteria. We therefore included the Liberal Democrats' proposals for the three wards in this area as part of our draft recommendations. With regard to the issue of ward names, we considered that the name Bargate continued to reflect the area covering the city's main commercial area and therefore proposed that it should be retained for the purposes of consultation. In the case of the existing St Lukes ward, we noted that the City Council and the Liberal Democrats each proposed that the ward should be renamed Bevois. We considered that this ward name would better reflect the area concerned and has the agreement of two of the three political parties and we therefore adopted it as part of our draft recommendations.

90 At Stage Three the City Council unanimously accepted the draft recommendations for the wards of Bargate, Bevois and Freemantle, subject to proposing three minor boundary amendments. In addition to the modification to the boundary between Bevois and Portswood wards, detailed earlier, the City Council proposed that the boundary between Bargate and Bevois wards should be modified to follow Northam Road, Six Dials, and St Andrews Road as far as Charlotte Place. It also proposed a second amendment to the boundary between Bargate and Bevois wards so that the boundary would follow Cumberland Place and the whole of Bedford Place. The Liberal Democrats supported these proposed amendments. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 6 per cent below the city average in Bargate ward (1 per cent above in 2004) and 4 per cent below the city average in Bevois ward (2 per cent above in 2004).

91 We have given careful consideration to the views which we have received in response to our draft recommendations. Having examined the amendments put forward by the City Council and the Liberal Democrats we note that they would secure similar levels of electoral equality to those secured under our draft recommendations while, we judge, providing a more readily recognisable boundary. Therefore we are confirming our draft recommendations for this area as final subject to the amendments outlined above. Our proposals for this area are shown on the large map at the back of this report.

## **Electoral Cycle**

92 At Stage One we received no proposals in relation to the electoral cycle of the city. Accordingly, we made no recommendation for change to the present system of elections by thirds.

93 At Stage Three no comments were received on the electoral cycle, and we confirm our draft recommendation for no change to the present system as final.

## **Conclusions**

94 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided to endorse our draft recommendations, subject to adopting the four minor boundary amendments affecting the wards of Bargate, Bevois, Bitterne Park, Portswood and Swaythling which were unanimously supported by the City Council.

95 We conclude that, in Southampton:

- there should be an increase in council size from 45 to 48;
- there should be 16 wards, one more than at present;

- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified;
- the council should continue to be elected by thirds.

96 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	45	48	45	48
Number of wards	15	16	15	16
Average number of electors per councillor	3,687	3,457	3,784	3,548
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	3	0	5	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	0	0	1	0

97 As Figure 4 shows, our final recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from three to none, with no wards varying by more than 20 per cent from the city average. This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with no wards forecast to vary by more than 2 per cent from the average for the city in 2004. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

**Final Recommendation**

Southampton City Council should comprise 48 councillors serving 16 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover. The council should continue to be elected by thirds.

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

## 6 NEXT STEPS

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

99 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 4 September 2000.

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

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





## APPENDIX A

### Draft Recommendations for Southampton

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ in terms of electorate from those we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of a number of wards, where our draft proposals are set out below.

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

Ward name	Constituent areas
Bargate	Bargate ward (part)
Bevois	Bargate ward (part); St Lukes ward (part)
Bitterne Park	Bitterne Park ward (part); Harefield ward (part); Peartree ward (part)
Swaythling	Bassett ward (part); Bitterne Park ward (part); Portswood ward (part)

*Figure A2: 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 %
Bargate	3	9,776	3,259	-6	10,831	3,610	2
Bevois	3	9,928	3,309	-4	10,786	3,595	1
Bitterne Park	3	10,216	3,405	-1	10,496	3,499	-1
Swaythling	3	10,457	3,486	1	10,685	3,562	0

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

