

LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND

FINAL
RECOMMENDATIONS
ON THE FUTURE
ELECTORAL
ARRANGEMENTS FOR
PURBECK
IN DORSET

*Report to the Secretary of State for
the Environment*

March 1997

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for Purbeck in Dorset.

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Local Government Commission for England

25 March 1997

Dear Secretary of State

On 19 March 1996 the Commission commenced a periodic electoral review of the district of Purbeck under the Local Government Act 1992. It published its draft recommendations in October 1996 and undertook a nine-week period of consultation.

The Commission has now formulated its final recommendations in the light of the consultation. It has, for the most part, confirmed its draft recommendations, although it has modified some of its initial warding proposals in the light of further evidence. This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in the area.

The Commission is recommending to you that Purbeck should be served by 24 councillors representing 14 wards, and that some changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the Commission's statutory criteria. It is recommended that the Council should change to whole-council elections.

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

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Purbeck on 19 March 1996. It published its draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 31 October 1996, after which it undertook a nine-week period of consultation.

- **This report summarises the submissions received by the Commission during consultation on its draft recommendations, and offers its final recommendations to the Secretary of State.**

The Commission found that the existing electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Purbeck because:

- **in eight of the 12 wards, the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district, and in four of these it varies by more than 20 per cent;**
- **by 2001, the number of electors per councillor is likely to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in six wards, and in three of these by more than 20 per cent.**

The Commission's final recommendations for electoral arrangements (Figure 1) are that:

- **Purbeck District Council should be served by 24 councillors, rather than the current 22;**
- **there should be 14 wards, rather than 12 as at present;**
- **the ward boundaries of six of the existing wards should be modified, while six wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **the whole Council should be elected together every four years, rather than by thirds as at present.**

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 12 of the 14 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **By 2001 the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average in 13 wards.**

A recommendation is also made for changes to parish council electoral arrangements.

- **Church Knowle Parish Council should be served by nine councillors rather than seven as at present.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, who will not make an Order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 5 May 1997.

Figure 1:
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1 Bere Regis	1	Bere Regis ward (part - the parishes of Bere Regis and Bloxworth)	Map 2
2 Castle	1	Castle ward (part - the parishes of Corfe Castle and Studland)	Map 2
3 Creech Barrow	1	Castle ward (part - Arne parish); West Purbeck ward (part - the parishes of Church Knowle, Kimmeridge, Steeple and Tyneham)	Map 2
4 Langton	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Langton Matravers and Worth Matravers)	Map 2
5 Lytchett Matravers	2	Lytchett Matravers ward (the parish of Lytchett Matravers); Bere Regis ward (part - Morden parish)	Map 2
6 Lytchett Minster and Upton East	2	Lytchett Minster ward (part - Lytchett Minster and Upton parish East ward)	Maps 2 and A2
7 Lytchett Minster and Upton West	2	Lytchett Minster ward (part - Lytchett Minster and Upton parish West ward)	Maps 2 and A2
8 St Martin	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Wareham St Martin parish)	Map 2
9 Swanage North	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Swanage town - North ward)	Map 2
10 Swanage South	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Swanage town - South ward)	Map 2
11 Wareham	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Wareham town)	Map 2
12 West Purbeck	1	West Purbeck ward (part - the parishes of East Holme, East Lulworth and West Lulworth); Wool ward (part - the parishes of Coombe Keynes and East Stoke)	Map 2
13 Winfrith	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Affpuddle, Chaldon Herring, Moreton, Turners Puddle and Winfrith Newburgh)	Map 2
14 Wool	2	Wool ward (part - Wool parish)	Map 2

1. INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Purbeck in Dorset.

2 The Commission reviewed Purbeck as part of its programme of periodic electoral reviews of all principal local authority areas in England. This is the Commission's first review of the electoral arrangements for Purbeck. A previous such review was undertaken by the Commission's predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in March 1977 (Report No. 188). The LGBC began a further electoral review of Purbeck in 1989 and submitted a report (Report No. 621) to the Secretary of State for the Environment in September 1992. However, its recommendations were overtaken by the establishment of this Commission and its review of local government structure in Dorset. As a consequence, the LGBC recommendations for electoral changes were not implemented. The electoral arrangements of Dorset County Council were last reviewed in June 1982 (Report No. 427). The electoral arrangements of the remaining districts in Dorset will be reviewed in due course, and it is intended that a review of the County Council's electoral arrangements will follow thereafter.

3 In undertaking these reviews, the Commission is required to have regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992:
 - (a) to reflect the identities and interests of local people; and
 - (b) to secure effective and convenient local government; and

- the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements* contained in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 The Commission has also had regard to its own *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (published in March 1996 and supplemented in September 1996). This sets out its approach to the reviews.

5 The review of Purbeck was in four stages (Figure 2).

6 Stage One commenced on 19 March 1996. The Commission wrote to Purbeck District Council inviting it to make proposals for its future electoral arrangements. Copies of that letter were sent to Dorset County Council, Dorset Police Authority, the local authority associations, parish and town councils in the area, Members of Parliament and Members of the European Parliament with constituency interests in the district and the headquarters of the main political parties. The Commission also placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council itself to publicise the review.

7 At Stage Two the Commission considered all the representations received during Stage One and formulated its draft recommendations.

8 Stage Three began on 31 October 1996 with the publication of the Commission's report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Purbeck in Dorset*. Copies were sent to all those to whom the Commission wrote at the start of the review as well as to those who had written to the Commission during Stage One,

*Figure 2:
Stages of the Review*

Stage	Description
One	Submission of proposals to the Commission
Two	The Commission's analysis and deliberation
Three	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation
Four	Final deliberation and report to the Secretary of State for the Environment

inviting comments on the Commission's preliminary conclusions. Again, the Commission placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the report more widely.

9 Finally, during Stage Four the Commission reconsidered its draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation.

2. CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

10 Purbeck district comprises an area of some 40,500 hectares and has a population of around 47,600. It is essentially rural in character, with tourist attractions at Swanage, West Lulworth, Corfe Castle and Studland. The Isle of Purbeck is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a large part lies within the Heritage Coast. There are industrial sites at Holton Heath, Wareham, Swanage and Upton, and several Ministry of Defence establishments in the south and west of the district. There are 28 parish and town councils in the district.

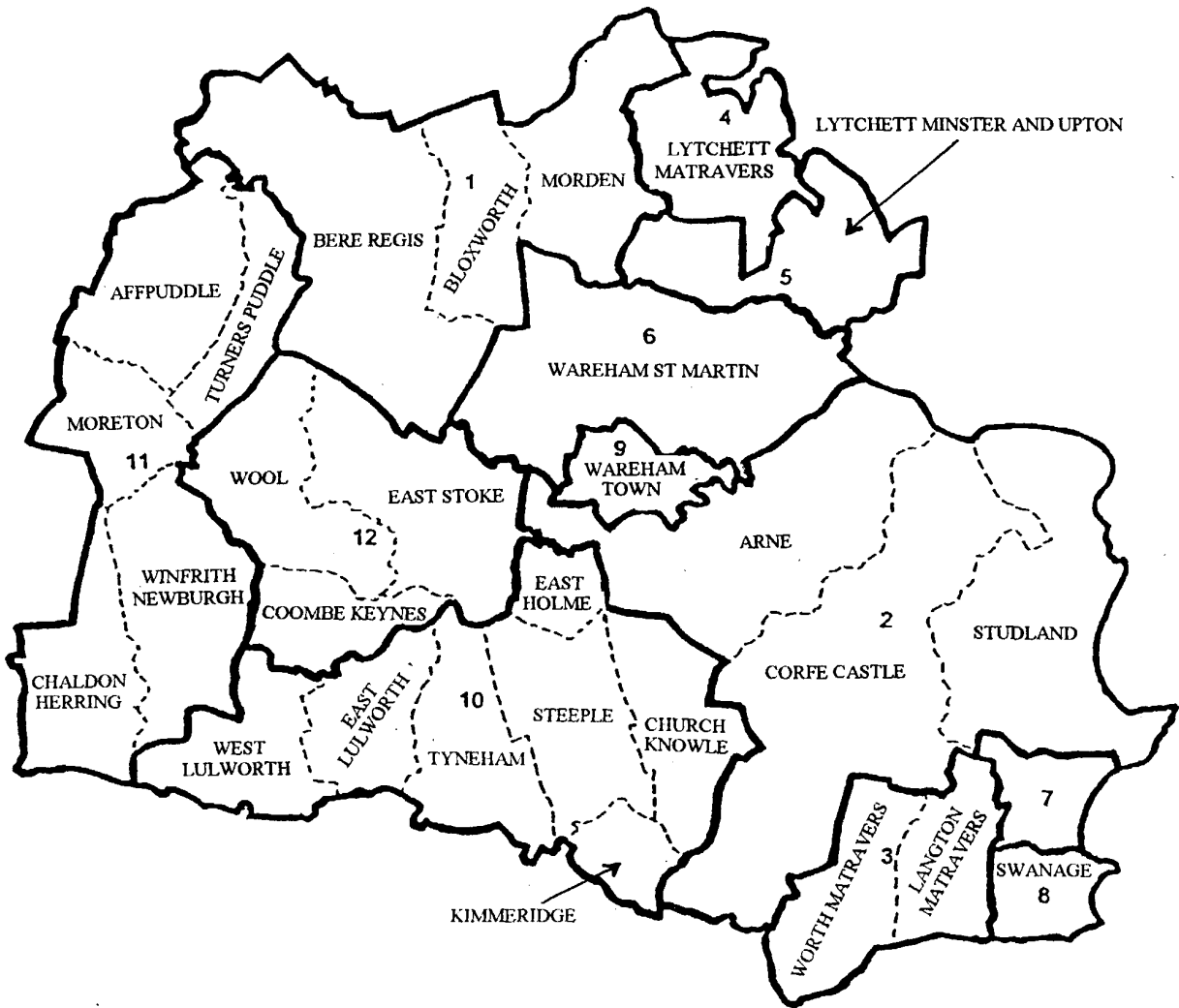
11 The District Council has 22 councillors elected from 12 wards (Map 1 and Figure 3). The Council is elected by thirds, with the next elections due to take place in May 1998. The current electorate of the district (February 1996) is 34,273 and each councillor represents an average of 1,558 electors. The District Council forecasts that the electorate will increase to 37,019 by the year 2001, which would increase the average number of electors per councillor to 1,683 (Figure 3).

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

13 Since the present electoral arrangements were put in place in 1979, changes in population and electorate have not been evenly spread across the district. As a result, the number of electors per councillor varies significantly from the average in many wards. In eight of the 12 wards, representation varies by more than 10 per cent from the average and in four wards by more than 20 per cent.

14 The most significant variances are in Lytchett Matravers (48 per cent) and Lytchett Minster (29 per cent) both of which are relatively under-represented, and St Martin (relatively over-represented by 29 per cent). In Lytchett Matravers, one councillor represents 2,301 electors, compared to the district average of 1,558 electors per councillor.

Map 1:
Existing Wards in Purbeck



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KEY	
EXISTING WARD BOUNDARY	—————
EXISTING PARISH BOUNDARY	- - - - -

Key To Wards

1 Bere Regis

5 Lytchett Minster

9 Wareham

Figure 3:
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	1996				2001 (Projected)		
	Number of councillors	Electorate	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Bere Regis	1	1,811	1,811	16	1,849	1,849	10
2 Castle	2	2,537	1,269	-19	2,709	1,355	-20
3 Langton	1	1,313	1,313	-16	1,431	1,431	-15
4 Lytchett Matravers	1	2,301	2,301	48	2,591	2,591	54
5 Lytchett Minster	3	6,019	2,006	29	6,319	2,106	25
6 St Martin	2	2,203	1,102	-29	3,203	1,602	-5
7 Swanage North	2	3,142	1,571	1	3,386	1,693	1
8 Swanage South	3	4,515	1,505	-3	4,915	1,638	-3
9 Wareham	3	4,716	1,572	1	4,826	1,609	-4
10 West Purbeck	1	1,185	1,185	-24	1,213	1,213	-28
11 Winfrith	1	1,372	1,372	-12	1,386	1,386	-18
12 Wool	2	3,159	1,580	1	3,191	1,596	-5
Totals	22	34,273	—	—	37,019	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,558	—	—	1,683	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Purbeck District Council's Stage One submission.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1996, electors in St Martin ward are relatively over-represented by 29 per cent, while electors in Lytchett Minster are relatively under-represented by 29 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

¹⁵ During Stage One the Commission received a submission from Purbeck District Council on the electoral arrangements in the district. It also received three submissions from parish councils. In the light of these representations, the Commission formulated its preliminary conclusions which were set out in its report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Purbeck in Dorset*. The Commission proposed that Purbeck should be served by 24 councillors representing 13 wards. It also proposed that:

- (a) the two south-western wards of West Purbeck and Wool as proposed by the District Council should be combined to form a single three-member ward;
- (b) a new ward should be created for Creech Barrow from parts of the current Castle and West Purbeck wards;
- (c) the Lytchett Minster and Upton ward should be split into two wards: Lytchett Minster and Upton East, and Lytchett Minster and Upton West;
- (d) the boundaries of Bere Regis, Castle and Lytchett Matravers wards should be modified;
- (e) there should be no change to the existing arrangements for the wards of Langton, St Martin, Swanage North, Swanage South, Wareham and Winfrith.

Draft Recommendation

Purbeck District Council should comprise 24 councillors, serving 13 wards. The whole Council should be elected every four years.

¹⁶ The Commission's proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 12 of the 13 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the district average both now and in 2001.

¹⁷ The Commission's draft recommendations are summarised in Appendix B.

4. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

18 During the consultation on the Commission's draft recommendations report, 14 submissions were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission.

Purbeck District Council

19 The District Council largely welcomed the Commission's recommendations. It stated that it was pleased to see that in most instances the Commission had supported the Council's original Stage One submission and that, with one exception, the Council supported the draft recommendations. The exception related to the proposal to combine the wards of West Purbeck (one-member) and Wool (two-member).

20 The District Council recognised that electoral equality was the main criterion in the review but it urged the Commission to recognise that Purbeck was a unique area with special problems probably not encountered anywhere else in England. It commented that the constituent parish councils strongly opposed the draft recommendation to combine West Purbeck and Wool wards, and that their views were supported by the District Council.

21 In reaching this view, the District Council said that it had taken into account the comments of Church Knowle and West Lulworth parish councils and East Holme and East Lulworth parish meetings. It stated that there were real differences between Wool and the other parishes which the Commission proposed to join together. It pointed to the "deliberate planning policy to create a hard edge" to the southern boundary of the predominantly urban area of Wool which contrasted with the sparsely populated, rolling agricultural and wooded land to the south. The District Council said that the sense of isolation in the southern areas was further highlighted when there was firing on the military ranges, often causing local roads to be closed.

22 The Council recognised that the Commission had to have regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act, and said that combining the District Council's proposed Wool and West Purbeck wards would indeed improve electoral equality in West Purbeck, although it would slightly worsen in Wool. However, the

District Council did not consider that the statutory criteria in the 1992 Act could be met by a combined Wool and West Purbeck ward, and reiterated its view that West Purbeck should be recognised as a unique area with unique problems.

23 However, the Council stated that if the Commission was still minded to recommend a combined Wool and West Purbeck ward then its constituent parishes should be reconsidered. The Council proposed that two parishes which under the draft recommendations were due to be included in the combined ward, namely the unpopulated parish of Tyneham and the parish of East Holme (46 electors), should instead form part of the proposed Creech Barrow ward.

24 Finally, the Council reiterated its request for a move to whole-council elections, and restated its request that the scheduled 1998 elections be cancelled, and that whole-council elections should take place in 1999.

Parish Councils

25 The Commission received representations from eight parish councils and one parish meeting. Studland Parish Council agreed with the Commission's draft recommendation for Castle ward, and supported the move to whole-council elections. Corfe Castle Parish Council proposed that Tyneham parish be transferred to Creech Barrow ward in order to retain its "historical and geographical connections with Church Knowle". Lytchett Matravers Parish Council agreed with the Commission's draft recommendation for the Lytchett Matravers ward, and reiterated its support for district council elections continuing to be held by thirds. Wareham St Martin Parish Council requested that its ward be represented by three district councillors.

26 East Stoke, West Lulworth and Wool parish councils all expressed their opposition to the draft recommendation that a combined Wool and West Purbeck ward be created, comprising the parishes of Coombe Keynes, East Holme, East Lulworth, East Stoke, Tyneham, West Lulworth and Wool. Church Knowle Parish Council also opposed the draft recommendation for Wool and West Purbeck, and proposed that the unpopulated parish

of Tyneham be included in the proposed Creech Barrow ward. Kimmeridge Parish Meeting declared that it unanimously supported the District Council's representation.

Other Representations

27 The South Dorset Conservative Association opposed the creation of a combined Wool and West Purbeck ward, and proposed that Tyneham parish be transferred to Creech Barrow ward on the grounds of its historical connections with Steeple, Church Knowle and Creech (a village on the boundary between Church Knowle and Steeple). Councillor Bond, the district councillor for the current West Purbeck ward, said that there was strong local feeling against the Commission's proposed Wool and West Purbeck ward, and that there was much local support for the District Council's proposals. The county councillor for Purbeck Hills, Councillor Duffy, also opposed the creation of a Wool and West Purbeck ward, and was concerned that East and West Lulworth should be kept separate from Wool.

28 The Commission received one other submission during Stage Three, from a resident who urged that Tyneham be included in the proposed Creech Barrow ward because of "its historical allegiances and connections with Steeple, Church Knowle and Creech".

5. ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

29 As indicated previously, the Commission's prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Purbeck was to achieve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria and to Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the ratio of electors to councillors being "as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough".

30 However, the Commission's function is not merely arithmetical, for three reasons. First, its 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. Second, it must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries, and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken. Third, the Commission has had to consider the desirability of servicing effective and convenient local government, and reflecting the interests and identities of local communities.

31 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. In conducting its electoral reviews, the Commission's predecessor, the LGBC, considered that variations from the average number of electors per councillor for an authority as a whole should be kept to the absolute minimum: a variation of up to plus or minus 10 per cent in a particular ward may be regarded as being "acceptable", but variations in excess of plus or minus 20 per cent were generally accepted only in very exceptional circumstances.

32 The Commission's view is that the LGBC's approach to this issue had merit insofar as it combined a clearly defined tolerance threshold with the degree of flexibility necessary to achieve reasonable levels of electoral equality across a local authority's area. Accordingly, the Commission has decided to adopt this approach for the purposes of its reviews.

33 In its March 1996 *Guidance*, the Commission expressed the view that "proposals for changes in electoral arrangements should therefore be based on variations in each ward of no more than plus or minus 10 per cent from the average councillor:elector ratio for the authority, having regard to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates. Imbalances in excess of plus or minus 20 per cent may be acceptable, but only in highly exceptional circumstances ... and will have to be justified in full." However, as the Commission emphasised in its September 1996 supplement to the *Guidance*: "While the Commission accepts that absolute equality of representation is likely to be unattainable, it considers that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to a minimum, such equality should be the starting point in any electoral review."

34 As previously indicated, the LGBC began a review of the area in 1989 and submitted its recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment in September 1992. Those recommendations were identical to the proposals submitted during Stage One of this review by the District Council, except that the Council proposed that St Martin ward be represented by two councillors, rather than three.

Electorate Projections

35 The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the period 1996 to 2001, projecting an increase in the electorate of over 2,700 from 34,273 to 37,019. 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. Reasonable estimates have been made of the changes in electorate that will arise. The Commission accepts that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to projected electorates, is content that they represent the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council Size

36 The Commission indicated in its March 1996 *Guidance* that it would normally expect the number of councillors serving a district council to be in the range of 30 to 60.

37 Purbeck District Council is at present served by 22 councillors. The Council proposed an increase in council size to 24 during Stage One of the review. In its draft recommendations report the Commission considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received. The Commission concluded that the statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would best be served by a council of 24 members. The Commission received support for this council size from the District Council and has not received evidence to persuade it to move away from its view.

Electoral Arrangements

38 Having considered all representations received during both Stage One and Stage Three of the review, the Commission has further considered its draft recommendations. The following areas, based on existing wards, are covered in turn:

- (a) Bere Regis and Lytchett Matravers;
- (b) Lytchett Minster;
- (c) Castle;
- (d) West Purbeck and Wool;
- (e) Langton, St Martin, Swanage North, Swanage South, Wareham and Winfrith.

Bere Regis and Lytchett Matravers

39 The Commission adopted as its draft recommendation the District Council's proposal that the boundary between Bere Regis and Lytchett Matravers be modified, so that the parish of Morden (280 electors) would form part of Lytchett Matravers ward rather than Bere Regis ward. The Council had stated that the parishes of Lytchett Matravers and Morden fall within the North East Purbeck Local Plan area, while the parishes of Bere Regis and Bloxworth do not, as they lie beyond the Green Belt. The Council also commented that Morden falls within the Lytchett Minster school catchment area, which also includes Lytchett Matravers. For shopping and entertainment purposes, Morden looks eastwards to Lytchett Matravers and the conurbation of Poole and

Bournemouth, while Bere Regis and Bloxworth are more likely to look westwards to Dorchester. Under the Commission's draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Lytchett Matravers ward would be 10 per cent below the district average, improving to 7 per cent in 2001, while in Bere Regis ward it would be 7 per cent above the average, improving to 2 per cent in 2001.

40 During Stage Three the Commission received submissions from the District Council and Lytchett Matravers Parish Council in support of its draft recommendations for Lytchett Matravers. The Commission received no other comments. It has therefore decided to confirm its draft recommendation for the wards of Bere Regis and Lytchett Matravers as final.

Lytchett Minster

41 During Stage One the District Council proposed that the existing three-member ward of Lytchett Minster be divided into two new two-member wards, Lytchett Minster and Upton East and Lytchett Minster and Upton West, based on an existing parish ward boundary (see Map A2 at Appendix A). The Commission adopted the proposal as its draft recommendation. The effect of the draft recommendation would be that the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent above the average in Lytchett Minster and Upton East and 3 per cent above the average in Lytchett Minster and Upton West (4 per cent and equal to the average respectively in 2001).

42 During Stage Three the District Council supported the Commission's draft recommendation. No other comments were received. The Commission has therefore decided to confirm its draft recommendation for Lytchett Minster as final.

Castle

43 Castle ward currently comprises the parishes of Arne, Corfe Castle and Studland, and is served by two councillors. With Arne parish forming part of the proposed Creech Barrow ward (discussed below), the District Council proposed at Stage One that the residual Castle ward be served by one councillor. Representation in the ward would initially be 9 per cent above the district average, improving to 3 per cent in 2001. At Stage One Corfe Castle Parish Council requested a second district councillor for the proposed Castle ward, on

the grounds that Castle ward would be geographically large and would provide a significant responsibility for a single councillor. However, an extra councillor would result in significant electoral inequality in the area, and the Commission decided to adopt the District Council's proposal as its draft recommendation.

44 At Stage Three the District Council and Studland Parish Council supported the Commission's draft recommendation for this area. Corfe Castle Parish Council noted the inclusion in the draft recommendations report of comments it raised at Stage One. No other comments were received. The Commission has therefore decided to confirm its draft recommendation as final.

West Purbeck and Wool

45 The Commission's draft recommendation to combine West Purbeck and Wool wards was the only proposed change which differed from that originally submitted by the District Council. The Council proposed that the existing West Purbeck ward, comprising the parishes of Church Knowle, East Holme, East Lulworth, Kimmeridge, Steeple, Tyneham and West Lulworth, be modified to incorporate the parishes of East Holme, East Lulworth, Tyneham and West Lulworth, together with the parishes of Coombe Keynes and East Stoke which are currently in Wool ward. (The remaining West Purbeck parishes of Church Knowle, Kimmeridge and Steeple would form part of the proposed Creech Barrow ward, described below.)

46 The current ward of Wool comprises the parishes of Wool, Coombe Keynes and East Stoke. Under the scheme proposed by the District Council, Wool ward would consist only of Wool parish (a change which is supported by Wool Parish Council), while Coombe Keynes and East Stoke parishes would form part of the Council's modified West Purbeck ward. The number of electors per councillor in this revised Wool ward would be 3 per cent below the district average (10 per cent in 2001).

47 The District Council's scheme would have resulted in the number of electors per councillor in the West Purbeck ward being 19 per cent below the average (24 per cent in 2001). The Council contended that the configuration of parishes in the area made any further improvement in electoral equality difficult to achieve, and referred to a clear community of interest in the proposed ward, characterised by the Purbeck Hills, the coastline and Ministry of Defence activities.

48 In contrast, a merger of the two wards to create a new three-member ward would result in the average number of electors represented by each councillor being 9 per cent below the district average (14 per cent in 2001). This would be a significant improvement over the level of imbalance resulting from the District Council's proposal for West Purbeck. Having given careful consideration to the arguments, and mindful of the views of the District Council, the Commission decided to consult on a draft recommendation for a new three-member ward for the area, and sought further evidence during Stage Three.

49 The Commission received nine submissions opposing its draft recommendation for a combined Wool and West Purbeck ward. While the District Council acknowledged that "electoral equality is the main criterion in the review" it urged the Commission equally to recognise that West Purbeck "is a unique area with special problems probably not encountered elsewhere in England". It stressed the differences between the more urban area of Wool and the rural nature of the surrounding parishes.

50 The Council did not consider that the Commission's statutory criteria could be met by a combined Wool and West Purbeck ward. It argued that the identities, topography and communications of the two areas were quite different, and that a combined ward would not secure effective and convenient local government because "the rural parishes are unlikely to have a 'local' member elected".

51 As detailed in Chapter 4, the District Council said that in reaching this view it had taken into account the views of some of the affected parish councils and parish meetings. The Council maintained that there were real differences between Wool and the other parishes and referred to the "deliberate planning policy to create a hard edge" to the southern boundary of the more urban Wool area, which contrasted with the rural areas to the south. The southern areas were even more isolated when roads were closed due to firing on the military ranges.

52 Although a combined Wool and West Purbeck ward would achieve improved electoral equality overall, the Council noted that it would worsen in Wool. The Council stated that the unique character of West Purbeck should be recognised by a separate ward for the area.

53 The draft recommendation for a combined Wool and West Purbeck ward was also opposed by West Lulworth, East Stoke, Church Knowle and Wool parish councils, together with Kimmeridge parish meeting. Objections were received from a district councillor, a county councillor and the South Dorset Conservative Association.

54 The Commission has considered carefully all the representations received, and taken account of all the further evidence presented to it during Stage Three. It is aware of the strength of feeling that Wool and the other parishes are different in character, and of the support for the District Council's proposal. In light of the further evidence and the unique circumstances which prevail in much of this area, the Commission has been persuaded to move away from its draft recommendation for a combined ward of Wool and West Purbeck. Instead, the Commission has decided to recommend that:

- (a) West Purbeck should be a single-member ward, comprising the parishes of East Holme, East Lulworth and West Lulworth from the existing West Purbeck ward, together with the parishes of Coombe Keynes and East Stoke from the existing Wool ward; and
- (b) Wool ward should comprise only the parish of Wool and be represented by two councillors.

55 The number of electors per councillor would vary from the district average by 19 per cent in West Purbeck ward (24 per cent in 2001) and by 3 per cent in Wool ward (10 per cent in 2001).

56 The Commission has also decided further to amend its draft recommendations in this area to reflect other proposals it received. At Stage One the Council proposed a new single-member ward in the east of the district, Creech Barrow, to comprise the parishes of Church Knowle, Steeple and Kimmeridge (currently part of West Purbeck ward), and Arne (currently part of Castle ward). The ward was proposed in order to achieve better electoral equality in the area covered by West Purbeck and Castle wards, and to better reflect local community identities and interests. In Creech Barrow the number of electors per councillor would vary from the district average by 1 per cent both now and in 2001.

57 During Stage Three the District Council stated that if the Commission was "still minded to recommend a combined Wool and West Purbeck ward then its constituent parishes should be looked

at again. The Commission has received requests for Tyneham to be included in the Creech Barrow ward and the Council would not object to this change". Tyneham village is in fact MoD controlled and the parish area is unpopulated. The South Dorset Conservative Association agreed with the District Council commenting: "We suggest that the parish of Tyneham should be included in the Creech Barrow ward rather than the Wool and West Purbeck ward. The ecclesiastical parish is Steeple with Tyneham...when the parish of Tyneham had inhabitants they tended to look to Steeple and Church Knowle, rather than westwards to Lulworth. There are no voters in Tyneham at present so it will make no difference to the electoral arithmetic if Tyneham is transferred from one ward to another. Should the Army leave it would be appropriate that Tyneham was encouraged to pick up its pre-war allegiances. Even if the Army leaves immediately it would be a long time before enough electors could live in Tyneham to affect electoral equality." This point was reinforced by a local resident and by Church Knowle and Corfe Castle parish councils.

58 In the light of this further information, the Commission has decided to modify its proposals for this area, and to recommend to the Secretary of State that a new Creech Barrow ward should comprise the parishes of Arne, Church Knowle, Kimmeridge, Steeple and Tyneham. As the parish of Tyneham has no electors, the number of electors per councillor in the revised Creech Barrow ward would be unaffected, varying by 1 per cent below the district average (1 per cent above in 2001).

Langton, St Martin, Swanage North, Swanage South, Wareham and Winfrith

59 In line with the District Council's Stage One submission, the Commission's draft recommendations were for no change to the existing arrangements in the six wards of Langton, St Martin, Swanage North, Swanage South, Wareham and Winfrith. With the exception of St Martin, in none of these wards would the number of electors per councillor vary from the average for the district by more than 10 per cent either now or in 2001.

60 In St Martin ward the number of electors per councillor would be 23 per cent below the average (4 per cent in 2001). Under the Commission's draft recommendations, this was the only ward in

which the number of electors per councillor would initially vary by more than 10 per cent from the district average. It is also the only ward in the district where significant development is forecast, although the District Council now considers that the extent of development in the area is likely to be less than was envisaged during the last LGBC review and it therefore considers that the third councillor for the ward, which the LGBC had recommended in 1992, would not now be required. Nevertheless, St Martin ward is expected to gain 500 extra dwellings by 2001, equating to a growth of some 1,000 electors, by far the largest increase in the district.

61 As indicated in its draft recommendations report, the Commission is prepared to accept this relatively high level of electoral imbalance in the short term, because of the improved electoral equality that is expected to be achieved by 2001 as a result of the electorate growth. Although Wareham St Martin Parish Council proposed during Stage Three that St Martin ward be represented by three councillors in view of the proposed development for Sandford and Holton Heath, the Commission has concluded that the level of electoral equality provided by two councillors (4 per cent above the average in 2001) is acceptable and has not been persuaded to modify its draft recommendation.

62 The Commission received no other proposals for change to the six wards during Stage Three. It has therefore decided to confirm as final its draft recommendation for no change to the wards of Langton, St Martin, Swanage North, Swanage South, Wareham and Winfrith. The number of electors per councillor in each ward would initially vary by 8 per cent, 23 per cent, 10 per cent, 5 per cent, 10 per cent and 4 per cent from the district average (7 per cent, 4 per cent, 10 per cent, 6 per cent, 4 per cent and 10 per cent in 2001).

Electoral Cycle

63 In its draft recommendations report, the Commission proposed that the electoral cycle be changed from elections by thirds to whole-council elections every four years. At Stage Three the District Council reiterated its support for this proposal, and requested that whole-council elections be introduced in 1999 with the 1998 elections being cancelled. Studland Parish Council supported the change, while Lytchett Matravers Parish Council opposed it.

64 In view of the continued support of the District Council, the Commission has decided to confirm its draft recommendation that the whole Council be elected every four years. The District Council commented on the timing of elections as follows: "It is recognised that implementation is a matter for the Secretary of State. In the Council's (Stage One) submission, however, the case was made for whole-council elections in 1999 with the scheduled 1998 elections being cancelled. There are precedents for this approach during the structural review of local government. Whilst it is appreciated that the Commission may not make a formal recommendation to the Secretary of State on this issue, it would be helpful if the Commission felt able to comment in passing that it would hardly be effective or convenient local government for Councillors elected in 1998 to have to stand again in 1999."

Conclusions

65 Having considered all the evidence and representations received in response to its draft recommendations, the Commission has decided to endorse substantially the District Council's submission that there should be an increase in council size from 22 to 24 members; that there should be 14 wards - two three-member wards, six two-member wards and six single-member wards; that elections should be held on a whole-council basis; and that the boundaries of six of the existing wards should be modified. Figure 4 shows the impact of the Commission's final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, as based on 1996 electorate figures, and with projected electorates in the year 2001.

66 As Figure 4 shows, the Commission's recommendations would result in a reduction from eight to two in the number of wards where the number of electors per councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, with a further reduction to one in 2001. The average number of electors per councillor would fall from 1,558 to 1,428. The Commission concludes that its recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Purbeck District Council should comprise 24 councillors serving 14 wards, as detailed in Figures 1 and 5, Map 2 and Appendix A. The whole Council should be elected together every four years.

Final Recommendation

The number of councillors representing the parish of Church Knowle should be increased from seven to nine.

Parish Council Electoral Arrangements

67 At Stage One the Commission received only one proposal for a change to parish council electoral arrangements. Church Knowle Parish Council proposed an increase in the number of parish councillors from seven to nine to reflect increased workload, but did not wish the parish to be warded. The Commission adopted the proposal as its draft recommendation.

68 At Stage Three Church Knowle Parish Council noted the draft recommendation to increase its number of parish councillors from seven to nine. No other submissions were received. The Commission has therefore decided to confirm its draft recommendation for Church Knowle Parish Council as final.

69 The Commission also proposes that the parish and town council elections should be held on the same cycle as those for the District Council.

Final Recommendation

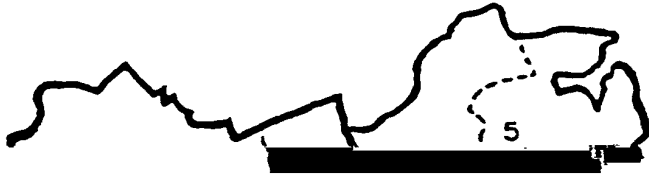
For parish and town councils, whole-council elections should continue to take place every four years, on the same cycle as that for the District Council.

Figure 4:

Comparison of Current and Recommended Arrangements

	1996 electorate		2001 projected electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	22	24	22	24
Number of wards	12	14	12	14
Average number of electors per councillor	1,558	1,428	1,683	1,542
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	8	2	6	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	4	1	3	1

Map 2:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Purbeck



[REDACTED]

Figure 5:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Purbeck

Ward name	1996				2001 (Projected)		
	Number of councillors	Electorate	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Bere Regis	1	1,531	1,531	7	1,569	1,569	2
2 Castle	1	1,562	1,562	9	1,592	1,592	3
3 Creech Barrow	1	1,408	1,408	-1	1,556	1,556	1
4 Langton	1	1,313	1,313	-8	1,431	1,431	-7
5 Lytchett Matravers	2	2,581	1,291	-10	2,871	1,436	-7
6 Lytchett Minster and Upton East	2	3,070	1,535	7	3,220	1,610	4
7 Lytchett Minster and Upton West	2	2,949	1,475	3	3,099	1,550	0
8 St Martin	2	2,203	1,102	-23	3,203	1,602	4
9 Swanage North	2	3,142	1,571	10	3,386	1,693	10
10 Swanage South	3	4,515	1,505	5	4,915	1,638	6
11 Wareham	3	4,716	1,572	10	4,826	1,609	4
12 West Purbeck	1	1,153	1,153	-19	1,175	1,175	-24
13 Winfrith	1	1,372	1,372	-4	1,386	1,386	-10
14 Wool	2	2,758	1,379	-3	2,790	1,395	-10
Totals	24	34,273	—	—	37,019	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,428	—	—	1,542	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Purbeck District Council's submissions.

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.

6. NEXT STEPS

⁷⁰ Having completed its review of electoral arrangements in Purbeck and submitted its final recommendations to the Secretary of State, the Commission has fulfilled its statutory role under the Local Government Act 1992.

⁷¹ It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to the Commission's recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made earlier than six weeks from the date that the Commission's recommendations are submitted to the Secretary of State.

⁷² All further correspondence concerning the Commission's recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State at the following address:

The Secretary of State for the Environment
Local Government Review
Department of the Environment
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

APPENDIX A

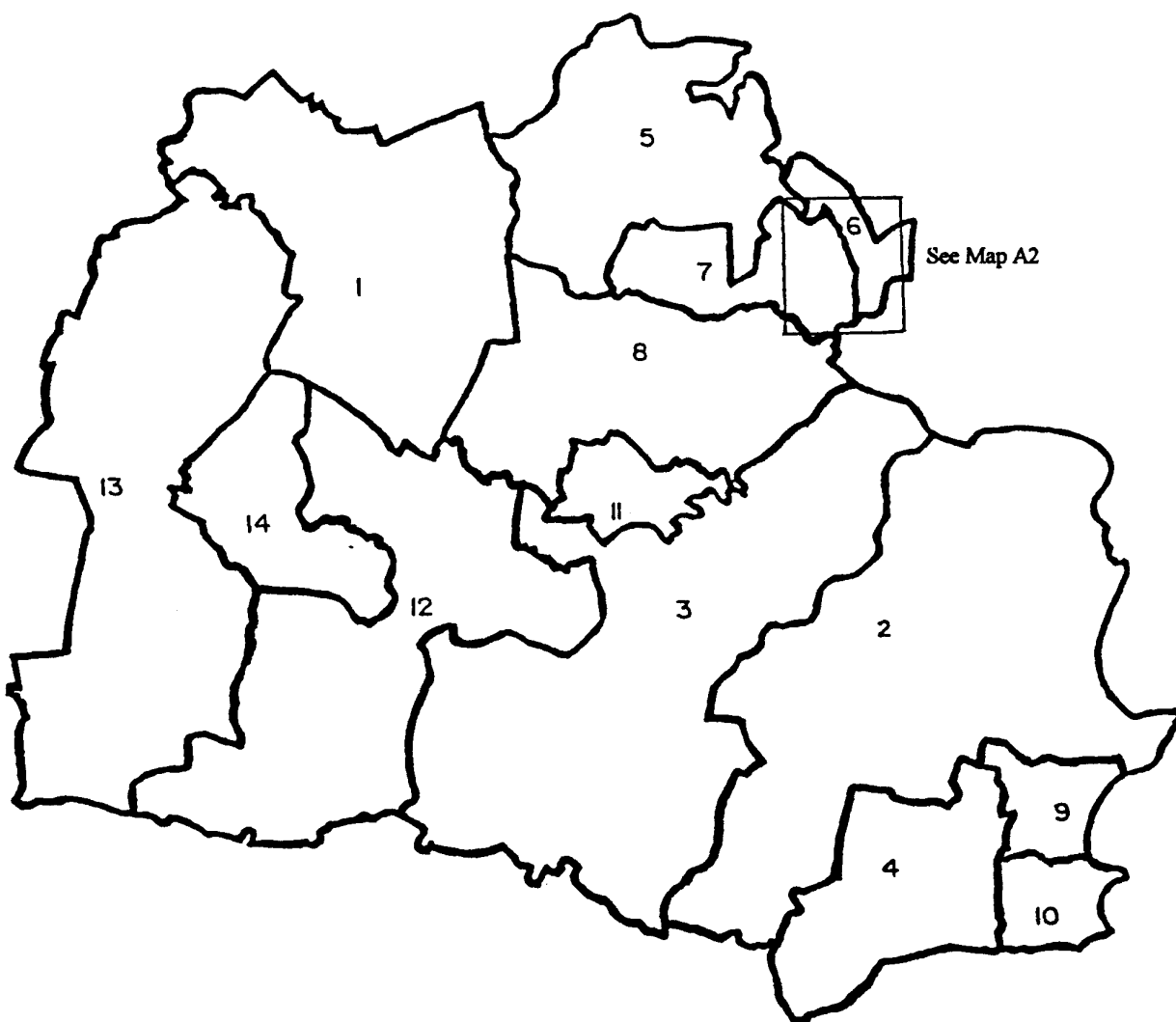
Final Recommendations for Purbeck: Detailed Mapping

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

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the district and indicates the area which is shown in more detail in Map A2.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed split of the existing Lytchett Minster ward to create the two new wards of Lytchett Minster and Upton East, and Lytchett Minster and Upton West.

Map A1:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Purbeck: Key Map



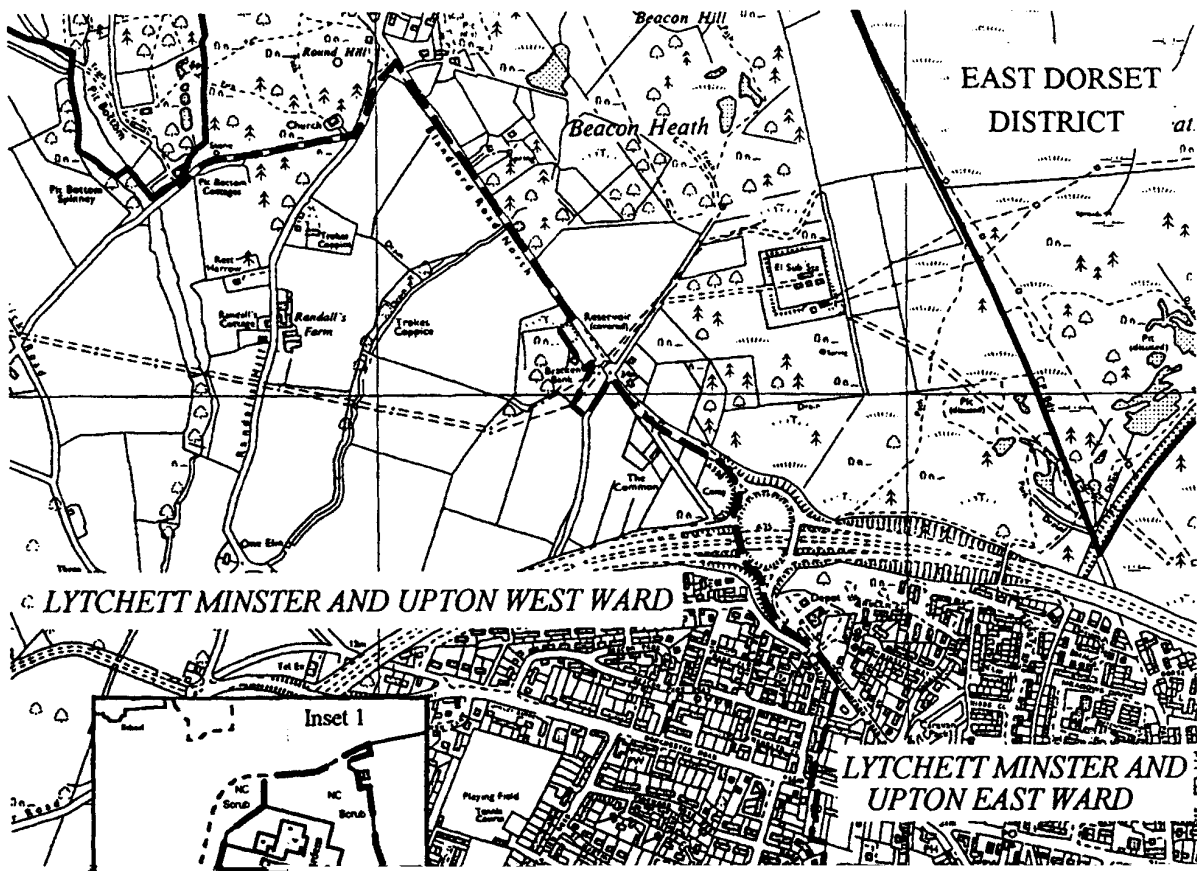
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Key To Wards

- | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 1 Bere Regis | 5 Lytchett Matravers | 9 Swanage North | 12 West Purbeck |
| 2 Castle | 6 Lytchett Minster And Upton East | 10 Swanage South | 13 Winfrith |
| 3 Creech Barrow | 7 Lytchett Minster And Upton West | 11 Wareham | 14 Wool |
| 4 Langton | 8 St Martin | | |

Map A2:

Proposed Ward Boundary between Lytchett Minster and Upton East and Lytchett Minster and Upton West



APPENDIX B

Draft Recommendations for Purbeck

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

Ward name	Constituent areas
1 Bere Regis	Bere Regis ward (part - the parishes of Bere Regis and Bloxworth)
2 Castle	Castle ward (part - the parishes of Corfe Castle and Studland)
3 Creech Barrow	Castle ward (part - parish of Arne); West Purbeck ward (part - the parishes of Church Knowle, Kimmeridge and Steeple)
4 Langton	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Langton Matravers and Worth Matravers)
5 Lytchett Matravers	Lytchett Matravers ward (parish of Lytchett Matravers); Bere Regis ward (part - Morden parish)
6 Lytchett Minster and Upton East	Lytchett Minster ward (part - Lytchett Minster and Upton parish East ward)
7 Lytchett Minster and Upton West	Lytchett Minster ward (part - Lytchett Minster and Upton parish West ward)
8 St Martin	<i>Unchanged</i> (Wareham St Martin parish)
9 Swanage North	<i>Unchanged</i> (Swanage town - North ward)
10 Swanage South	<i>Unchanged</i> (Swanage town - South ward)
11 Wareham	<i>Unchanged</i> (Wareham town)
12 Winfrith	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Affpuddle, Chaldon Herring, Moreton, Turners Puddle and Winfrith Newburgh)
13 Wool and West Purbeck	West Purbeck ward (part - the parishes of East Holme, East Lulworth Tynham and West Lulworth); Wool ward (the parishes of Coombe Keynes, East Stoke and Wool)

Figure B2:
The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Purbeck

Ward name	1996				2001 (Projected)		
	Number of councillors	Electorate	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Bere Regis	1	1,531	1,531	7	1,569	1,569	2
2 Castle	1	1,562	1,562	9	1,592	1,592	3
3 Creech Barrow	1	1,408	1,408	-1	1,556	1,556	1
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8 St Martin	2	2,203	1,102	-23	3,203	1,602	4
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11 Wareham	3	4,716	1,572	10	4,826	1,609	4
12 Winfrith	1	1,372	1,372	-4	1,386	1,386	-10
13 Wool and West Purbeck	3	3,911	1,304	-9	3,965	1,322	-14
Totals	24	34,273	—	—	37,019	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,428	—	—	1,542	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Purbeck District Council's Stage One submission.

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

