

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Epping Forest in Essex

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

November 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

Members of the Commission are:

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CONTENTS

	page
LETTER TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE	<i>v</i>
SUMMARY	<i>vii</i>
1 INTRODUCTION	<i>1</i>
2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS	<i>3</i>
3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>7</i>
4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION	<i>9</i>
5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>13</i>
6 NEXT STEPS	<i>39</i>
APPENDICES	
A Final Recommendations for Epping Forest: Detailed Mapping	<i>41</i>
B Draft Recommendations for Epping Forest May 2000	<i>49</i>

A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Loughton and Waltham Abbey is inserted inside the back cover of the report.



Local Government Commission for England

28 November 2000

Dear Secretary of State

On 30 November 1999 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Epping Forest under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in May 2000 and undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although some modifications have been made (see paragraph 127) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Epping Forest.

We recommend that Epping Forest District Council should be served by 58 councillors representing 32 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

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

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

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Epping Forest on 30 November 1999. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 16 May 2000, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

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

We found that the existing electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Epping Forest:

- **in 19 of the 30 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and 10 wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2004 electoral equality is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 18 wards and by more than 20 per cent in eight wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 126-127) are that:

- **Epping Forest District Council should have 58 councillors, one fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 32 wards, instead of 30 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 24 of the existing wards should be modified and six wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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 31 of the proposed 32 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in no ward expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2004.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Chigwell, Epping, Loughton, Ongar, Sheering and Waltham Abbey.**

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 9 January 2001:

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

Figure 1: The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1 Broadley Common, Epping Upland & Nazeing	1	Epping Lindsey ward (part – Epping Upland parish); Nazeing ward (part – the Bumbles Green parish ward of Nazeing parish); Roydon ward (part – the Broadley Common parish ward of Roydon parish)	Map 2 and large map
2 Buckhurst Hill East	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Buckhurst Hill East parish ward of Buckhurst Hill parish)	Map 2 and large map
3 Buckhurst Hill West	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Buckhurst Hill West parish ward of Buckhurst Hill parish)	Map 2 and large map
4 Chigwell Row	1	Chigwell Row ward (part – part of the proposed Chigwell Row parish ward of Chigwell parish)	Maps 2 and A7
5 Chigwell Village	2	Chigwell Village ward (part – part of the proposed Chigwell Village parish ward of Chigwell parish)	Maps 2 and A7
6 Chipping Ongar, Greensted & Marden Ash	2	Chipping Ongar ward (part – part of the proposed Chipping Ongar parish ward of Ongar parish); Greensted & Marden Ash ward (the parish wards of Greensted and Marden Ash of Ongar parish)	Maps 2 and A3
7 Epping Hemnall	3	Epping Hemnall ward (part – part of the proposed Epping Hemnall parish ward of Epping parish)	Maps 2 and A5
8 Epping Lindsey & Thornwood Common	3	Epping Hemnall ward (part – part of the proposed Epping Hemnall parish ward of Epping parish); Epping Lindsey ward (part – the proposed St John's parish ward of Epping parish); North Weald Bassett ward (part – the Thornwood parish ward of North Weald parish); (part – part of the Village parish ward of North Weald parish)	Maps 2, A4 and A5
9 Grange Hill	3	Chigwell Row ward (part – part of the proposed Chigwell Row parish ward of Chigwell parish); Chigwell Village ward (part – part of the proposed Chigwell Village parish ward of Chigwell parish); Grange Hill ward (Grange Hill parish ward of Chigwell parish)	Maps 2 and A7
10 Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village	1	Moreton & Matching ward (part – Matching parish); North Weald Bassett ward (part – the Hastingwood parish ward of North Weald Bassett parish); Sheering ward (part – the proposed Sheering Village parish ward of Sheering parish)	Map 2
11 High Ongar, Willingdale & The Rodings	1	High Ongar ward (High Ongar parish); Roothing Country ward (part – Abbess, Beauchamp & Berners Roding and Willingdale parishes)	Map 2

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
12 Honey Lane	3	High Beach ward (part - part of High Beach parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish); Paternoster ward (part – part of Paternoster parish ward of Waltham Abbey ward); Waltham Abbey East ward (part – part of Waltham Abbey East parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish)	Map 2 and large map
13 Lambourne	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parish of Lambourne)	Map 2
14 Loughton Alderton	2	Broadway ward (part – the proposed Broadway parish ward of Loughton parish); Loughton St Mary’s ward (part – part of the proposed St Mary’s parish ward of Loughton parish); Loughton Roding ward (part – part of the proposed Loughton Roding parish ward of Loughton parish)	Map 2 and large map
15 Loughton Broadway	2	Broadway ward (part – part of the proposed Broadway parish ward of Loughton parish) Debden Green ward (part – part of the proposed Debden Green parish ward of Loughton parish)	Map 2 and large map
16 Loughton Fairmead	2	Debden Green ward (part – part of the proposed Debden Green parish ward of Loughton parish); Loughton St John’s ward (part – part of the proposed St John’s parish ward of Loughton parish)	Map 2 and large map
17 Loughton Forest	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Loughton Forest parish ward of Loughton parish)	Map 2 and large map
18 Loughton Roding	2	Loughton Roding ward (part – part of the proposed Loughton Roding parish ward of Loughton parish)	Map 2 and large map
19 Loughton St John’s	2	Loughton St John’s ward (part – part of the proposed St John’s parish ward of Loughton parish); Loughton St Mary’s ward (part - part of the proposed St Mary’s parish ward of Loughton parish)	Map 2 and large map
20 Loughton St Mary’s	2	Loughton St John’s ward (part – part of the proposed St John’s parish ward of Loughton parish); Loughton St Mary’s ward (part – part of the proposed St Mary’s parish ward of Loughton parish)	Map 2 and large map
21 Lower Nazeing	2	Nazeing ward (part – the Nazeingbury and Riverside parish wards of Nazeing parish)	Map 2 and map A6
22 Lower Sheering	1	Sheering ward (part – the Sheering West parish ward of Sheering parish)	Map 2 and map A2

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
23 Moreton & Fyfield	1	Moreton & Matching ward (part – Moreton, Bobbingworth, High Laver, Little Laver and Magdalen Laver parishes); Roothing Country ward (part – Fyfield parish)	Map 2
24 North Weald Bassett	2	North Weald Bassett ward (part – part of the Village parish ward of North Weald parish)	Map 2 and map A4
25 Passingford	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Stapleford Abbots, Stapleford Tawney, Theydon Garnon, Theydon Mount and the Stanford Rivers parish ward of Stanford Rivers parish)	
26 Roydon	1	Roydon (part – the Dobbs Weir and Roydon Village parish wards of Roydon parish)	Map 2 and map A6
27 Shelley	1	Chipping Ongar ward (part – part of the proposed Chipping Ongar parish ward of Ongar parish); Shelley ward (the Shelley parish ward of Ongar parish)	map 2 and map A3
28 Theydon Bois	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Theydon Bois parish)	Map 2
29 Waltham Abbey North East	2	Paternoster ward (part - part of Paternoster parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish); Waltham Abbey East ward (part – part of Waltham Abbey East parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish); Waltham Abbey West ward (part – part of Waltham Abbey West parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish)	Map 2 and large map
30 Waltham Abbey South West	2	Waltham Abbey East ward (part – part of Waltham Abbey East parish ward of Waltham Abbey Town); Waltham Abbey West ward (part – part of Waltham Abbey West parish ward of Waltham Abbey Town)	Map 2 and large map
31 Waltham Abbey High Beach	1	High Beach ward (part – part of High Beach parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish); Waltham Abbey West ward (part - part of Waltham Abbey West parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish); Waltham Abbey East ward (part – part of Waltham Abbey East parish ward)	Map 2 and large map
32 Waltham Abbey Paternoster	2	High Beach ward (part – part of High Beach parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish); Paternoster ward (part – part of Paternoster parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish)	Map 2 and large map

Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Epping Forest

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Broadley Common, Epping Upland & Nazeing	1	1,577	1,577	-2	1,607	1,607	-4
2 Buckhurst Hill East	2	3,427	1,714	6	3,437	1,719	3
3 Buckhurst Hill West	3	5,120	1,707	6	5,162	1,721	3
4 Chigwell Row	1	1,748	1,748	9	1,752	1,752	5
5 Chigwell Village	2	3,079	1,540	-4	3,193	1,597	-4
6 Chipping Ongar, Greenstead & Marden Ash	2	3,057	1,529	-5	3,316	1,658	-1
7 Epping Hemnall	3	4,822	1,607	0	4,950	1,650	-1
8 Epping Lindsey & Thornwood Common	3	4,820	1,607	0	5,034	1,678	1
9 Grange Hill	3	4,782	1,594	-1	4,896	1,632	-2
10 Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village	1	1,668	1,668	4	1,694	1,694	2
11 High Ongar, Willingdale & The Rodings	1	1,619	1,619	0	1,627	1,627	-2
12 Honey Lane	3	4,736	1,579	-2	4,742	1,581	-5
13 Lambourne	1	1,504	1,504	-7	1,616	1,616	-3
14 Loughton Alderton	2	3,365	1,683	4	3,369	1,685	1
15 Loughton Broadway	2	3,236	1,618	3	3,291	1,646	-1
16 Loughton Fairmead	2	3,198	1,599	-1	3,301	1,651	-1
17 Loughton Forest	2	3,228	1,614	0	3,384	1,692	1
18 Loughton Roding	2	3,498	1,749	9	3,498	1,749	5
19 Loughton St John's	2	3,342	1,671	4	3,350	1,675	0
20 Loughton St Mary's	2	3,211	1,606	0	3,399	1,700	0

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 %
21 Lower Nazeing	2	3,259	1,630	1	3,291	1,646	-1
22 Lower Sheering	1	1,528	1,528	-5	1,608	1,608	-4
23 Moreton & Fyfield	1	1,593	1,593	-1	1,720	1,720	3
24 North Weald Bassett	2	3,263	1,632	1	3,413	1,707	2
25 Passingford	1	1,602	1,602	-1	1,686	1,686	1
26 Roydon	1	1,685	1,685	5	1,699	1,699	2
27 Shelley	1	1,487	1,487	-8	1,631	1,631	-2
28 Theydon Bois	2	3,141	1,571	-3	3,219	1,610	-3
29 Waltham Abbey High Beach	1	1,772	1,772	10	1,810	1,810	9
30 Waltham Abbey North East	2	3,250	1,625	1	3,250	1,625	-3
31 Waltham Abbey Paternoster	2	3,543	1,772	10	3,553	1,777	7
32 Waltham Abbey South West	2	2,279	1,140	-29	3,179	1,590	-5
Totals	58	93,439	-	-	96,677	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,611	-	-	1,667	-

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

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Epping Forest in Essex. We have now reviewed 12 districts in Essex as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Epping Forest. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in March 1976 (Report No. 147). The electoral arrangements of Essex County Council were last reviewed in November 1980 (Report No. 401). We intend reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992, ie the need to:
 - (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 District Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also make recommendations on the electoral arrangements for parish councils in the district.

5 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (third edition published in October 1999), which sets out our approach to the reviews.

6 In our *Guidance*, we state that we wish wherever possible to build on schemes which have been prepared locally on the basis of careful and effective consultation. Local interests are normally in a better position to judge what council size and ward configuration are most likely to secure effective and convenient local government in their areas, while allowing proper reflection of the identities and interests of local communities.

7 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the district as a whole. Having regard to our statutory criteria, our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable. We will require particular justification for schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

8 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the general assumption that the existing council size already secures effective and convenient local government in that district but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified: in particular, we do not accept that an increase in a district's electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a district council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other districts.

9 In July 1998, the Government published a White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, ie in year one half of the district council would be elected, in year two half the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities.

10 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/00 PER programme, including the Essex districts, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the October 1999 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State's intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas. The proposals have been taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, provides that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities' electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Orders under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in the two-tier district areas, and our current *Guidance*.

11 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 30 November 1999, when we wrote to Epping Forest District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Essex County Council, Essex Police Authority, the local authority associations, Essex Association of Local Councils, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district and the Members of the European Parliament for the Eastern region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 28 February 2000. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

12 Stage Three began on 16 May 2000 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Epping Forest in Essex*, and ended on 10 July 2000. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

13 Epping Forest is bordered to the east by the Essex districts of Uttlesford, Chelmsford and Brentwood, to the south by the London boroughs of Havering, Redbridge, Waltham Forest and Enfield and to the north by the Hertfordshire districts of Broxbourne and East Hertfordshire and the Essex borough of Harlow. It covers an area of 34,021 hectares and has a population of some 116,023, giving a population density of around 3 persons per hectare. The forest, after which the district is named, spans the west side of the district. The district contains both commuter towns and country villages, including the settlements of Chigwell, Epping, Loughton, Ongar and Waltham Abbey.

14 The district is entirely parished and contains 28 parishes. The district's two largest towns, Loughton and Waltham Abbey, comprise 25 per cent and 17 per cent of the district's total electorate respectively.

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

16 The electorate of the district is 93,439 (February 1999). The Council presently has 59 members who are elected from 30 wards, those in the west of the district being relatively urban, while the remainder are predominantly rural. Eleven of the wards are each represented by three councillors, seven are each represented by two councillors and 12 are single-member wards. The Council is elected by thirds.

17 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Epping Forest district, with around 6 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Waltham Abbey East and Waltham Abbey West wards, which have 888 and 1,142 more electors respectively than 20 years ago.

18 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,584 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,639 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 19 of the 30 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, 10 wards by more than 20 per cent and six wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalances are in High Ongar ward, where the councillor represents 45 per cent fewer electors than the district average and North Weald Bassett ward, where the councillor represents 43 per cent more electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Epping Forest

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 Broadway	3	4,095	1,365	-14	4,153	1,384	-16
2 Buckhurst Hill East	3	3,427	1,142	-28	3,437	1,146	-30
3 Buckhurst Hill West	3	5,120	1,707	8	5,162	1,721	5
4 Chigwell Row	1	1,813	1,813	14	1,817	1,817	11
5 Chigwell Village	2	3,323	1,662	5	3,437	1,719	5
6 Chipping Ongar	1	1,322	1,322	-17	1,681	1,681	3
7 Debden Green	3	4,030	1,343	-15	4,130	1,377	-16
8 Epping Hemnall	3	4,768	1,589	0	4,896	1,632	0
9 Epping Lindsey	3	4,744	1,581	0	4,975	1,658	1
10 Grange Hill	3	4,473	1,491	-6	4,587	1,529	-7
11 Greensted & Marden Ash	1	1,852	1,852	17	1,892	1,892	15
12 High Beach	1	2,174	2,174	37	2,212	2,212	35
13 High Ongar	1	871	871	-45	877	877	-46
14 Lambourne	1	1,504	1,504	-5	1,616	1,616	-1
15 Loughton Forest	2	3,228	1,614	2	3,384	1,692	3
16 Loughton Roding	3	4,192	1,397	-12	4,192	1,397	-15
17 Loughton St John's	3	4,182	1,394	-12	4,194	1,398	-15
18 Loughton St Mary's	2	3,351	1,676	6	3,539	1,770	8
19 Moreton & Matching	1	1,580	1,580	0	1,594	1,594	-3
20 Nazeing	2	3,676	1,838	16	3,714	1,857	13

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 %
21 North Weald Bassett	2	4,543	2,272	43	4,700	2,350	43
22 Passingford	1	1,602	1,602	1	1,686	1,686	3
23 Paternoster	3	3,481	1,160	-27	3,493	1,164	-29
24 Roothing Country	1	1,242	1,242	-22	1,361	1,361	-17
25 Roydon	1	2,195	2,195	39	2,209	2,209	35
26 Sheering	1	2,215	2,215	40	2,317	2,317	41
27 Shelley	1	1,370	1,370	-13	1,374	1,374	-16
28 Theydon Bois	2	3,141	1,571	-1	3,219	1,610	-2
29 Waltham Abbey East	3	5,758	1,919	21	5,762	1,921	17
30 Waltham Abbey West	2	4,167	2,084	32	5,067	2,534	55
Totals	59	93,439	-	-	96,677	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,584	-	-	1,639	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Epping Forest District Council

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1999, electors in High Ongar ward were relatively over-represented by 45 per cent, while electors in North Weald Bassett ward were relatively under-represented by 43 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

19 During Stage One we received 18 representations, including district-wide schemes from the District Council, Epping Forest Liberal Democrat Group and Epping Forest Conservative Group. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Epping Forest in Essex*.

20 Our draft recommendations were based on the District Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality, and provided a pattern of one, two and three-member wards in the district. However, we moved away from the District Council's scheme in the Loughton area, and in Waltham Abbey. We proposed that:

- Epping Forest District Council should be served by 58 councillors, compared with the current 59, representing 32 wards, two more than at present;
- the boundaries of 24 of the existing wards should be modified, while six wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- there should be new warding arrangements for the parishes of Chigwell, Epping, Loughton, Ongar, Sheering and Waltham Abbey.

Draft Recommendation

Epping Forest District Council should comprise 58 councillors, serving 32 wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

21 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 31 of the 32 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2004.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

22 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 32 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Epping Forest District Council and the Commission.

Epping Forest District Council

23 The District Council stated that it would not give our recommendations its support until the Commission consulted directly with the originators of alternative options. It also proposed the transfer of six electors from Abbey North ward to our proposed High Beach ward and the transfer of 44 electors from North Weald ward to Epping Lindsey & Thornwood ward. They also proposed that Epping Lindsey & Thornwood ward be renamed Epping Lindsey & Thornwood Common ward, that North Weald ward be renamed North Weald Bassett and that High Beach, Paternoster, Abbey North East and Abbey South West wards all be prefixed with Waltham Abbey.

The Liberal Democrat Group on the District Council

24 The Liberal Democrat Group supported our draft recommendations but proposed that the existing boundary along the tube line be maintained between Grange Hill and Chigwell Row wards. It also proposed that the boundary between Epping Lindsey & Thornwood and North Weald wards be amended and that eight electors be transferred from Epping Lindsey ward to Epping Hemnall ward.

The Conservatives Group on the District Council

25 The Conservative Group on the District Council accepted our proposals for the urban wards “namely Loughton and Waltham Abbey” but objected to our proposals in the rural areas, arguing that their own Stage One proposals highlighted rural concerns.

Epping Forest Liberal Democrats

26 Epping Forest Liberal Democrats supported our draft recommendations but proposed that five houses be transferred from Epping Lindsey ward to Epping Hemnall ward.

Loughton Labour Party

27 Loughton Labour Party supported the objections made by Councillor Bostock (as detailed below), except his proposed ward name changes. It also requested that the Commission reconsider its Stage One proposals for 14 councillors in Loughton and Debden and objected to our proposed Loughton Roding ward.

Parish and Town Councils

28 We received representations direct from eight parish and town councils. Epping Town Council requested clarification of a number of boundaries and stated that they had no objection to our proposed ward names. Epping Upland Parish Council objected to our proposed Broadley Common, Epping Upland & Nazeing ward, stating that it was too large for one district councillor and proposed instead that Epping Upland remain in the current Epping Lindsey ward. Loughton Town Council suggested that our proposed Loughton Alderton Arch ward be renamed Loughton Alderton ward.

29 Matching Parish Council objected to our proposed Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village ward. North Weald Bassett Parish Council also objected to our proposals for its area. It proposed that the current North Weald Bassett ward be maintained, but that it be served by three members instead of the current two.

30 Ongar Parish Council proposed a parish warding change, amending the boundary between Chipping Ongar, Greensted and Marden Ash parish wards. Sheering Parish Council proposed a parish ward name change. Waltham Abbey Parish Council supported our proposals for its area but proposed that Abbey North East and Abbey South West wards be prefixed by Waltham Abbey.

Other Representations

31 A further 19 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from one county councillor, eight district councillors, one parish councillor, eight residents and a joint submission from three councillors regarding parish warding arrangements.

32 County Councillor Webster generally supported our recommendations but proposed a minor boundary amendment between our proposed Abbey North East and High Beach wards. District Councillor Ainsworth proposed a parish ward name change. Councillors Grigg and Stallan both objected to our proposals for North Weald Bassett ward, proposing instead that the existing ward be retained and allocated an extra councillor.

33 Councillor Bostock proposed that the Limes Farm area of our proposed Grange Hill ward should have its own representation. He proposed that the alternative proposal for 14 councillors for the Loughton and Debden area be reconsidered and also proposed a number of ward name changes. He also objected to our proposed Loughton Roding and Loughton St Mary's wards. Councillor Goodwin objected to part of the existing Loughton Roding ward being transferred to our proposed Loughton Alderton Arch ward.

34 Councillor Green supported our proposals for the Waltham Abbey area but proposed a minor boundary amendment. Councillor Jacobs supported our proposals. Councillor Pond supported our proposals for the Loughton area but proposed two ward name changes. Councillors Whitehouse, Whitehouse and Boydon supported our proposals for the Epping area but submitted a joint proposal suggesting a minor warding amendment between Epping Hemnall and Epping Lindsey & Thornwood wards.

35 Parish Councillor Aitken objected to our proposals for the North Weald Bassett parish area and proposed that North Weald Bassett ward be maintained on its existing boundaries with an extra councillor. Six local residents objected to our proposals for the current North Weald Bassett ward with five proposing that we retain the existing arrangements.

36 A local resident mistakenly believed we had proposed that Thornwood Common be transferred to Epping Lindsey to form a new local council. One local resident supported our proposals for the Sheering area but requested that Lower Sheering ward be transferred to the district of East Hertfordshire, which is outside the terms of this review.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

37 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Epping Forest 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”.

38 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.

39 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.

40 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

41 At Stage One the District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 3 per cent from 93,439 to 96,737 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004.

42 The District Council expects most of the growth to be in Waltham Abbey West ward, although a significant amount is also expected in Chipping Ongar and Epping Lindsey wards. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having examined their electorate forecasts, we were concerned that planned single-person dwellings had not been sufficiently taken into account in preparing its forecast electorates and asked the District Council to review its forecast electorate. After further work, the District Council submitted a revised forecast electorate total of 96,677. A revised ward-by-ward forecast electorate was placed on deposit for public inspection. Having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were

satisfied that the revised forecasts represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

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

Council Size

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

45 Epping Forest District Council is at present served by 59 councillors. At Stage One the District Council proposed a reduction in council size from 59 to 58. It argued that such a proposal would provide for electoral arrangements which would achieve the appropriate balance of representation across the district. This council size of 58 members was supported by the Liberal Democrat Group. The Conservative Group submitted a 58-member scheme, although it also proposed, as an alternative, a council size of 45 in the light of the Modernising Local Government review that is in the process of being carried out.

46 However, in considering radical reductions in council size we would expect such proposals to have the support of more than one party on the council, and preferably that there should be all-party consensus on such an important issue. The Liberal Democrat Group, in its submission, stated it had discarded the 45-member option “primarily because our Modernisation of Local Government Review is insufficiently advanced to prove any case for a 25% seat reduction”. Both the Conservative Group and the Liberal Democrat Group noted that reflecting communities while achieving good levels of electoral equality was much more difficult under such a reduced council size. Furthermore, the Conservative Group did not provide an analysis of how the council would function with a council of 45 and, given the lack of evidence of support, amongst political parties on the council and of consultation with local people, we were reluctant to propose such a reduction in council size.

47 During Stage Three Epping Forest Liberal Democrats supported our proposals stating that a “substantial reduction in the number of councillors would ... greatly increase the size of rural wards and could make it more difficult for rural councillors to perform their representative role”.

48 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 58 members.

Electoral Arrangements

49 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including the district-wide scheme from the District Council, Epping Forest Liberal Democrat Group and Epping Forest Conservative Group. From

these representations, some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations.

50 There was consensus on the proposed warding arrangements in the Loughton area between the schemes from the District Council, the Liberal Democrat Group and the Conservative Group. There was a consensus that the wards of Buckhurst Hill East, Buckhurst Hill West, Lambourne, Passingford and Theydon Bois should remain unchanged. All district-wide schemes proposed that Ongar Parish Council be re-warded, so that a single-member ward and a two-member ward should replace the three existing single-member wards and there was general agreement that the parishes of Abbess Beauchamp & Berners Roding, High Ongar and Willingale should be combined to form the new High Ongar, Willingale & The Rodings ward.

51 In view of the degree of consensus over large elements of the District Council's scheme and the greatly improved levels of electoral equality provided, we concluded that we should utilise it as the basis of our recommendations. We considered that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or the alternative scheme submitted at Stage One. However, having regard to local community identities and interests, we decided to move away from the District Council's proposals in four areas.

52 At Stage Three the District Council stated that it would only support our draft recommendations if we gave further consideration to alternative options and consulted directly with the originators of those alternatives to develop those ideas. However, the District Council did not refer to any specific options that it wished us to examine. We have carefully considered the small number of alternative warding arrangements that were received at Stage Three and have reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of these and other representations received at this stage. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Broadway, Debden Green, Loughton Forest, Loughton Roding, Loughton St John's and Loughton St Mary's wards;
- (b) High Beach, Paternoster, Waltham Abbey East and Waltham Abbey West wards;
- (c) Buckhurst Hill East, Buckhurst Hill West, Chigwell Row, Chigwell Village and Grange Hill wards;
- (d) High Ongar, Moreton & Matching, Roothing Country and Sheering wards;
- (e) Chipping Ongar, Greensted & Marden Ash and Shelly wards;
- (f) Lambourne, Passingford and Theydon Bois wards;
- (g) Epping Hemnall, Epping Lindsey, Nazeing, North Weald Bassett and Roydon wards.

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

Broadway, Debden Green, Loughton Forest, Loughton Roding, Loughton St John's and Loughton St Mary's wards

54 These six wards, situated in the southwest of the district, together generally comprise the urban area of Loughton town and make up the parish of the same name. Loughton Forest and Loughton St Mary's wards are each represented by two members while the remaining wards are each represented by three. Under the current arrangements Broadway, Debden Green, Loughton Forest, Loughton Roding, Loughton St John's and Loughton St Mary's wards contain 14 per cent fewer, 15 per cent fewer, 2 per cent more, 12 per cent fewer, 12 per cent fewer and 6 per cent more electors than the district average currently. This level of electoral inequality is projected to remain relatively constant over the next five years.

55 At Stage One the District Council proposed a new configuration of seven two-member wards covering this area. It considered that its proposals in this area would achieve substantial improvements to electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. In the north of the town it proposed that Loughton St John's ward should be modified to include part of Debden Green ward in the Debden Lane area. The Council proposed that Loughton St John's ward should be further modified to transfer an area around Hillcroft and Hillyfields to a new Loughton Fairmead ward and Wellfields to an amended Loughton St Mary's ward. The remainder of a new Loughton Fairmead ward would comprise that part of Debden Green ward lying generally to the west of Castell Road, Jessell Drive and Westall Road. The District Council proposed that the remainder of Debden Green ward should be combined with that part of Broadway ward to the northeast of Chigwell Lane, to form a new Loughton Broadway ward. In the centre of the town, in addition to the modification to the northern boundary of Loughton St Mary's ward (detailed above), the Council proposed that an area around The Lindens should be transferred from Loughton St Mary's ward to a new Loughton Alderton Arch ward. Loughton Alderton Arch ward would also comprise part of Broadway ward to the west of Chigwell Lane, together with an area in the east of Loughton Roding ward. In the south of the town a modified Loughton Roding ward would comprise the remainder of the existing ward, while Loughton Forest ward would remain unchanged.

56 The Conservative Group and the Liberal Democrat Group each supported the District Council's proposals for Loughton. Loughton Labour Party submitted two alternative proposals for Loughton at Stage One, one based on a pattern of five three-member wards, the other based on a pattern of four two-member wards and two three-member wards. Loughton Residents' Association stated that it broadly supported the District Council's proposals, although it proposed that "the present boundary between St John's and St Mary's wards is retained between the Kings Head public house in Church Hill and 20 Church Lane". It argued that such an arrangement would provide a more clearly defined boundary than that put forward by the District Council.

57 We carefully considered the views which we received in this area. We noted in particular that we had received proposals based on both 14 and 15 members to cover the Loughton area. However, we calculated that, under a council size of 58, Loughton merited 14 councillors and consequently we did not consider that the proposal put forward by Loughton Labour Party for a pattern of five three-member wards for Loughton could be justified. With regard to the two alternative proposals which we had received based on 14 councillors serving the Loughton area, we noted that by 2004 the District Council's proposals would achieve better levels of electoral

equality while enjoying some local support and we considered that it appeared to reflect local community identities and interests. Consequently we adopted the District Council's proposals for Loughton as part of our draft recommendations, subject to the amendment put forward by Loughton Residents' Association to the boundary between Loughton St John's and Loughton St Mary's wards, as we considered that it would provide a more clearly defined boundary while slightly improving the current levels of electoral equality. We also proposed a minor boundary amendment between Loughton St John's and Loughton St Mary's wards to clarify a boundary anomaly in the Hill Top Place area. Under these proposed amendments, Loughton St John's and Loughton St Mary's wards would have 4 per cent more and equal to the average currently (equal to and 2 per cent more in 2004). Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors in Loughton Alderton Arch, Loughton Broadway, Loughton Fairmead, Loughton Forest and Loughton Roding wards would be 4 per cent more, equal to, 1 per cent fewer, equal to and 9 per cent more than the district average currently (1 per cent more, 1 per cent fewer, 1 per cent fewer, 1 per cent more and 5 per cent more in 2004).

58 At Stage Three the District Council proposed that alternative options for Loughton be considered and that the originators of these options be consulted but did not specify what these were. The Conservative Group accepted our proposals for the area. Loughton Labour Party objected to our proposals for the Loughton area and endorsed all the points made by Councillor Bostock, detailed below, with the exception of his proposed ward name changes. It proposed that its Stage One representation for 14 councillors in Loughton be reconsidered and objected to our proposed Loughton Roding ward, arguing that the existing ward has "a clear community of interest". Epping Forest Liberal Democrats supported our proposals for this area, arguing that our proposals largely follow "clear boundaries and [retain] natural communities within wards". Loughton Town Council proposed that our proposed Loughton Alderton Arch ward be renamed Loughton Alderton ward arguing that Alderton Arch "does not reflect common usage".

59 Councillor Bostock requested that our proposed Loughton St Mary's ward be reconsidered and that the Loughton Labour Party scheme for 14 councillors be reconsidered. He also objected to our proposed Loughton Roding ward, proposing that we "recognise the separate community that lives along the Roding Valley". He proposed that Loughton Broadway ward be renamed Debden Broadway ward, Loughton Fairmead ward be renamed Debden Fairmead ward, Loughton Alderton Arch ward be renamed Debden Alderton Arch ward and that Loughton Roding ward be renamed Roding Valley ward, arguing that "Debden is a separate community to Loughton". Councillor Goodwin objected to our proposals to transfer part of Loughton Roding ward to our proposed Loughton Alderton Arch ward on the grounds of community interest. Councillor Jacobs supported our proposals for the Loughton area. Councillor Pond supported our proposed boundaries for the area but proposed that Loughton Fairmead ward be renamed Loughton Hillyfields ward, arguing that the name Fairmead no longer relates to the ward. He also proposed that Loughton Alderton Arch be renamed Loughton Alderton ward or Loughton Alrewarton ward.

60 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to endorse our draft recommendation for Loughton Broadway, Loughton Fairmead, Loughton Forest, Loughton Roding, Loughton St John's and Loughton St Mary's wards as they would achieve good electoral equality and have received some local support. We considered the proposals put forward by Loughton Labour Party and Councillor Bostock for 14 councillors but note that the District Council's proposals achieve a better level of electoral equality. We have also considered

Councillor Bostock's proposals for renaming a number of wards but have not been convinced that these proposals are widely supported. We also carefully considered the objections to our proposed Loughton Roding ward but note that retaining the existing ward boundaries would result in a ward that would be significantly over-represented by 2004. We have also not been convinced that Councillor Pond's proposals to rename Loughton Fairmead are widely supported. However, we have been convinced that Loughton Town Council and Councillor Pond's proposal to rename Loughton Alderton Arch ward as Loughton Alderton ward would be more easily recognisable for the electors contained therein.

61 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors in Loughton Alderton, Loughton Broadway, Loughton Fairmead, Loughton Forest, Loughton Roding, Loughton St John's and Loughton St Mary's wards would be 4 per cent more, equal to, 1 per cent fewer, equal to, 9 per cent more, 4 per cent more and equal to the district average currently (1 per cent more, 1 per cent fewer, 1 per cent fewer, 1 per cent more, 5 per cent more, equal to and 2 per cent more in 2004). Our proposals for Loughton are illustrated in the large map at the back of the report.

High Beach, Paternoster, Waltham Abbey East and Waltham Abbey West wards

62 Situated in the west of the district and bounded by the Hertfordshire borough of Broxbourne and the London borough of Enfield to the west, the parish of Waltham Abbey is currently represented by nine district councillors. Paternoster and Waltham Abbey East wards are both represented by three members, Waltham Abbey West ward is represented by two members and the rural High Beach ward is represented by a single member. Under the current arrangements, High Beach, Paternoster, Waltham Abbey East ward and Waltham Abbey West wards would have 37 per cent more, 27 per cent fewer, 21 per cent more and 32 per cent more than the district average (35 per cent more, 29 per cent fewer, 17 per cent more and 55 per cent more in 2004).

63 At Stage One we received representations regarding Waltham Abbey from the District Council, the Conservative Group, the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillors Farren, Pennell and Sumner, Councillor Webster and Waltham Abbey Town Council. The District Council proposed that the area should have 10 councillors, an increase of one, representing six wards, an increase of two. It proposed that the existing Waltham Abbey East ward should be modified in order to correct its "unconventional geography". The Council proposed that it should be renamed Abbey North East and that it be extended westwards so that its western boundary would follow the Cornmill Stream to Abbeyview. It would then run south along Crooked Mile, east along Farm Hill Road, south along the backs of the properties on Howard Close and Elm Close. The boundary would then follow Cobbin's Brook to the existing boundary, diverting onto Broomstick Hall Road where the brook runs parallel with the street.

64 The District Council proposed that Waltham Abbey West ward should be modified in the east, as described above. From the Cobbin's Brook the boundary would return to the existing boundary at the M25, then running west to the district boundary, transferring Beechview Nursery to High Beach ward. This ward would be renamed Abbey South West. The southern half of the existing Waltham Abbey East ward, east of Cobbin's Brook, would be split into two wards, to be named Honey Lane North and Honey Lane South respectively, with the boundary between the two wards following Honey Lane. Honey Lane South ward's southern and eastern boundaries would follow the existing Waltham Abbey East ward's current boundaries. Honey Lane North

ward's eastern boundary would continue along Old Shire Lane. The boundary would then run west along the existing boundary, then north behind Mason Way and Badburgham Court to Ninefields, Paternoster Hill and the existing boundary at Cobbin's Brook.

65 Under the District Council's proposals, Paternoster ward would be amended in the west as described above. The Council also proposed that the ward should be extended east to include Abbotts Drive and Stanway Road, an urban area currently in the more rural High Beach ward, providing a more coherent boundary between the two wards. High Beach ward's boundaries would continue to follow Waltham Abbey Town Council's external boundaries in the south and east but would be amended in the north. The District Council stated that it accepted that "distinct communities exist in the rural and urban parts of the Town Council area", and amendments had been proposed to the boundary of High Beach ward and the more urban wards of Honey Lane South and Paternoster to respect these differences.

66 The Liberal Democrat Group supported the District Council's proposals for Waltham Abbey in their entirety. The Conservative Group supported the District Council's proposals for the Waltham Abbey area, but proposed minor modifications to Abbey North East and Paternoster wards, and proposed that the District Council's proposed two-member Honey Lane North and single-member Honey Lane South wards should be combined to create a new three-member Honey Lane ward.

67 Councillors Farren, Pennell and Sumner, district council members for Paternoster, Waltham Abbey West and Paternoster wards respectively, and Councillor Mrs Webster, county council member for Waltham Abbey, proposed identical boundaries to those proposed by the Conservative Group.

68 Waltham Abbey Town Council proposed that the Waltham Abbey area should be represented by 10 district councillors, representing five wards, reflecting the Conservative Group's proposals. It stated that it considered that a three-member ward in the town would provide for more effective and convenient local government than a single-member ward and a two-member ward.

69 We carefully considered all the representations received and adopted the District Council's proposals in part and the Conservative Group's proposals in part for these wards. We endorsed the Conservative Group's proposal to transfer Amwell Court and Badburgham Court to a modified Paternoster ward, as we considered that it would better reflect communities in this area. We considered that electors on these two roads share similar interests with the streets around Ninefields, rather than Honey Lane. We noted that, under the District Council's scheme, these electors would have no direct road access to the remainder of the new Honey Lane North ward. Consequently, we did not believe it would best reflect community identities to combine these areas. We considered that the Conservative Group's proposal would better reflect local communities, while not significantly affecting electoral equality.

70 However, we adopted the District Council's proposals for the remainder of the Waltham Abbey area. In particular, we adopted the District Council's proposal for the southern boundary of the new Abbey North East ward, as we noted that its proposals used the strong boundary of Cobbin's Brook and provided for better electoral equality in this area than other schemes proposed at Stage One. Under our draft recommendations Abbey North East, Abbey South West,

High Beach, Honey Lane and Paternoster wards would have 1 per cent more, 29 per cent fewer, 10 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer and 10 per cent more electors than the district average currently (2 per cent fewer, 5 per cent fewer, 8 per cent more, 5 per cent fewer and 7 per cent more in 2004).

71 In response to our draft recommendations the District Council proposed a minor boundary amendment between Abbey North East and High Beach wards. It proposed that six electors in Cobbinsend Road be transferred to High Beach ward. It also proposed that High Beach, Paternoster, Abbey North East and Abbey South West wards be renamed Waltham Abbey - High Beach, Waltham Abbey - Paternoster, Waltham Abbey - North East and Waltham Abbey - South West wards. Waltham Abbey Town Council supported our proposals for the area but proposed that Abbey North East and Abbey South West be renamed Waltham Abbey North East and Waltham Abbey South East wards. The Conservative Group on the District Council accepted our proposals for the area. The Liberal Democrat Group on the District Council supported our proposals in the area and stated that “Honey Lane has several communities on both sides of the main road and replaces Waltham Abbey East ward on a like for like basis”. Epping Forest Liberal Democrats supported our proposals for the area, stating that “community interests are generally reflected well in the boundaries suggested”. County Councillor Webster and Councillor Green supported our proposals for the area but proposed that six electors on Cobbinsend Road be transferred from our proposed Abbey North West ward to High Beach ward on “community grounds”.

72 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received, and are content to endorse the amendment put forward by the District Council, County Councillor Webster and Councillor Green. We consider that this amendment better reflects community links and has no effect on electoral equality. We are also content that Abbey North East, Abbey South West, High Beach and Paternoster wards should be renamed Waltham Abbey North East, Waltham Abbey South West, Waltham Abbey High Beach and Waltham Abbey Paternoster wards respectively.

73 Under our final recommendations Waltham Abbey North East, Waltham Abbey South West, Waltham Abbey High Beach, Honey Lane and Waltham Abbey Paternoster wards would have 1 per cent more, 29 per cent fewer, 10 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer and 10 per cent more electors than the district average currently (3 per cent fewer, 5 per cent fewer, 9 per cent more, 5 per cent fewer and 7 per cent more in 2004). These wards are illustrated in the large map at the back of the report.

Buckhurst Hill East, Buckhurst Hill West, Chigwell Row, Chigwell Village and Grange Hill wards

74 The areas of Buckhurst Hill and Chigwell are bounded by Loughton to the north and the London boroughs of Waltham Forest and Redbridge to the south. The Buckhurst Hill and Chigwell areas are each represented by six councillors. Buckhurst Hill East and Buckhurst Hill West wards together comprise Buckhurst Hill parish and are each represented by three members, whereas the Chigwell area is represented by the single-member Chigwell Row ward, the two-member Chigwell Village ward and the three-member Grange Hill ward which together cover Chigwell Parish. Under the current arrangements Buckhurst Hill East, Buckhurst Hill West,

Chigwell Row, Chigwell Village and Grange Hill wards would have 28 per cent fewer, 8 per cent more, 14 per cent more, 5 per cent more and 6 per cent fewer electors than the district average currently (30 per cent fewer, 5 per cent more, 11 per cent more, 5 per cent more and 7 per cent fewer in 2004).

75 At Stage One we received representations regarding these wards from the District Council, the Conservative Group and the Liberal Democrat Group. The District Council proposed minor amendments to the three Chigwell wards to improve electoral equality between the wards. The northern, eastern and western boundaries of Chigwell Village ward would remain unchanged, but the District Council proposed that its boundary with Grange Hill ward should be modified to follow Manor Road, transferring the area south of this road to an enlarged Grange Hill ward. Grange Hill ward would be further extended to the east, so that the west side of Vicarage Lane and the north side of Manor Road, including High Elms, would be transferred from Chigwell Row ward to Grange Hill ward. Chigwell Row ward would otherwise remain unaltered. The District Council stated that it considered Chigwell Row “is an identifiable community in its own right”, and that it should remain a separate ward. The District Council proposed that the two wards covering Buckhurst Hill remain unchanged, but that Buckhurst Hill East ward should be reduced from a three-member ward to a two-member ward to improve electoral equality.

76 The Liberal Democrat Group supported the District Council’s proposals for Chigwell in their entirety. The Conservative Group considered that, in Chigwell, “the Liberal/Labour Proposals were unnecessarily complex”. It proposed two three-member wards, to be named Chigwell and Grange Hill. Chigwell ward would consist of Chigwell Row parish ward, Village polling district and part of St John’s polling district. The modified Grange Hill ward would consist of Limes Farm and St Winifred’s polling districts and the remaining part of St John’s polling district. The Conservative Group supported the District Council’s proposals for Buckhurst Hill.

77 We gave careful consideration to the views which we received in this area. We noted the consensus regarding the reduction in members representing Buckhurst Hill from six to five and the retention of the existing boundaries in this area, and in view of the good levels of electoral equality which would result, included them as part of our draft recommendations. In Chigwell we considered that the Chigwell Village area was sufficiently separate in profile from the remainder of the parish to justify separate Chigwell Village and Chigwell Row wards. We considered that the District Council’s proposals to modify the existing wards in Chigwell would better reflect communities in this area, while achieving good electoral equality, and therefore adopted them as part of our draft recommendations.

78 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Buckhurst Hill East ward would be 6 per cent above the district average (3 per cent in 2004), 6 per cent above the average in Buckhurst Hill West ward (3 per cent in 2004), 9 per cent above the average in Chigwell Row ward (5 per cent in 2004), 4 per cent below the average in Chigwell Village ward both now and in 2004 and 1 per cent below the average in Grange Hill ward (2 per cent in 2004). Our proposals for Buckhurst Hill are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

79 At Stage Three the District Council proposed that alternative options for Chigwell be considered and that the originators of these options be consulted but was not specific regarding who these respondents were, or what the schemes were. The Liberal Democrat Group on the

District Council supported our proposals for the area but proposed that the existing boundary between Grange Hill ward and Chigwell Row ward be maintained. Epping Forest Liberal Democrats supported our proposals for this area. Councillor Bostock objected to our proposed Grange Hill ward, arguing that the Limes Farm area is a “ distinct community on its own”. He proposed that the Limes Farm area be represented in a single-member ward but did not provide detailed proposals.

80 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period but have not been persuaded to move away from our draft recommendations. We have considered the Liberal Democrat Group’s proposal but note that it would adversely affect the levels of electoral equality in the area. We have also considered Councillor Bostock’s proposals for the Limes Farm area of Grange Hill ward but have not been convinced that the statutory criteria would be better reflected under this proposal. Therefore we are content to confirm our draft recommendations for this area as final.

81 Under our final recommendations Buckhurst Hill East, Buckhurst Hill West, Chigwell Row, Chigwell Village and Grange Hill wards would have 6 per cent more, 6 per cent more, 9 per cent more 4 per cent fewer and 1 per cent fewer electors than the district average currently (3 per cent more, 3 per cent more, 5 per cent more, 4 per cent fewer and 2 per cent fewer in 2004). Our proposals for Chigwell are illustrated on Map A7 in Appendix A.

High Ongar, Moreton & Matching, Roothing Country and Sheering wards

82 These wards stretch from the northernmost point in the district along its eastern border, and are bounded by the Essex districts of Uttlesford to the north, Chelmsford to the east and Brentwood to the south. All four wards are represented by a single councillor. Under the current arrangements High Ongar, Moreton & Matching, Roothing Country and Sheering wards (each comprising the parishes named in the ward title) have 45 per cent fewer, equal to, 22 per cent fewer and 40 per cent more electors than the district average (46 per cent fewer, 3 per cent fewer, 17 per cent fewer and 41 per cent more in 2004).

83 At Stage One we received representations regarding these wards from the District Council, the Conservative Group, the Liberal Democrat Group, Abbess Beauchamp & Berners Roding Parish Council, Sheering Parish Council and a parish councillor. The District Council proposed that High Ongar ward, consisting of the parish of the same name, should be combined with the parishes of Abbess Beauchamp & Berners Roding and Willingale, currently in Roothing Country ward, creating a single-member High Ongar, Willingale & The Rodings ward. The District Council proposed that the remainder of Roothing Country ward, the parish of Fyfield, should join with part of the existing Moreton & Matching ward, creating a new Moreton & Fyfield ward. It proposed that this ward would comprise the parishes of Bobbingworth, Fyfield, High Laver, Little Laver, Magdalen Laver and Moreton and would be represented by one councillor. The Council proposed that a new single-member Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village ward should comprise Matching parish, Hastingwood parish ward of North Weald Bassett parish, and Sheering Village parish ward of Sheering parish. A single-member ward would cover the remainder of Sheering parish and would be named Lower Sheering ward. Under these proposals the southern boundary of the proposed Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village ward would follow the existing parish ward boundary along field lines, north of Rye Hill Road, Cross Keys

and Ashlyn Farm, then along the Cripsey Brook to the parish boundary. The boundary between the new wards of Lower Sheering and Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village would follow the Sheering and Matching parish boundary east to the M11, then north along the motorway to the district boundary.

84 The Liberal Democrat Group supported the District Council's proposals in this area. The Conservative Group supported the District Council's proposed High Ongar, Willingale & The Rodings ward. However, it proposed an alternative warding configuration for the remainder of the area. Similarly to the District Council, it proposed a new single-member Fyfield & Moreton ward comprising the parishes of Bobbingworth, Fyfield, Magdalen Laver and Moreton. The Conservative Group acknowledged that this ward would be over-represented (by 27 per cent), but argued "this is a rural situation with natural community interest". The Conservative Group proposed that the remainder of the existing Moreton & Matching ward, that is, the parishes of High Laver, Little Laver and Matching, should be combined with the existing Sheering ward, consisting of the parish of the same name, to form a two-member Matching & Sheering ward.

85 Abbess Beauchamp & Berners Roding Parish Council objected to the District Council's proposed High Ongar, Willingale & The Rodings ward. It considered that "the proposed new warding would be detrimental to electoral equality and would not secure convenient and effective local government". The Parish Council also proposed an increase in rural councillors, stating that "electoral equality, in the sense of each voter having a vote of equal weight does not depend on any arithmetical factor". Sheering Parish Council objected to the District Council's proposals in the Sheering area. It argued that the proposal to create a Lower Sheering ward and a Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village ward would "split the village in two". It proposed instead, similarly to the proposal put forward by the Conservative Group, a two-member ward combining Sheering parish with the parishes of Matching Tye and High Laver, and part of Moreton parish.

86 Councillor Ainsworth, a Sheering parish councillor, stated that "Lower Sheering is a discrete area", noting that it "is separated from the Village by the M11 and agricultural land". Similar to the District Council, Councillor Ainsworth proposed a separate ward for Lower Sheering.

87 We gave careful consideration to the representations that we have received for this area. With regard to the proposals put forward by the Conservative Group under its 58-member scheme, while we noted that it would use whole parishes and would provide for some improvement to electoral equality, we were not convinced that there was sufficient evidence to justify an over-representation of 27 per cent in 1999 in the Conservative Group's proposed Fyfield & Moreton ward. We noted that the District Council's scheme generally used whole parishes, otherwise combining areas of similar profiles, and provided for better levels of electoral equality across the wider area. We also noted the consensus between the political groups on the Council for the proposed High Ongar, Willingale & The Rodings ward. Consequently we considered that, based on the evidence available, the District Council's proposals would provide the best balance between the need to seek electoral equality while reflecting the statutory criteria and we therefore adopted its proposals for these wards as part of our draft recommendations. In particular, we stated that we could not accept an argument for a different councillor:elector ratio in one part of the district, given that the objective of a periodic electoral review is the achievement, as nearly as may be, of electoral equality.

88 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village ward would be 4 per cent above the district average (2 per cent in 2004), equal to the average in High Ongar, Willingdale & The Rodings ward (2 per cent below in 2004), 5 per cent below the average in Lower Sheering ward (4 per cent in 2004) and 1 per cent below the average in Moreton & Fyfield ward (3 per cent above in 2004).

89 At Stage Three the District Council proposed that alternative options for Sheering be considered and that the originators of these options be consulted. The Conservative Group stated that it stood by its Stage One proposals and Epping Forest Liberal Democrats supported our proposals for the Hastingwood area. North Weald Bassett Parish Council objected to our proposed Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village ward, arguing that the “local government line of communication” would be complicated. Matching Parish Council objected to our proposed Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village ward, arguing that it was not in the interests of their community. It argued further that Matching was historically and socially linked with the Lavers and that the area is “very rural ... and not at all suited to be forced to join a built up community”. It proposed that the existing Moreton & Matching ward be maintained.

90 Councillor Grigg objected to our proposals for the area, arguing that established community ties would be broken under our proposals. Councillor Stallan objected to our proposed Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village ward, arguing that it would increase “the layers of bureaucracy and of local government”. He stated that should the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions be minded to accept our draft proposals then the Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village ward should be renamed Hastingwood, Matching and Sheering ward. Councillor Jacobs supported our proposals for the area, arguing that alternative schemes produced would lead to high electoral variances. Three local residents objected to the Hastingwood area being included within our proposed Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village ward, arguing that Hastingwood has no links with the rest of the area.

91 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period. As we have received no specific comments with regard to our proposed High Ongar, Willingdale & The Rodings, Lower Sheering and Moreton & Fyfield wards we are content to confirm our draft recommendations as final. We considered Councillor Stallan’s proposed ward name change, but were not convinced that this proposal enjoys wide local support. As discussed later, we have not been minded to amend our proposed Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village ward as we have not been convinced that retaining North Weald Bassett as a single ward would better meet the statutory criteria. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for this area as final. Our proposals for these wards are illustrated on map 2 and the maps in Appendix A.

92 Under our final recommendations Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village, High Ongar, Willingdale & The Rodings, Lower Sheering and Moreton & Fyfield wards would have 4 per cent more, equal to, 5 per cent fewer and 1 per cent fewer electors than the district average currently (2 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer, 4 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more in 2004). Our proposals for these wards are illustrated on map 2 and the maps in Appendix A.

Chipping Ongar, Greensted & Marden Ash and Shelley wards

93 The three wards of Chipping Ongar, Greensted & Marden Ash and Shelley together comprise Ongar parish. They are situated to the west of High Ongar parish and north of Brentwood district. All three Ongar wards are represented by a single councillor. Under the present arrangements Chipping Ongar, Greensted & Marden Ash and Shelley wards have 17 per cent fewer, 17 per cent more and 13 per cent fewer electors than the district average currently (3 per cent more, 15 per cent more and 16 per cent fewer in 2004).

94 At Stage One we received representations regarding these wards from the District Council, the Conservative Group, the Liberal Democrat Group and Ongar Parish Council. The District Council proposed that Ongar parish should be divided into two district wards: Shelley ward, to be represented by one councillor, and Chipping Ongar, Greensted & Marden Ash ward, to be represented by two councillors. The boundary between the two wards would follow Epping Road and Chelmsford Road from Ackingford Bridge to High Ongar Bridge, transferring all the properties north of this road, currently in Chipping Ongar ward, to an enlarged Shelley ward.

95 These proposals were supported by the Conservative Group and the Liberal Democrat Group. Ongar Parish Council supported the District Council's proposals for Ongar parish and proposed that the parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries.

96 Given the high level of consensus behind the District Council's proposals for Ongar, the good levels of electoral equality which would ensue and the clear boundaries which would be utilised, we adopted the District Council's proposals for Ongar as part of our draft recommendations. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Chipping Ongar, Greensted & Marden Ash ward would be 5 per cent below the district average (1 per cent in 2004) and 8 per cent below the average in Shelley ward (2 per cent in 2004).

97 At Stage Three we received only one representation regarding the Ongar area from the Epping Forest Liberal Democrats who supported our proposals. We are therefore content to confirm our draft recommendations as final. Chipping Ongar, Greensted & Marden Ash and Shelley wards would have 5 per cent fewer and 8 per cent fewer electors than the district average currently (1 per cent fewer and 2 per cent fewer in 2004). Our proposals for Ongar parish are illustrated on Map A3 in Appendix A.

Lambourne, Passingford and Theydon Bois wards

98 The wards of Lambourne, Passingford and Theydon Bois are situated in the southern part of the district between Chigwell and Ongar, and each comprise the parish of the same name. Lambourne and Passingford wards are each represented by a single councillor, while Theydon Bois is a two-member ward. Under the current arrangements Lambourne, Passingford and Theydon Bois have 5 per cent fewer, 1 per cent more and 1 per cent fewer electors than the district average currently (1 per cent fewer, 3 per cent more and 2 per cent fewer in 2004).

99 At Stage One we received representations regarding these wards from the District Council, the Conservative Group and the Liberal Democrat Group. The District Council proposed no

change to the wards of Lambourne, Passingford and Theydon Bois. These proposals were supported by both the Conservative Group and the Liberal Democrat Group.

100 We therefore adopted the District Council's proposal to retain these wards on their existing boundaries as part of our draft recommendations. We noted in particular the good levels of electoral equality currently enjoyed by these three wards and noted that these levels are expected to be maintained in five years' time. We also considered that the retention of these three wards would not have an adverse effect on our proposals for other wards in the district.

101 At Stage Three the Conservative Group on the District Council accepted our proposed Theydon Bois and Passingford wards and we received no other representations concerning this area. We are therefore content to confirm our draft recommendations as final. Under our final recommendations Lambourne, Passingford and Theydon Bois wards would have 7 per cent fewer, 1 per cent fewer and 3 per cent fewer electors than the district average currently (3 per cent fewer, 1 per cent more and 3 per cent fewer in 2004). Our proposals for these wards are illustrated on Map 2.

Epping Hemnall, Epping Lindsey, Nazeing, North Weald Bassett and Roydon wards

102 The wards of Roydon and Nazeing comprising the parishes of the same names are situated in the north-west of the district, north of Waltham Abbey and west of Harlow borough. Epping Hemnall ward comprises the parish ward of the same name in Epping parish, Epping Lindsey ward comprises the parish of Epping Upland and the parish ward of St Johns in Epping Parish. North Weald Bassett ward comprising the parish of the same name lies south of Harlow borough, and Epping town is placed in the centre of the district. Epping Hemnall and Epping Lindsey are both three-member wards, North Weald Bassett and Nazeing are both two-member wards and Roydon is a single-member ward. Under the current arrangements Epping Hemnall, Epping Lindsey, Nazeing, North Weald Bassett and Roydon wards have equal to, equal to, 16 per cent more, 43 per cent more and 39 per cent more electors than the district average currently (equal to, 1 per cent more, 13 per cent more, 43 per cent more and 35 per cent more in 2004).

103 At Stage One we received representations regarding these wards from the District Council, the Conservative Group, the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor Grigg, Councillor Stallan, Epping Town Council, North Weald Bassett Parish Council and three local residents. The District Council proposed that Roydon and Nazeing wards should both be divided in two, so that the more urban, west side of the area comprise single- and two-member wards. The remainder of the parishes of Roydon and Nazeing would be combined with Epping Upland Parish to form a new single-member Broadley Common, Epping Upland & Nazeing ward. The District Council argued that "the link between Epping Upland and Epping was not strong enough to allow the present Lindsey Ward to continue in being".

104 Epping town is currently split between the existing Epping Hemnall and Epping Lindsey wards. Under the District Council's proposals Epping Upland Parish would be transferred from Epping Lindsey ward to form a new ward with parts of Roydon and Nazeing parishes, as described above. That part of Epping currently in Epping Lindsey ward would be combined with Thornwood parish ward of North Weald Bassett parish, forming a new Epping Lindsey & Thornwood ward, represented by three councillors. Epping Hemnall ward would remain

unchanged, except for a minor boundary amendment with the proposed Epping Lindsey & Thornwood ward so that this new ward would include all of the High Road to the M25 Bell Common Tunnel. As described above, Hastingwood parish ward of North Weald Bassett parish would form part of a new Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering ward.

105 North Weald village constitutes the Village parish ward of North Weald Bassett parish. It is situated in the south-east of the parish and is separated from Thornwood by the M11 and from Hastingwood by the Cripsey Brook and open land. The District Council proposed that Village parish ward should form a two-member North Weald ward. The District Council's proposals were supported in their entirety by the Liberal Democrat Group.

106 The Conservative Group objected to the District Council's proposals for Epping and the northern parishes. The Group stated that the District Council's argument that there is no community interest between Epping town and Epping Upland parish "is to say the least misleading". It continued "there has always been real links between the village of Epping Upland and Epping". The Conservative Group proposed instead that Roydon parish and the parish wards of Nazeingbury and Riverside (of Nazeing parish), should be combined to form a three-member Nazeing & Roydon ward. The Group proposed that Epping Lindsey and Epping Hemnall wards should be retained, but that the boundary between the two wards should follow the High Road, transferring all those properties west of the railway line and north of Stonards Hill from Epping Lindsey ward to Epping Hemnall ward. Epping Lindsey ward would be extended in the west to include Broadley Common parish ward, part of Nazeing ward. The Conservative Group proposed that North Weald Bassett ward should be retained, but with an additional councillor, forming a three-member ward, to improve electoral equality.

107 Epping Town Council objected to the District Council's proposals for the Epping Town Council area and proposed that the existing arrangements should be retained. It argued that the town has historical links with Epping Upland parish and that residents of Epping Upland look to Epping town for many facilities "thereby making it a joint community". The Town Council also asserted that Epping's connection with Thornwood "is not so close" and that such boundary modifications would "be creating confusion in the minds of the electorate".

108 North Weald Bassett Parish Council objected to the District Council's proposals for North Weald Bassett parish. It proposed instead that the existing ward should be retained, but as a three-member ward, an increase of one councillor. The Parish Council stated that the area shares a parish church and has common interests in the North Weald Airfield. It argued that "the links are of a community and historical nature and are not simply geographical". The Parish Council also expressed concern that its provision of local amenities would be affected if the parish were split at district level. Additionally, it stated that it had undertaken local consultation and that local residents "wish to remain as part of North Weald Bassett".

109 Councillor Grigg and Councillor Stallan, members for North Weald Bassett ward, both objected to the District Council's proposals for North Weald Bassett ward. They both proposed that the ward should be retained as a three-member ward, as proposed by the Conservative Group and the Parish Council, arguing that the villages are linked by common interests in the parish church and the airfield. Councillor Grigg stated that the ward's two district councillors are also parish councillors and stated her concern that district councillors would not attend parish council

meetings if the District Council's proposals were implemented. Councillor Stallan argued that the proposals "do not take into account the community and historical links between the three villages", commenting that the parish has strong links with its district councillors.

110 A resident of Thornwood Common supported the District Council's proposals for the ward, stating that "geographically this makes sense". A resident of North Weald objected to the District Council's proposals and supported the submission made by North Weald Bassett Parish Council, considering that the parts of the "ancient parish" should not be combined with another area which, "traditionally has not had the same connection". An Epping resident supported the District Council's proposals in full.

111 We noted the arguments both for and against the District Council's submission for Epping and the northern parishes. Having visited the area we noted that while the Epping Town Council area is relatively urban, Epping Upland parish is rural and is separated from the town area by large open spaces and a valley. We also considered that a rural ward in this area would provide for good electoral equality while meeting the statutory criteria and facilitating our proposals for neighbouring wards. We therefore adopted the District Council's proposals for the wards of Broadley Common, Epping Upland & Nazeing, Lower Nazeing and Roydon as part of our draft recommendations.

112 Regarding the proposals in the North Weald Bassett area, we noted that an increase in representation for the ward from two councillors to three would significantly improve electoral equality in the ward. However, we cannot look at any single ward in isolation, but must look for electoral equality across the district. We accepted that, historically, the three villages in North Weald Bassett have many links. We also noted the Parish Council's concerns that its local service provision would be affected by boundary changes. However, we also noted that the parish of North Weald Bassett is already warded for parish election purposes; the District Council proposed using these existing parish wards as the basis of their proposed new district wards. Therefore, having visited the area, noting the improved levels of electoral equality achieved, and, in order to facilitate warding patterns in the east of the district, we also adopted the District Council's new Epping Hemnall, Epping Lindsey & Thornwood and North Weald wards.

113 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Broadley Common, Epping Upland & Nazeing ward would be 2 per cent below the district average (4 per cent in 2004), equal to the average in Epping Hemnall ward (1 per cent below in 2004), 1 per cent below in Epping Lindsey & Thornwood ward (equal to the average in 2004), 1 per cent above in Lower Nazeing ward (1 per cent below in 2004), 3 per cent above the average in North Weald ward (4 per cent in 2004), and 5 per cent above the average in Roydon ward (2 per cent in 2004).

114 At Stage Three the District Council proposed that alternative options for Epping be considered and that the originators of these options be consulted but did not specify what these options were. It proposed a boundary amendment between our proposed Epping Lindsey & Thornwood and North Weald wards, recommending that 44 electors to the north of North Weald Airfield be transferred to Epping Lindsey ward in order to improve and reflect the community links. It also proposed that Epping Lindsey & Thornwood ward be renamed Epping Lindsey & Thornwood Common ward and that North Weald ward be renamed North Weald Bassett ward. The Conservative Group objected to our proposals in this area, arguing that their Stage One

proposals “highlighted concerns felt in the rural areas”. The Liberal Democrat Group supported our proposals but proposed that five properties be transferred from Epping Lindsey & Thornwood ward to Epping Hemnall ward to better reflect the community links between these properties. Epping Forest Liberal Democrats fully supported our proposals for the Epping and North Weald areas arguing that our recommendations lead to “excellent electoral equality while respecting community identity”. However, it also proposed that five properties in Coopersale Common be transferred from Epping Lindsey & Thornwood ward to Epping Hemnall ward.

115 Epping Town Council stated that they had no objection to our ward names. Epping Upland Parish Council objected to our proposed Broadley Common, Epping Upland & Nazeing ward arguing that it is “too large for one District Councillor to cover”, that it has more synergy with Epping Lindsey and that no direct links have previously existed between the Epping Upland area and the areas of Nazeing and Broadley Common. It stated that it would prefer to remain within the current Epping Lindsey ward.

116 North Weald Bassett Parish Council objected to our proposals for the area arguing that they would complicate the “local government line of communication for the whole of the north west of the district” and that they would “destroy vibrant local community links”. It reiterated its Stage One proposal that the current North Weald Bassett ward be maintained, served by three councillors, one more than at present. It stated further that, should our proposals be confirmed as final, North Weald ward should be renamed North Weald Bassett ward and Epping Lindsey & Thornwood should be renamed Epping Lindsey & Thornwood Common.

117 Councillors Grigg and Stallan both objected to our proposals for North Weald Bassett ward. They both proposed that the existing ward should be retained but with an additional councillor. Councillor Grigg stated that strong community ties would be broken and that “effective local administrative practices would be destroyed”. She also objected to our proposal to use the M11 motorway as a boundary between our proposed Epping Lindsey & Thornwood and North Weald wards. Councillor Stallan argued that local government in the area would be complicated by our proposals. He stated that should our proposals be confirmed as final, then he proposed that our proposed Epping Lindsey & Thornwood ward should be renamed Epping Lindsey & Thornwood Common ward and that our proposed North Weald ward should be renamed North Weald Bassett ward.

118 Councillor Jacobs supported our proposals for the area. Councillors Whitehouse, Whitehouse and Boydon generally supported our proposals for Epping “as they provide excellent electoral equality whilst respecting community identity”. However, they proposed transferring five houses in Coopersale Common from our proposed Epping Lindsey & Thornwood ward to our proposed Epping Hemnall ward. Parish Councillor Aitken objected to our proposals and proposed that the current North Weald Bassett ward be maintained with an extra councillor.

119 Six local residents objected to our proposals for North Weald Parish, five of whom proposed that the boundaries of the current North Weald Bassett ward be maintained but served by three councillors instead of the current two. They argued that our proposals “cut across well established community links with organisations and societies”.

120 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period and are content to adopt the proposal put forward by the District Council, the Liberal Democrat Group, Epping Forest Liberal Democrats and Councillors Whitehouse, Whitehouse and Boydon. We propose that the 44 residents directly to the north of North Weald Airfield be transferred from our proposed North Weald ward to our proposed Epping Lindsey & Thornwood ward, as we consider that this would better reflect local community identity. We are also content to endorse the proposal to transfer five properties in Coopersale Common from our proposed Epping Lindsey & Thornwood ward to our proposed Epping Hemnall ward. However, we have not been persuaded to maintain the current North Weald Bassett ward with an increase in representation for the ward from two councillors to three. Whilst we have some sympathy with this proposal and we accept that this would result in a reasonable level of electoral equality in the proposed North Weald ward, we remain of the view that we are unable to consider any area in isolation due to the consequential effects on surrounding wards. We must therefore look for electoral equality across the district as a whole. In the absence of any feasible alternative that would address the resulting consequential electoral inequality in surrounding wards, and the support that our draft recommendations received, we are confirming our draft recommendations as final, subject to the minor boundary amendments detailed above.

121 Similarly, in order to address the high levels of electoral inequality in the wards to the west of Epping Upland parish we considered that the District Council's Stage One proposals provided good electoral equality whilst meeting the statutory criteria. Whilst we have some sympathy for the wishes of Epping Upland Parish Council to remain within Epping Lindsey ward, we are unable to view any area in isolation from the rest of the district. In the light of the resulting levels of electoral inequality which this alternative proposal would create, we are content to confirm our draft recommendations for Broadley Common, Epping Upland & Nazeing ward as final.

122 We have been persuaded that if the proposed Epping Lindsey & Thornwood ward be renamed Epping Lindsey & Thornwood Common and our proposed North Weald ward be renamed North Weald Bassett this would better reflect the communities contained within each ward and are content to endorse these ward name changes.

123 In the light of the support received at Stage Three, we are content to confirm our draft recommendations for the remainder of the area as final. Under our final recommendations Broadley Common, Epping Upland & Nazeing, Epping Hemnall, Epping Lindsey & Thornwood Common, Lower Nazeing, North Weald Bassett and Roydon wards would have 2 per cent fewer, equal to, equal to, 1 per cent more, 1 per cent more and 5 per cent more electors than the district average currently (4 per cent fewer, 1 per cent fewer, 1 per cent more, 1 per cent fewer, 2 per cent more and 2 per cent more in 2004). The wards are illustrated on map 2 and the maps in Appendix A.

Electoral Cycle

124 At Stage One all district-wide schemes proposed the retention of elections by thirds. The Liberal Democrat Group stated that it would "wish consideration to be given to moving to elections by halves ... once Government legislation is sanctioned". However, we are guided by the legislation which only allows for whole-council elections every four years or elections by

thirds until such time as the Secretary of State makes Statutory Orders. Therefore we proposed no change to the Council's present system of elections by thirds at this time.

125 At Stage Three the District Council reiterated its preference for the continuation of elections by thirds. The Liberal Democrat Group on the district council stated that they "would obviously continue with thirds but would wish to consider comparison with election by halves pending eventual legislation". We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for elections by thirds as final.

Conclusions

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

- minor boundary modification between Epping Lindsey & Thornwood Common and North Weald Bassett, and Epping Hemnall wards;
- a minor boundary realignment between Waltham Abbey North East and Waltham Abbey High Beach wards;
- the proposed Epping Lindsey & Thornwood ward should be renamed Epping Lindsey & Thornwood Common ward;
- the proposed Loughton Alderton Arch ward should be renamed Loughton Alderton ward;
- the proposed North Weald ward should be renamed North Weald Bassett ward;
- the proposed Epping Forest wards of Abbey North East, Abbey South West, High Beach and Paternoster should be renamed with the prefix of Waltham Abbey.

127 We conclude that, in Epping Forest:

- there should be a reduction in council size of one from 59 to 58;
- there should be 32 wards, two more than at present;
- the boundaries of 24 of the existing wards should be modified;
- the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

128 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	59	58	59	58
Number of wards	30	32	30	32
Average number of electors per councillor	1,584	1,611	1,639	1,667
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	19	1	18	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	10	1	8	0

129 As Figure 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 19 to one. This improved level of electoral equality would improve further in 2004, with no wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Epping Forest District Council should comprise 58 councillors serving 32 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

130 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards, it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, in our draft recommendations report we proposed consequential changes to the warding arrangements for the parishes of Chigwell, Epping, Loughton, Ongar, Sheering, and Waltham Abbey to reflect the proposed district wards.

131 The parish of Chigwell is currently served by 11 councillors representing three wards, Chigwell Row, Chigwell Village and Grange Hill, which are currently represented by two, four and five councillors respectively. In the light of our draft recommendations for district warding in Chigwell parish, reflecting the District Council's proposed Chigwell Row, Chigwell Village

and Grange Hill district wards, we proposed modifying the parish ward boundaries to correspond with those of the district wards within the parish.

132 We received no comments at Stage Three. In the light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for warding Chigwell parish as final.

Final Recommendation
Chigwell Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Chigwell Row (returning two councillors), Chigwell Village (four) and Grange Hill (five). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A7 in Appendix A.

133 Epping Town Council is currently served by 12 councillors representing two wards, Hemnall and St John’s, which are represented by six councillors each. In the light of our draft recommendations for district warding in Epping town, reflecting the District Council’s proposals for Epping Hemnall and Epping Lindsey & Thornwood district wards, we proposed modifying the parish ward boundaries to correspond with those of the district within the parish.

134 At Stage Three we proposed transferring five properties in Coopersale Common from Epping Lindsey & Thornwood Common ward to Epping Hemnall ward. We therefore propose that the parish ward boundary between Epping Hemnall and St John’s be amended accordingly.

Final Recommendation
Epping Town Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Epping Hemnall and St John’s, each returning six councillors. The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Maps A4 and A5 in Appendix A.

135 Loughton Town Council is currently served by 22 councillors representing six wards, Broadway, Debden Green, Loughton Forest, Loughton Roding, Loughton St. John’s and Loughton St. Mary’s, which are represented by four, four, three, four, four and three councillors respectively. Our draft recommendations for district warding in Loughton town generally reflected the District Council’s proposal for Loughton town although modified to reflect Loughton Residents Association’s proposal and to amend a boundary anomaly between Loughton St John’s and Loughton St Mary’s wards. We proposed modifying the parish ward boundaries to correspond with those of the district wards within the parish.

136 We received no comments at Stage Three. In the light of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for warding Loughton Town Council as final, subject

to renaming Loughton Alderton Arch parish ward as Loughton Alderton parish ward, thus reflecting our proposed district ward name change.

Final Recommendation
Loughton Town Council should comprise 22 councillors, as at present, representing seven wards: Loughton Alderton (returning three councillors), Loughton Broadway (three), Loughton Fairmead (three), Loughton Forest (three), Loughton Roding (four), Loughton St John’s (three) and Loughton St Mary’s (three). The boundaries between the seven parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

137 The parish of Ongar is currently served by 15 councillors representing four wards, Chipping Ongar, Greensted, Marden Ash and Shelley, which are represented by four, two, four and five councillors respectively. In the light of our draft recommendations for district warding in Ongar parish, reflecting the District Council’s proposals for Chipping Ongar, Greensted & Marden Ash and Shelley district wards, we proposed modifying the parish ward boundaries to correspond with those of the district wards within the parish.

138 At Stage Three Ongar Parish Council and the Liberal Democrat Group proposed that the parish boundary between Chipping Ongar, Greensted, and Marden Ash parish wards should run along Crispy Brook river and that the whole of Turners Close be included within Greensted parish ward. In the light of these representations received we have revised our proposed parish ward boundary between Chipping Ongar, Greensted and Marden Ash parish wards. We propose that the boundary run along Crispy Brook river and include Turners Close wholly within Greensted parish ward.

Final Recommendation
Ongar Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Chipping Ongar (returning four councillors), Greensted (two), Marden Ash (four) and Shelley (five). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A3 in Appendix A.

139 The parish of Sheering is currently served by 11 councillors and the parish is unwarded. In order to facilitate its proposals for district warding in this area, the District Council proposed that Sheering parish should be warded into two: one parish ward covering the newer settlement which borders Harlow borough, to be called Sheering West, and the other covering the older settlement, to be called Sheering Village. The two wards would be represented by seven and four parish councillors respectively. For district warding purposes the proposed Sheering West parish ward would form the new Lower Sheering district ward and the proposed Sheering Village parish ward would form part of the new Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village district ward.

140 At Stage Three Sheering Parish Council and Councillor Ainsworth proposed that our proposed Sheering West parish ward be renamed Lower Sheering parish ward, and we are content to endorse that as part of our final recommendations.

Final Recommendation
Sheering Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Lower Sheering (returning seven councillors) and Sheering Village (four). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

141 Waltham Abbey Town Council is currently served by 11 councillors representing the four parish wards of High Beach, Paternoster, Waltham Abbey East and Waltham Abbey West, which are represented by two, three, three and three councillors respectively. At Stage One Waltham Abbey Town Council proposed that the parish wards be based on the five new district wards. It proposed that Honey Lane ward be represented by three parish councillors, with the remaining four parish wards being represented by two parish councillors each. We considered this a reasonable distribution of parish councillors and therefore adopted the Town Council’s proposal as part of our draft recommendations.

142 We received no comments at Stage Three. Therefore we confirm our draft recommendation for warding Waltham Abbey Town Council as final subject to the minor boundary amendment between the district wards of Waltham Abbey North East and Waltham Abbey High Beach and to our proposed parish wards of Abbey North East, Abbey South West, High Beach and Paternoster being prefixed by Waltham Abbey, thus reflecting our proposed district ward name changes.

Final Recommendation
Waltham Abbey Town Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Waltham Abbey North East (returning two councillors), Waltham Abbey South West (two), Waltham Abbey High Beach (two), Honey Lane (three) and Waltham Abbey Paternoster (two). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named in the large map at the back of the report.

143 In our draft recommendations report we proposed that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the district. In the light of there being no opposition at Stage Three, we are content to confirm this as final.

Final Recommendation

For parish and town councils, elections should continue to be held at the same time as elections for the principal authority.

Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Epping Forest

6 NEXT STEPS

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

145 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 9 January 2001.

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

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

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for Epping Forest: Detailed Mapping

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

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the district and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail in Maps A2 - A7 and the large map at the back of the report.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed district and parish warding of Sheering parish.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed district and parish warding of Ongar parish.

Map A4 illustrates the proposed district and parish warding of North Weald Bassett parish.

Map A5 illustrates the proposed district and parish warding of Epping Town.

Map A6 illustrates the proposed district and parish warding of Roydon and Nazeing parishes.

Map A7 illustrates the proposed district and parish warding of Chigwell parish.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the proposed warding arrangements for Loughton and Waltham Abbey.

Map A1: Final Recommendations for Epping Forest: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed warding of Sheering Parish

Map A3: Proposed warding of Ongar Parish

Map A4: Proposed warding of North Weald Bassett Parish

Map A5: Proposed warding of Epping Town

Map A6: Proposed warding of Roydon and Nazeing parishes

Map A7 : Proposed warding of Chigwell Parish

APPENDIX B

Draft Recommendations for Epping Forest

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of only five wards, where our draft proposals are set out below. The only other changes from draft to final recommendations, which is not included in Figures B1 and B2, is that we propose that Abbey North East ward be renamed Waltham Abbey North East ward, Abbey South West ward be renamed Waltham Abbey South West ward, High Beach ward be renamed Waltham Abbey High Beach ward, Paternoster ward be renamed Waltham Abbey Paternoster ward, Epping Lindsey & Thornwood ward be renamed Epping Lindsey & Thornwood Common ward, North Weald ward be renamed North Weald Bassett ward and Loughton Alderton Arch ward be renamed Loughton Alderton ward.

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

Ward name	Constituent areas
Abbey North East	Paternoster ward (part – part of Paternoster parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish); Waltham Abbey East ward (part – part of Waltham Abbey East parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish); Waltham Abbey West ward (part – part of Waltham Abbey West parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish)
Epping Hemnall	Epping Hemnall ward (part – part of Epping Hemnall parish ward of Epping parish)
Epping Lindsey & Thornwood	Epping Hemnall ward (part – part of Epping Hemnall parish ward of Epping parish); Epping Lindsey ward (St John's parish ward of Epping parish); North Weald Bassett ward (part – Thornwood parish ward of North Weald parish)
High Beach	High Beach ward (part – part of High Beach parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish); Waltham Abbey West ward (part – part of Waltham Abbey West parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish)
North Weald	North Weald Bassett ward (part – Village parish ward of North Weald parish)

Figure B2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Abbey North East	2	3,256	1,628	1	3,256	1,628	-2
Epping Hemnall	3	4,814	1,605	0	4,942	1,647	-1
Epping Lindsey & Thornwood	3	4,784	1,595	-1	4,998	1,666	0
High Beach	1	1,766	1,766	10	1,804	1,804	8
North Weald	2	3,307	1,654	3	3,457	1,729	4

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

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