

Further draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Rochford in Essex

November 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's further draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Rochford in Essex.

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

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Rochford on 30 November 1999. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 20 June 2000, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

- **This report summarises the representations we received during consultation on our draft recommendations for change. Copies of our draft recommendations are available on our website or from the address below.**
- **In the light of the representations received during the consultation period we have decided to compile further draft recommendations which are summarised in this report. We seek further views on these proposals.**

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

- **in 14 of the 23 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and nine wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2004 electoral equality is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 15 wards and by more than 20 per cent in eight wards.**

Our main further draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 92-93) are that:

- **Rochford District Council should have 39 councillors, one less than at present;**
- **there should be 19 wards instead of 23 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 21 of the existing wards should be modified and two 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 16 of the proposed 19 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 only two wards, Barling & Sutton and Hullbridge, expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2004.**

This report sets out our further draft recommendations on which comments are invited.

- **We will consult on our further draft recommendations for six weeks from 28 November 2000. Because we take this consultation very seriously, we may move away from our further draft recommendations in the light of responses. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our further draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our further draft recommendations and then make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.**
- **It will then be for the Secretary of State to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. He will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 8 January 2001:

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Figure 1: The Commission's Further Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1	Ashingdon & Canewdon	2	Ashingdon ward (part – the proposed Ashingdon parish ward of Ashingdon parish); Canewdon ward (the parishes of Canewdon, Paglesham and Stambridge)
2	Barling & Sutton	1	<i>Unchanged:</i> Barling & Sutton ward (the parishes of Barling Magna and Sutton)
3	Downhall & Rawreth	2	Downhall ward (part – the proposed Downhall parish ward of Rayleigh parish); Grange & Rawreth ward (part – the parish of Rawreth)
4	Foulness & Great Wakering	3	Foulness & Great Wakering East, Great Wakering Central and Great Wakering West wards (the parishes of Foulness Island and Great Wakering)
5	Grange	2	Downhall and Grange & Rawreth wards (part – the proposed Grange parish ward of Rayleigh parish)
6	Hawkwell North	2	Ashingdon ward (part – the proposed Ashingdon Heights parish ward of Ashingdon parish); Hawkwell East ward (part – the proposed North parish ward of Hawkwell parish)
7	Hawkwell South	2	Hawkwell East ward (part – the proposed South ward of Hawkwell parish); Rochford St Andrews ward (part – the proposed North parish ward of Rochford parish)
8	Hawkwell West	2	<i>Unchanged:</i> Hawkwell West ward (West parish ward of Hawkwell parish)
9	Hockley Central	3	Ashingdon ward (part – the proposed South West parish ward of Ashingdon parish); Hockley Central, Hockley East and Hockley West wards (part – the proposed Central parish ward of Hockley parish)
10	Hockley North	1	Ashingdon ward (part – the proposed West parish ward of Ashingdon parish); Hockley East ward (part – the proposed North parish ward of Hockley parish)
11	Hockley West	1	Hockley West ward (part – the proposed West parish ward of Hockley parish)
12	Hullbridge	3	Hullbridge Riverside and Hullbridge South wards (the parish of Hullbridge)
13	Lodge	2	Lodge ward (part – the proposed Lodge parish ward of Rayleigh parish)
14	Rayleigh Central	2	Lodge and Rayleigh Central wards (part – the proposed Central parish ward of Rayleigh parish)
15	Rochford	3	Rochford Eastwood ward (Eastwood parish ward of Rochford parish); Rochford Roche ward (part – the proposed Roche parish ward of Rochford parish); Rochford St Andrews ward (part – the proposed St Andrews parish ward of Rochford parish)

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
16	Sweyne Park	2	Downhall and Grange & Rawreth wards (part – the proposed Sweyne Park parish ward of Rayleigh parish)
17	Trinity	2	Central, Lodge and Trinity wards (part – the proposed Trinity parish ward of Rayleigh parish)
18	Wheatley	2	Rayleigh Central, Trinity and Wheatley wards (part – the proposed Wheatley parish ward of Rayleigh parish)
19	Whitehouse	2	Lodge, Rayleigh Central and Whitehouse ward (part – the proposed Whitehouse parish ward of Rayleigh parish)

Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Further Draft Recommendations for Rochford

	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	Ashingdon & Canewdon	2	3,295	1,648	4	3,524	1,762	6
2	Barling & Sutton	1	1,385	1,385	-12	1,407	1,407	-15
3	Downhall & Rawreth	2	3,069	1,535	-3	3,280	1,640	-1
4	Foulness & Great Wakering	3	4,354	1,451	-8	4,531	1,510	-9
5	Grange	2	2,475	1,238	-22	3,188	1,594	-4
6	Hawkwell North	2	3,234	1,617	2	3,413	1,707	3
7	Hawkwell South	2	3,310	1,655	5	3,391	1,696	2
8	Hawkwell West	2	3,101	1,551	-2	3,220	1,610	-3
9	Hockley Central	3	5,073	1,691	7	5,126	1,709	3
10	Hockley North	1	1,534	1,534	-3	1,658	1,658	0
11	Hockley West	1	1,665	1,665	5	1,677	1,677	1
12	Hullbridge	3	5,458	1,819	15	5,536	1,845	11
13	Lodge	2	3,165	1,583	0	3,301	1,651	-1
14	Rayleigh Central	2	3,316	1,658	5	3,336	1,668	0
15	Rochford	3	5,054	1,685	7	5,442	1,814	9
16	Sweyne Park	2	2,926	1,463	-7	3,182	1,591	-4
17	Trinity	2	2,907	1,454	-8	3,107	1,554	-6
18	Wheatley	2	3,148	1,574	0	3,295	1,648	-1
19	Whitehouse	2	3,109	1,555	-2	3,183	1,592	-4
	Totals	39	61,578	-	-	64,797	-	-
	Averages	-	-	1,579	-	-	1,661	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Rochford 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 further draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Rochford in Essex on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the 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 is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Rochford. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in 1975 (Report No. 25). We completed a directed electoral review of Thurrock in 1996 and a periodic electoral review of Southend-on-Sea in 1999. The electoral arrangements of Essex County Council were last reviewed in November 1980 (LGBC Report No. 401). We expect to review the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

- the statutory criteria 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* in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the District Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also make recommendations on the electoral arrangements for parish and town councils in the district.

5 We also have regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (third edition published in October 1999). This 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, as far as possible, equality of representation across the district as a whole. Our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable, having regard to our statutory criteria. We will require particular justification for schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward.

Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

8 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the general assumption that the existing council size already secures effective and convenient local government in that district but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified: in particular, we do not accept that an increase in a district’s electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, 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 The review is in four stages (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Stages of the Review

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

10 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.

11 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/00 PER programme, including the North Yorkshire 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*.

12 Stage One began on 30 November 1999, when we wrote to Rochford District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Essex County Council, Essex Police Authority, the local authority associations, Essex Local Councils Association, 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 Essex 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 29 February 2000.

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

14 Stage Three began on 20 June 2000 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Rochford in Essex*, and ended on 4 September 2000. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions.

15 In the light of representations received at Stage Three, we are taking the exceptional step of publishing further draft recommendations, which are contained in this report. We are undertaking a period of public consultation on these recommendations which began on 28 November 2000, with the publication of this report, and will end on 8 January 2001. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our further draft recommendations.**

16 During Stage Four we will reconsider the further draft recommendations in the light of consultation, decide whether to move away from them in any areas, and submit final recommendations to the Secretary of State. Interested parties will have a further six weeks to make representations to the Secretary of State. It will then be for him to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If the Secretary of State accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, he will make an Order. The Secretary of State will determine when any changes come into effect.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

17 The district of Rochford is situated in the south-east of Essex and is bordered by the River Crouch and the North Sea to the north and east and shares its land boundaries with the districts of Basildon, Castle Point and Southend-on-Sea. Rochford is mainly rural, comprising large areas of protected green belt land and large rural parishes, with the two main towns of Rochford and Rayleigh. The area is well connected to London by rail and road and has a large commuter population. It also contains London Southend airport. There has been much development in the area, which is largely residential, resulting from the district's strong road and rail links with London. Growth has centred on the Rayleigh area, and in parts of Hawkwell, Hockley and Rochford.

18 The district is wholly parished, containing 12 rural parishes and the two town councils of Rayleigh and Rochford. Rayleigh town comprises 38 per cent of the district's total electorate, while Rochford town comprises 9 per cent.

19 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'.

20 The electorate of the district is 61,578 (February 1999). The Council presently has 40 members who are elected from 23 wards, nine of which are relatively urban ones in Rayleigh and Rochford, with the remainder being predominantly rural. Three of the wards are each represented by three councillors, 11 are each represented by two councillors and nine are single-member wards. The Council is elected by thirds.

21 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Rochford district, with around 17 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Hockley Central and Hockley West wards.

22 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,539 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,620 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 14 of the 23 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average and in nine wards by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Hockley West ward where the councillor represents 46 per cent more electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Rochford

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 Ashingdon	2	2,433	1,217	-21	2,719	1,360	-16
2 Barling & Sutton	1	1,385	1,385	-10	1,407	1,407	-13
3 Canewdon	1	1,903	1,903	24	1,944	1,944	20
4 Downhall	2	3,352	1,676	9	3,445	1,723	6
5 Foulness & Great Wakering East	1	1,727	1,727	12	1,775	1,775	10
6 Grange & Rawreth	3	5,118	1,706	11	6,205	2,068	28
7 Great Wakering Central	1	1,377	1,377	-11	1,403	1,403	-13
8 Great Wakering West	1	1,250	1,250	-19	1,353	1,353	-16
9 Hawkwell East	3	5,776	1,925	25	5,938	1,979	22
10 Hawkwell West	2	3,101	1,551	1	3,220	1,610	-1
11 Hockley Central	1	1,994	1,994	30	2,035	2,035	26
12 Hockley East	2	3,137	1,569	2	3,273	1,637	1
13 Hockley West	1	2,243	2,243	46	2,255	2,255	39
14 Hullbridge Riverside	2	3,144	1,572	2	3,208	1,604	-1
15 Hullbridge South	2	2,314	1,157	-25	2,328	1,164	-28
16 Lodge	3	4,641	1,547	0	4,777	1,592	-2
17 Rayleigh Central	2	2,934	1,467	-5	3,027	1,514	-7
18 Rochford Eastwood	1	1,379	1,379	-10	1,382	1,382	-15
19 Rochford Roche	1	1,968	1,968	28	2,183	2,183	35
20 Rochford St Andrews	2	2,332	1,166	-24	2,502	1,251	-23
21 Trinity	2	2,939	1,470	-5	3,139	1,570	-3
22 Wheatley	2	2,379	1,190	-23	2,453	1,227	-24

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 %
23 Whitehouse	2	2,752	1,376	-11	2,826	1,413	-13
Totals	40	61,578	–	–	64,797	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,539	–	–	1,620	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Rochford 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 Hullbridge South ward were relatively over-represented by 25 per cent, while electors in Hockley West ward were relatively under-represented by 46 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

23 During Stage One we received six representations, including a district-wide scheme from Rochford District Council which had been prepared following a local consultation exercise, and representations from four parish and town councils and a local councillor. 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 Rochford in Essex*.

24 Our draft recommendations were partly based on the District Council's proposals. However, we also put forward our own proposals in a number of areas in order to improve electoral equality while also having regard to local community identities and interests. This provided a pattern of two-member wards across the majority of the district, with one three-member and one single-member ward. We proposed that:

- Rochford District Council should be served by 40 councillors, as at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of three;
- there should be new warding arrangements for the parishes of Ashingdon, Great Wakering, Hawkwell, Hockley, Hullbridge, Rayleigh and Rochford.

Draft Recommendation

Rochford District Council should comprise 40 councillors, serving 20 wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

25 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 19 of the 20 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 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

26 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 68 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Rochford District Council and the Commission.

Rochford District Council

27 The District Council supported our proposal to retain a council size of 40 members and for elections to continue to take place by thirds. It also supported our recommendations for Ashingdon, Canewdon and Rayleigh, subject to a minor amendment in Rayleigh town. However, it objected to our proposals for the rest of the district and reiterated its Stage One proposals. These were for a council of 40 members, serving 22 wards – 18 two-member wards and four single-member wards. Overall, change was proposed to all but one of the existing wards.

28 Under the District Council's proposals there would be better levels of electoral equality than at present, with the number of electors per councillor varying by no more than 10 per cent in 18 wards and by no more than 20 per cent in 21 of the 22 wards. This level of electoral equality was projected to improve over the next five years so that 19 of the proposed 22 wards would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average by 2004, while no wards would vary by more than 20 per cent. The Council's proposal is summarised in Appendix B.

Parish and Town Councils

29 We received 10 representations from parish and town councils. Ashingdon Parish Council opposed our draft recommendations and put forward alternative proposals for Hawkwell North and Ashingdon. Barling Magna and Sutton parish councils wholly supported the District Council's proposals. Canewdon Parish Council objected to our draft recommendations and supported the District Council's Stage One proposals. Great Wakering Parish Council opposed our proposals for Great Wakering and supported the District Council's Stage One proposal, with a minor modification. Otherwise, it suggested an alternative three-member Great Wakering ward. Hawkwell Parish Council objected to our recommendations for Hawkwell and Rochford, and Hockley Parish Council objected to our proposals to link part of Hockley with Hullbridge. However, it supported our proposal to combine part of Ashingdon parish with Hockley. Hullbridge Parish Council supported a 40-member council, but opposed our proposal to combine parts of Hockley and Hullbridge. Rayleigh Town Council supported the District Council's Stage One proposals for Rayleigh. Rochford Parish Council objected to our proposals for Rochford and supported the District Council's proposals.

Other Representations

30 A further 57 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from local political groups, local organisations, an MP, councillors and residents.

31 Hockley Branch Conservative Association opposed our proposals to combine parts of Hockley and Hullbridge and supported retaining the existing Hockley West ward. Rayleigh Constituency Conservative Association supported the proposed council size, electoral cycle and our proposals for Ashingdon, Canewdon, Great Wakering, Hawkwell East, the west of Rayleigh and Rochford. However, it objected to our proposals to combine the west of Rochford with Hawkwell and part of Hockley with Hullbridge and opposed our proposals for the east of Rayleigh. It supported the District Council's Stage One proposals for the centre of the district, and its consultation proposals for the east of Rayleigh. Hawkwell Heartstart Group objected to our proposals for Hawkwell and Hawkwell Residents' Association opposed our proposal to combine part of Hawkwell with Hockley. Rochford and District Chamber of Trade & Commerce and Rochford Hundred Historical Society objected to our proposal to combine part of Rochford with Hawkwell. Rochford Hundred Amenities Society opposed our proposals to cross parish boundaries and supported the District Council's scheme. Sir Teddy Taylor MP objected to our proposal to divide Great Wakering and to combine part of Rochford with Hawkwell.

32 A district councillor supported the retention of a 40-member council, but objected to our proposal to link Barling Magna with Great Wakering. A second district councillor opposed our proposal to link Great Wakering with surrounding areas and supported the District Council's proposals for this area. He also proposed an alternative three-member Foulness & Great Wakering ward. Another district councillor objected to our proposals for Great Wakering East ward. A district councillor objected to our proposal for Hawkwell and Rochford West and supported retaining the existing boundaries of Hawkwell West ward. Another district councillor supported the retention of a 40-member council, but opposed our proposal combining part of Hockley with Hullbridge. A further district councillor opposed our proposals for Hullbridge. A district councillor objected to our proposals to combine parts of Rochford and Hawkwell and supported the District Council's proposals. A further district councillor supported most of our proposals, particularly those for Rochford.

33 We received a representation from a county councillor opposing our proposals for Hockley and supporting the District Council's proposals. A parish councillor opposed our proposals for Great Wakering, Hawkwell, Hockley and Rochford and supported the District Council's scheme. Another parish councillor generally agreed with the District Council's scheme and objected to our proposal combining part of Rochford with Hawkwell. He also objected to our proposal to combine part of Ashingdon with Hockley, while supporting uniting part of Ashingdon with Hawkwell. He put forward alternative proposals for Ashingdon, east Hawkwell and Canewdon.

34 We received 38 representations from local residents. Of those, six opposed our draft recommendations in general and supported the District Council's Stage One proposals. However, the majority of representations opposed our proposal to change the boundaries of the existing Hawkwell West ward. 26 of the representations from local residents opposed our proposal to combine that part of Rochford to the west of the railway line with Hawkwell, while 11 of the representations opposed our proposal to combine part of Hawkwell West with Hockley. Five of the representations proposed an alternative boundary between the proposed wards of Hawkwell & Rochford West and Rochford. One of the local residents opposed our proposals for Rochford and supported the District Council's proposals in this area.

5 FURTHER DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

35 It is exceptional for us to undertake consultation on a further set of draft recommendations before reporting to the Secretary of State. However, we feel it is appropriate for us to do so in this case given the extent to which we intend moving away from our draft recommendations.

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

37 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.

38 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.

39 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

40 At Stage One the District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 5 per cent from 61,578 to 64,797 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expects most of the growth to be in the current Grange & Rawreth ward. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the District Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries was obtained. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

41 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

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

43 Rochford District Council presently has 40 members. At Stage One the District Council proposed that this council size should be retained to secure effective and convenient representation. Hullbridge Parish Council suggested that the council should be increased to 42 members. However, it stated that it was “prepared to accept” a 40-member council. A local councillor proposed that there should be a 42-member council, representing 21 two-member wards. However, neither of these respondents put forward detailed schemes under an increased council size.

44 In our draft recommendations report, 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 40 members. While we noted that we received two submissions in favour of an increase in council size, with no supporting argumentation for this change, we were not persuaded that an increased council size would offer better representation.

45 During Stage Three we received representations in support of a 40-member council from the District Council, Hullbridge Parish Council, Rayleigh Constituency Conservative Association and two district councillors. However, in the light of evidence received at Stage Three, and having considered all possible options for the district, we have concluded that in order to create a scheme which reflects community identity, offers clear ward boundaries, respects parish boundaries where possible and offers reasonable levels of electoral equality, it is necessary to reduce the size of the council by one to 39 members. While this proposal has not received any support to date, we do not believe that a reduction in council size by one councillor would have an adverse effect on effective and convenient local government in the area.

Electoral Arrangements

46 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we considered carefully all the representations received at Stage One, including the district-wide scheme from the District Council. From these representations, some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations. However, we were limited by the lack of argumentation and supporting evidence provided at Stage One.

47 In our draft recommendations, we put forward alternative proposals in order to address the relatively poor levels of electoral equality which would result from the District Council’s proposals for Hullbridge and Rochford. As a result, we departed from the Council’s scheme throughout the centre of the district. In our proposals, we used parish boundaries wherever

possible. However, we crossed these boundaries in a number of wards, in order to provide significantly improved levels of electoral equality.

48 At Stage Three our proposals for the majority of the district received considerable opposition. In contrast, the District Council's Stage One proposals were widely supported. We received significant opposition to our proposals to traverse parish boundaries in the centre of the district, particularly in Hawkwell. In the light of the large amount of new evidence and argumentation received at Stage Three, we considered that in order to effectively reflect community identity across Rochford, we must move away from our draft recommendations in the majority of wards.

49 In the light of evidence received at Stage Three, we have prepared further draft recommendations which are based both on our original draft recommendations and on the District Council's Stage One scheme, with amendments. This scheme addresses the majority of concerns raised at Stage Three, while providing better levels of electoral equality than the District Council's scheme. We consider that these further recommendations offer the best possible balance between the statutory criteria and electoral equality.

50 For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Downhall, Grange & Rawreth, Lodge, Rayleigh Central, Trinity, Wheatley and Whitehouse wards;
- (b) Hockley Central, Hockley East, Hockley West, Hullbridge Riverside and Hullbridge South wards;
- (c) Hawkwell East, Hawkwell West, Rochford Eastwood, Rochford Roche and Rochford St Andrews wards;
- (d) Ashingdon, Barling & Sutton, Canewdon, Foulness & Great Wakering East, Great Wakering Central and Great Wakering West wards.

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

Downhall, Grange & Rawreth, Lodge, Rayleigh Central, Trinity, Wheatley and Whitehouse wards

52 The existing wards of Downhall, Grange & Rawreth, Lodge, Rayleigh Central, Trinity, Wheatley and Whitehouse cover the western area of the district. Downhall, Rayleigh Central, Trinity, Wheatley and Whitehouse wards are each represented by two councillors, while Grange & Rawreth and Lodge wards are each represented by three councillors. The current electoral variances are shown in Figure 3.

53 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that this area should be represented by eight wards, with the proposed wards of Downhall & Rawreth, Grange, Lodge, Rayleigh Central, Sweyne Park, Trinity, Wheatley and Whitehouse each being represented by two councillors. The District Council's proposals are summarised in Appendix B.

54 At Stage One, Rayleigh Town Council fully supported the District Council's proposals for Rayleigh. It rejected the District Council's consultation proposal for a North Rayleigh & Rawreth ward, arguing that this ward name would be "confusing" as it would not reflect the identity of the area. It argued that this ward should be named Downhall & Rawreth and should include Appledene Close and Deepdene Avenue. It argued that the proposed Sweyne ward should be named Sweyne Park, in line with the senior school within the ward. A local councillor argued that warding arrangements should reflect the links between Rawreth and Rayleigh, and should use the London to Southend railway line as a boundary between east and west Rayleigh.

Draft Recommendations

55 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we concluded that the District Council's proposals for this area generally offered good electoral equality and had received some local support. We therefore decided to adopt its proposals for the east of the town as our draft recommendations. However, we were not persuaded that the District Council's proposed Sweyne Park ward would offer the best representation of communities given that it would combine two areas with little commonality. We considered that the District Council's consultation proposal, comprising what would appear to be a more sensible geographical area, would offer a more clearly identifiable ward. As a result of accepting the District Council's consultation proposals for Sweyne Park ward, we proposed adopting their consultation proposals for the whole of the western part of Rayleigh.

56 Under these proposals, Sweyne Park ward would comprise that part of the existing Grange ward within Rayleigh parish, less the southern undeveloped part of the ward and that part to the south-east of Hatfield Road and London Road, plus that part of the existing Downhall ward that comprises Arundel Gardens. North Rayleigh & Rawreth ward would comprise the parish of Rawreth and that part of the existing Downhall ward to the north of Deepdene Avenue, Preston Gardens and to the west of Caversham Park Avenue. Grange ward would combine the remainder of the existing Downhall and Grange & Rawreth wards. We agreed with Rayleigh Town Council's proposal that the proposed North Rayleigh & Rawreth ward be renamed Downhall & Rawreth ward, and that the proposed Sweyne ward be renamed Sweyne Park ward in order to better reflect the constituent communities. We noted that the District Council received submissions opposing the division of Deepdene Avenue between wards. However, given the lack of evidence we received at Stage One with regard to this area, we considered that the consultation scheme would offer the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Our draft recommendations are summarised in Appendix A.

57 At Stage Three Rochford District Council supported our proposals for Rayleigh subject to a minor amendment. It argued that the correspondence that it had received illustrated that "the residents of Deepdene Avenue feel strongly that the whole of that road should be included in the same ward" and proposed that the road should therefore be united in the same ward. Rayleigh Town Council reiterated its Stage One submission in support of the District Council's Stage One proposals for Rayleigh. Rayleigh Constituency Conservative Association supported our proposals for the west of Rayleigh, but objected to our proposals for the eastern part of the town, except for the proposed Whitehouse ward. It supported the proposal that was put forward by the District Council during its local consultation exercise for the east of Rayleigh. Under the District Council's consultation proposals Lodge ward would comprise the majority of the existing Lodge

ward. Rayleigh Central ward would comprise the existing Central ward, less that area to the south of the Eastwood Road, plus those properties to the east of Bull Lane. Trinity ward would comprise the majority of the existing Trinity ward, less that part to the west of Hockley Road, including the remainder of Lodge ward. Wheatley ward would retain its existing boundaries with an extension northwards to Hambro Hill, while Whitehouse ward would be the same as under our draft recommendations. It argued that much of the northern part of Wheatley is only accessible from the southern part via the proposed Trinity ward, while the consultation proposals would result in “greater respect to natural boundaries” within the town.

Further Draft Recommendations

58 Having considered carefully the representations received, we have decided to endorse our draft recommendations for Rayleigh as they would achieve reasonable electoral equality and have received local support. However, given argumentation supporting the proposal to include the whole of Deepdene Avenue within a single ward in order to offer clearer community representation, we propose including it in Downhall & Rawreth ward.

59 We have not received any further evidence in support of the District Council’s Stage One proposals for the west of the town. Accordingly, we are not persuaded that its proposals would offer a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than our draft recommendations. Nor are we persuaded to the view of Rayleigh Constituency Conservative Association that the District Council’s consultation proposals would offer better community representation than our draft recommendations. Our further draft recommendations are summarised in Figures 1 and 2.

Hockley Central, Hockley East, Hockley West, Hullbridge Riverside and Hullbridge South wards

60 The existing wards of Hockley Central, Hockley East, Hockley West, Hullbridge Riverside, and Hullbridge South cover the northern central area of the district. Hockley Central and Hockley West wards are each represented by a single councillor, while Hockley East, Hullbridge Riverside and Hullbridge South wards are each represented by two councillors. The current electoral variances are shown in Figure 3.

61 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that this area should be represented by five wards, with the proposed Hockley West and Hullbridge South wards each being represented by a single councillor, while Hockley North, Hockley South and Hullbridge Riverside wards should each be represented by two councillors. The District Council’s proposals are summarised in Appendix B.

62 At Stage One Hockley Parish Council supported the District Council’s proposals for Hockley. Hullbridge Parish Council argued that Hullbridge should be represented by three single-member wards or a two-member Hullbridge Riverside and a single-member Hullbridge South ward. A local councillor argued that the parish of Hullbridge should not be warded with other areas and should be divided into two two-member wards, while Hockley should be divided into

three two-member wards. She supported the inclusion of part of Ashingdon parish in a Hockley ward.

Draft Recommendations

63 Having given careful consideration to the representations received at Stage One, we noted that, by seeking to respect parish boundaries, the District Council's proposals would have resulted in poor levels of electoral equality for the Hullbridge area. While we noted that there was some local support for reflecting parish boundaries at district level, we did not receive convincing evidence to persuade us to accept the resulting high levels of electoral variance. On the basis of its electorate under a 40-member council, Hullbridge merits three and a half district councillors. It is therefore necessary to combine parts of the parish with adjoining areas in order for the area to be fairly represented at district level. We considered that the adjoining parts of Hockley parish share strong road links with Hullbridge and are of a similar rural character and therefore proposed that these areas should be linked. We proposed two two-member wards, Hullbridge & Hockley Rural and Hullbridge Riverside. Hullbridge & Hockley Rural ward would combine the rural area of Hockley with the rural and southern parts of Hullbridge while Hullbridge Riverside ward would comprise the existing ward with minor boundary amendments.

64 In Hockley, we proposed one single-member ward, Hockley North, and two two-member wards, Hockley Central and Hockley West. We proposed that Hockley Central ward should contain the centre of Hockley town, combining the eastern part of the existing Hockley Central ward and that part of the existing Hockley East ward to the south of Cherry Close, Orchard Avenue, Orchard Close and Walnut Court, less that part to the north of Greensward Lane up to and including Hampstead Gardens, and the built-up part of the existing Ashingdon ward on the boundary of Hockley, to the south of Greensward Lane. We proposed that Hockley North ward should comprise the remainder of the existing Hockley East ward, and the adjoining built-up area of Ashingdon ward to the north of Greensward Lane. Hockley West ward would include the remainder of the existing Hockley Central and Hockley West wards and the adjoining area of Hawkwell West ward. Our draft recommendations are summarised in Appendix A.

65 In response to our draft recommendations the District Council reiterated its Stage One proposals for Hockley and Hullbridge. It opposed our proposal to combine parts of Hullbridge South and Hockley arguing that the "two communities are separated geographically" and have different interests. It also objected to our proposal to combine part of Hawkwell with Hockley. Hockley Parish Council opposed our proposals for the parish and supported the District Council's proposals. It particularly objected to our proposal to link parts of Hockley and Hullbridge, arguing that the two parishes "have little in common". However, it supported the proposed inclusion of parts of Ashingdon parish in the proposed Hockley Central and Hockley North wards and the name of Hockley North ward. It raised concerns that the proposed Hockley Central ward would contain areas which were not central to Hockley. Hullbridge Parish Council, Hockley Branch Conservative Association and Rayleigh Constituency Conservative Association opposed our proposal to combine parts of Hockley and Hullbridge, arguing that this would not respect community identities. Hockley Branch Conservative Association supported retaining the existing Hockley West ward while Rayleigh Constituency Conservative Association supported the District Council's proposals for Hockley and Hullbridge, arguing that the resulting electoral inequalities would be justified by the reflected community identity. Hawkwell Heartstart Group and

Hawkwell Residents' Association objected to our proposal to combine parts of Hawkwell with Hockley on grounds of community identity. Rochford Hundred Amenities Society objected to our proposals, arguing that Hawkwell is seen as separate from Hockley and that Hullbridge is distinct with a "very strong community spirit".

66 Three district councillors opposed our proposal to combine parts of Hockley and Hullbridge on grounds of the geographic division of the areas and their lack of community identity. One also argued that the proposed Hullbridge & Hockley Rural ward would cause confusion and apathy due to the lack of community identification with the ward, while another suggested that Hullbridge should be represented by three members serving two wards. A further district councillor suggested that the levels of electoral inequality in Hullbridge should be addressed by combining the parish with parts of Rawreth. A county councillor objected to our recommendations for the centre of Hockley and supported the District Council's proposals. A parish councillor opposed our proposal to combine the South Fambridge area of Ashingdon with Hockley, asserting that the residents of this area share a sense of identity with Ashingdon. However, he supported the inclusion of the Broadlands Estate part of Ashingdon in a Hockley ward, arguing that residents in this area use facilities in Hockley. We also received 11 representations from local residents in opposition to our proposal to combine part of Hawkwell West with Hockley, arguing that this would not reflect community identity.

Further Draft Recommendations

67 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received at Stage Three. Having considered the level of argumentation and support for the Hullbridge parish boundaries to be respected at district level on the basis of its distinct community identity, we consider that the best option for this area would be to unite the whole parish community in a three-member ward. We consider that the resulting electoral variance of 15 per cent is justified in terms of the improved reflection of community identity. As a result of this proposal it is necessary to amend our draft recommendations for Hockley, which have also received some opposition. We consider that the District Council's proposed Hockley West ward offers the best option for the rural and western part of Hockley. This ward has reasonable levels of electoral equality, comprises areas which are well connected by road, uses clear boundaries and has received local support. However, we do not consider that the District Council's proposals for the east of the district would offer a better representation of this area, particularly as it proposed dividing part of Ashingdon from those parts of the centre of Hockley with which it shares direct road links. We consider that it is preferable to retain our proposed Hockley North ward, with an amendment to include the remainder of the northern rural part of the parish. This would offer clearer ward boundaries and better community representation. We propose that the remaining parts of Hockley and that part of Ashingdon on the edge of Hockley, which cover the whole central area of Hockley, should form a new Hockley Central ward. While we recognise that there has been some opposition to our proposal to combine the South Fambridge part of Ashingdon with Hockley, this proposal has also received support. We consider that these areas are well-connected by road and that the residents of the areas share facilities and interests, and are content to put them forward as part of our further draft recommendations. Our further draft recommendations are summarised in Figures 1 and 2.

Hawkwell East, Hawkwell West, Rochford Eastwood, Rochford Roche and Rochford St Andrews wards

68 The existing wards of Hawkwell East, Hawkwell West, Rochford Eastwood, Rochford Roche and Rochford St Andrews cover the central area of the district. Rochford Eastwood and Rochford Roche wards are each represented by a single councillor, while Hawkwell West, Hockley East, and Rochford St Andrews wards are each represented by two councillors and Hawkwell East ward is represented by three councillors. The current electoral variances are shown in Figure 3.

69 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that this area should be represented by five wards, with the proposed wards of Hawkwell North, Hawkwell South, Hawkwell West, Rochford East and Rochford West wards each being represented by two councillors. The District Council's scheme is summarised in Appendix B.

70 At Stage One, Hawkwell Parish Council supported the District Council's proposals for Hawkwell. A local councillor argued that the part of Ashingdon parish on the boundary of Hawkwell should be warded with Hawkwell and that the existing Hawkwell East ward should be divided into two two-member wards. She supported retaining the existing boundaries of Hawkwell West ward. She also proposed that the parish of Great Stambridge should be warded with the centre of Rochford town, that the part of Rochford St Andrews ward to the north of the railway line should comprise a ward, while the remainder of the parish to the west of the railway line would form a third ward.

Draft Recommendations

71 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we were not persuaded to adopt the District Council's proposals for Rochford, given that they would have resulted in poor levels of electoral equality. We were also concerned that its proposal to exclude the Doggetts Close area from Rochford East ward would separate this area from the only part of the town with which it has road links. While we recognised the merit in its proposals for Hawkwell, as a result of our recommendations for Hockley and Rochford we are unable to adopt the District Council's proposals in this area. We sought to reflect elements of the proposals from the District Council, Hawkwell Parish Council and the local councillor in our recommendations. However, we did not consider that the local councillor's proposal to combine the parish of Great Stambridge with part of Rochford would offer improved representation of these communities given that the east of Rochford is relatively urban in character while Great Stambridge is rural.

72 In our draft recommendations we proposed three two-member wards to represent the Hawkwell area, which strongly reflected the proposals of the District Council and the local councillor and used the clear boundary of the London to Southend railway line. We proposed that Hawkwell North ward should comprise that part of the existing Hawkwell East ward to the north-west of Central and Harewood Avenues and the adjoining part of Ashingdon parish, which the District Council proposed combining with Hawkwell. We recommended that Hawkwell & Rochford West ward should comprise the remainder of the existing Hawkwell West ward, less that part to be transferred to Hockley West ward, and that part of Rochford St Andrews ward to

the west of the railway line. Under our draft recommendations Hawkwell South ward would comprise the remainder of the existing Hawkwell East ward and that part of the existing Rochford St Andrews ward to the north-west of Rochford Garden Way, the school boundary and Little Stambridge Hall. We proposed combining the whole of the urban area of Rochford in a three-member ward comprising the remainder of the existing Rochford Eastwood, Rochford Roche and Rochford St Andrews wards. We considered that this ward would provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and would avoid the creation of an arbitrary boundary between areas of the town which are of a similar character. Our draft recommendations are summarised in Appendix A.

73 At Stage Three the District Council objected to our proposals and supported its Stage One proposals for this area. It explained that as part of its consultation exercise it had received local opposition to proposals to combine parts of Hawkwell with Hockley and Rochford. In particular, it had received concerns regarding our proposal to link that part of Rochford to the west of the railway line with Hawkwell. It argued that our draft recommendations went against the reflection of community identity. The Parish Council of Ashingdon supported the proposed allocation of councillors, but objected to our proposals for Hawkwell North and Ashingdon Heights and put forward alternative proposals for this area. It proposed that the Ashingdon Heights area of Ashingdon should be combined with the northern part of the existing Hawkwell East ward, from Albert Close and Albert Road north. Hawkwell Parish Council opposed our proposals for Hawkwell, particularly in relation to combining parts of Hawkwell with Hockley and Rochford which it considered would break local community ties. Rochford Parish Council supported the District Council's proposals for the area, which it argued offered a better reflection of community identity than our draft recommendations. It was particularly concerned that the area to the west of the railway line identifies with Rochford and not Hawkwell. It also argued that the Doggetts Close area of Rochford is connected with the area to the west by footways, while it raised concerns that our draft recommendations would divide the King Edmund Comprehensive School from those parts of Rochford which see it as a focal point. It also commented that representation might be reduced should Rochford be the only three-member ward in the district.

74 Hawkwell Heartstart Group opposed our proposal to combine parts of Hawkwell with Hockley and Rochford, arguing that it went against community identity. It supported the existing arrangements for the parish. Rayleigh Constituency Conservative Association and Rochford and District Chamber of Trade & Commerce opposed our proposal to combine that part of Rochford to the west of the railway line with part of Hawkwell, arguing that the two areas are geographically separate and different in character. Rayleigh Constituency Conservative Association supported retaining the existing Hawkwell West ward. However, it supported our proposals for Hawkwell East and the remainder of Rochford. Rochford Hundred Amenities Society objected to our proposals on the basis that they would not respect the parish boundaries of Hawkwell and Rochford which they consider reflect the distinct communities. Rochford Hundred Historical Society also opposed our proposal to combine that part of Rochford to the west of the railway line with Hawkwell, arguing that the two areas are historically separate. Sir Teddy Taylor MP objected to our proposal to divide King Edmund School from the remainder of Rochford.

75 Two district councillors and a parish councillor opposed our proposal combining that part of Rochford to the west of the railway line with Hawkwell, arguing that it would go against

community identities in the area. One district councillor objected to our proposals for Hawkwell and Rochford and supported retaining the existing boundaries of Hawkwell West ward. He argued that the Hawkwell West area has little in common with those parts of Hockley and Rochford with which we proposed combining it, and that the part of Rochford to the west of the railway line is geographically separate from Hawkwell. The other district councillor argued that the existing boundaries of Hawkwell West ward are clearly defined. She supported the District Council's proposal to combine the Doggetts Close part of Rochford with that area to the west, arguing that the two areas are connected by footpath. However, she suggested an alternative scheme to transfer Malting Villas, Middlemead, Robbing Close, Oast Way and Prentice Close to Rochford West ward instead. She also argued that the Ashingdon Road forms a "natural dividing line" between Hawkwell and Rochford. The parish councillor supported the District Council's proposals, arguing that our proposals lacked community identity and would tend to discourage local voters. A district councillor supported our proposals for Hawkwell and Rochford, which she considered "fair". Another councillor proposed combining the north of the existing Hawkwell East ward with Ashingdon Heights or with the whole of Ashingdon, arguing that residents of these areas look to Ashingdon for their facilities.

76 We also received 26 representations from local residents in opposition to our proposal to combine that part of Rochford to the west of the railway line with Hawkwell, and 11 representations from local residents in opposition to our proposal to combine part of Hawkwell West with Hockley. Both of these proposals were opposed because they were considered not to respect community identities. Two local residents asserted that there are no public transport links between Hawkwell and Rochford and that the two areas are geographically separate. Another two argued that our proposed Hawkwell & Rochford West ward would lead to voter apathy due to a lack of identification with the ward. We also received five representations from local residents proposing an alternative boundary between the proposed wards of Hawkwell & Rochford West and Rochford. They suggested that, should we retain our draft recommendations for this ward, the boundary should be modified to transfer that area to the east of Rochford Hall Road to Rochford ward. This would ensure that St Andrews Church, Rochford Hall and this area, which they considered strongly connected to Rochford, would be included in a ward with the majority of Rochford town. Five local residents supported the District Council's proposals for this area, while we received two representations from local residents in support of retaining the existing Hawkwell West ward.

Further Draft Recommendations

77 We have considered carefully the representations received during the consultation period. We note that our proposals for the east of Hawkwell have received little opposition and a degree of support. We are therefore proposing to retain our draft recommendations for Hawkwell North and Hawkwell South. While we note that there was some opposition to our proposal to combine the north-western part of Rochford with Hawkwell, we have not been persuaded that the residents of these closely connected areas do not share similar interests and identities. Nor have we been persuaded that the local councillor's proposals for Hawkwell North and Ashingdon would result in improved levels of electoral equality or offer better community representation. The existing ward of Hawkwell West has received local support and has good levels of electoral equality. We are therefore content to propose its retention.

78 The majority of correspondence that we received at Stage Three with regard to Rochford was in opposition to our proposal to link the western part of Rochford with Hawkwell West. We have been persuaded that this part of Rochford shares an identity with the centre of Rochford, and we are proposing to modify our proposed Rochford ward to include that part of Rochford parish, to the west of the railway line. While we note that the District Council's proposals for Rochford have received some support, we have also received support for our draft recommendations for the town and we remain concerned that the District Council's proposals would combine areas which have no transport connections. Our further draft recommendations are summarised in Figures 1 and 2.

Ashingdon, Barling & Sutton, Canewdon, Foulness & Great Wakering East, Great Wakering Central and Great Wakering West wards

79 The existing wards of Ashingdon, Barling & Sutton, Canewdon, Foulness & Great Wakering East, Great Wakering Central and Great Wakering West cover the eastern, rural area of the district. Barling & Sutton, Canewdon, Foulness & Great Wakering East, Great Wakering Central and Great Wakering West wards are each represented by a single councillor, while Ashingdon ward is represented by two councillors. The existing electoral variances are shown in Figure 3.

80 At Stage One the District Council proposed that this area should be represented by four wards, with the proposed Barling, Sutton & Great Wakering West and Foulness & Great Wakering South East wards each being represented by a single councillor, while Ashingdon & Canewdon and Great Wakering Central wards should each be represented by two councillors. The District Council's scheme is summarised in Appendix B.

81 At Stage One, a local councillor proposed that the parish of Great Stambridge should be combined with part of Rochford and that those parts of Ashingdon parish on the borders of Hawkwell and Hockley should be warded and placed in district wards with parts of those towns. She also argued that the remainder of Ashingdon should be combined with the existing Canewdon ward. She proposed that Great Wakering should not be combined with other areas and that Foulness Island should be combined with Barling Magna, Little Wakering and Sutton.

Draft Recommendations

82 In our draft recommendations we considered carefully the representations received at Stage One. We considered that the District Council's proposed Ashingdon & Canewdon ward would offer the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, while respecting parish and natural boundaries in the area. We supported its proposal to transfer parts of the existing Ashingdon ward to Hawkwell and Hockley, as described above. However, we were not persuaded to adopt the District Council's proposals for the south-east of the district, given the high levels of electoral inequality they would create. We were also concerned that the District Council's proposal to divide the area of Conway Avenue, New Road, St Johns Close, St Johns Road and Shoebury Road from the remainder of Great Wakering village would not offer the best level of representation for the residents of this area. Similarly, we did not consider that it would best reflect community identity and interests to combine the parishes of Great Stambridge and Rochford, as proposed by a local councillor, given that the former is rural in character while the

latter is more urban. Nor were we persuaded by her proposal to combine the parish of Foulness Island with areas other than Great Wakering, given the distinct natural river boundaries and the lack of road links between Foulness Island and all other adjoining areas.

83 In the south-east of the district, we proposed two two-member wards as our draft recommendations. Barling, Sutton & Great Wakering West ward would comprise the existing wards of Barling & Sutton and Great Wakering West with the north-western part of Great Wakering Central ward. We proposed that Foulness & Great Wakering East ward would comprise the existing Foulness & Great Wakering East ward and the remainder of Great Wakering Central ward. Our draft recommendations are summarised in Appendix A.

84 In response to our draft recommendations the District Council supported our proposals for Ashingdon & Canewdon. However, it objected to our proposals for the south-east of the district. It argued that it had received representations from local interested parties, as part of its consultation exercise, concerned about the combination of a large part of Great Wakering with Barling and Sutton. It argued that these parishes “have distinct interests and needs”. Ashingdon Parish Council supported the allocation of councillors and the combination of Ashingdon Heights with the north-east of Hawkwell. Great Wakering Parish Council opposed our draft recommendations and supported the District Council’s Stage One proposals, with a minor amendment to combine Potton Island with Great Wakering. It added that otherwise it would prefer that Great Wakering form a three-member ward to include Potton Island. Rayleigh Constituency Conservative Association supported our proposals for the whole of the rural eastern part of the district. Sir Teddy Taylor MP objected to our proposals to divide Great Wakering, asserting that it would be preferable to retain Great Wakering in a single ward.

85 A district councillor argued that Barling Magna has “its own identity and local interests” and is independent of Great Wakering. He proposed that Barling Magna and Sutton parishes should form a single- member ward, less Potton Island. Given that the Island is only accessible via Great Wakering he argued that the two should be combined. A further district councillor objected to our proposals, arguing that Great Wakering and Barling & Sutton have “distinct community identities”. He supported the District Council’s proposals or a possible alternative under which Great Wakering and Foulness would be combined in a three-member ward. Another district councillor also proposed that Potton Island should be combined with Foulness and Great Wakering rather than Barling and Sutton. A parish councillor objected to our proposals for Great Wakering, which he considered ignored community boundaries. A further parish councillor put forward an alternative two-member ward for Ashingdon parish, the north of Hawkwell and the western part of Canewdon parish and a single-member Canewdon ward, comprising the parishes of Paglesham, Stambridge and the remainder of Canewdon. He argued that these wards would better reflect community identity and would encourage voting due to more accessible polling centres. A local resident raised concerns that the name of South Fambridge in Ashingdon parish would be lost.

Further Draft Recommendations

86 Having considered carefully the responses received, we note the general support that our proposals for Ashingdon & Canewdon have received. We are proposing therefore to retain our draft recommendations for this ward. We have not received convincing argumentation to

persuade us that alternative proposals for the parishes of Ashingdon and Canewdon would offer better community representation. Also, given that we propose combining parts of Ashingdon with Hawkwell and Hockley, we have not found alternative warding arrangements which provide for equally good levels of electoral equality or the reflection of community identity.

87 Our proposals for the south-eastern rural part of the district received local opposition, while the District Council's proposals received some support. While we note that there were objections to the way in which we proposed dividing the village of Great Wakering, we have not been persuaded that the District Council's proposals would offer clearer boundaries or a better reflection of community identity. However, we consider that there is merit in the proposal to retain the existing Barling & Sutton ward, which has clearly defined natural boundaries, and to combine the whole of the Great Wakering community in a three-member ward comprising the whole of Great Wakering and Foulness parishes. We consider that this option would offer the most acceptable representation of the communities in this area and the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. While we note the support for combining Potton Island with those parts of Great Wakering to which it is attached, we are unable to transfer part of a parish without first creating a parish ward and, given the fact that this area currently contains very few electors, we are not persuaded that creating a parish ward for this area would provide for effective and convenient local government.

88 We consider that the relatively high level of inequality in Barling & Sutton and Foulness & Great Wakering wards is justified as they are rural, parished areas with strong natural geographical boundaries and we do not consider that alternative arrangements would better reflect community identity or offer more clearly identifiable boundaries. Our further draft recommendations are summarised in Figures 1 and 2.

Electoral Cycle

89 At Stage One we received two representations regarding the District Council's electoral cycle. The District Council itself stated that it considers that the present cycle of elections by thirds aids the electorate's interest in local politics; provides frequent opportunities for the electorate to change their representation; provides the opportunity for local communities to become more involved in local issues; and offers an element of continuity, given that there is less probability of a complete change of serving councillors. As a result, it proposed retaining the current system of elections by thirds. However, it considered that a possible future change to elections every two years "could provide a useful balance between the need for the electorate to be provided with an opportunity to express their view of the performance of their councillor with the need for continuity of local authority administration". Rayleigh Town Council commented that it would prefer two-yearly elections, but argued that parish elections should not be held at the same time as District Council elections in order to avoid confusion.

90 In our draft recommendations, we noted that there was some support for elections every two years. However, we are guided by current legislation under which we cannot propose elections by halves. We also noted that the District Council supported retaining the present electoral cycle. Accordingly, we proposed no change to the current cycle of elections by thirds.

91 In response to our draft recommendations, the District Council supported retaining elections by thirds. Rayleigh Constituency Conservative Association supported our recommendation for elections every three years given the limits of current legislation, but it favoured a two-yearly cycle for the district. Given that we cannot recommend elections by halves, and as we have received support for retaining elections by thirds, we make no recommendation for change to the present system of elections by thirds.

Conclusions

92 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our draft recommendations report, we propose that:

- there should be a council of 39 members;
- there should be 19 wards;
- the boundaries of 21 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of four wards;
- elections should continue to be held by thirds.

93 Our further draft recommendations would involve modifications to all but two of the existing wards in Rochford district, as summarised below:

- we propose retaining the existing boundaries of Barling & Sutton and Hawkwell West wards;
- we propose adopting the District Council's Stage One proposals for Ashingdon & Canewdon, Hockley West, Lodge, Rayleigh Central, Trinity, Wheatley and Whitehouse wards without modification;
- we propose adopting our draft recommendations for the wards of Downhall & Rawreth, Grange, Hawkwell North, Hawkwell South, Hockley North and Swayne Park, with minor modifications to the boundaries of Downhall & Rawreth, Grange and Hockley North wards;
- we propose creating the new wards of Foulness & Great Wakering, Hockley Central, Hullbridge and Rochford.

94 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	Further draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Further draft recommendations
Number of councillors	40	39	40	39
Number of wards	23	19	23	19
Average number of electors per councillor	1,539	1,579	1,620	1,661
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	14	3	15	2
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	9	1	8	0

95 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 14 to three, with only one ward varying by more than 20 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality would improve further in 2004, with only two wards, Barling & Sutton and Hullbridge, varying by more than 10 per cent from the average, at 15 per cent and 11 per cent. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Further Draft Recommendation
 Rochford District Council should comprise 39 councillors serving 19 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

96 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, we propose consequential changes to the warding arrangements for the parishes of Ashingdon, Hawkwell, Hockley, Rayleigh and Rochford to reflect the proposed district wards. At Stage Three, Great Wakering Parish Council suggested that if a three-member district ward represented the area, the existing parish wards should be retained. Therefore, we propose retaining the existing arrangements for Great Wakering to be represented by 13 councillors serving three wards – Central, East and West.

97 The parish of Ashingdon is currently served by 11 councillors representing two wards: Ashingdon South and Fambridge. At Stage One, the District Council proposed that the existing parish wards should be abolished and that three new wards should be created to be coterminous with its proposed district wards. The proposed parish ward of Ashingdon would comprise the Ashingdon village area and the rural part of the ward, which it proposed including in Ashingdon & Canewdon ward. The proposed Ashingdon Heights ward would comprise that area of Ashingdon parish which borders Hawkwell and which the District Council argued is “known” as Ashingdon Heights; it argued that the creation of this parish ward would not only assist at a district level, but would also ensure that this area would be recognised as a distinct community on the parish council. Ashingdon West ward would comprise that area which borders Hockley. It proposed that Ashingdon ward be represented by seven councillors, Ashingdon Heights by one and Ashingdon West by three.

98 In our draft recommendations, we considered that the District Council’s proposals for Ashingdon parish were sensible and would aid representation at both a district and parish level and we endorsed the District Council’s proposed Ashingdon and Ashingdon Heights parish wards. However, we recommended that its proposed Ashingdon West parish ward should be divided, given that it would be divided between two district wards, with the part that would be in Hockley Central ward being named South West parish ward, to be represented by one councillor, given its smaller electorate. That part that would be in Hockley North ward should be named West parish ward, to be represented by two parish councillors.

99 In response to our draft recommendations a parish councillor put forward alternative parishing arrangements for Ashingdon and Canewdon in line with his proposed district wards. However, given that we are adopting our draft recommendations for the district warding arrangements for Ashingdon, we are content to adopt our draft recommendations for Ashingdon parish as our further draft recommendations. At Stage Three a local resident raised concerns regarding the loss of the name of South Fambridge. Given that we are proposing new warding arrangements for the parish, we consider that it would be confusing to retain existing ward name of Fambridge. However, we would welcome comments on the proposed parish ward names in response to our further draft recommendations.

Further Draft Recommendation
Ashingdon Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Ashingdon (returning seven councillors), Ashingdon Heights (returning one councillor), South West (returning one councillor) and West (returning two councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

100 The parish of Hawkwell is currently served by 17 councillors and is divided into two parish wards: East and West. At Stage One the District Council proposed that the existing East ward should be abolished and replaced by a North and a South ward, to be coterminous with its proposed Hawkwell North and Hawkwell South district wards, while the existing boundaries of West ward should be retained. It proposed that North parish ward should be represented by five

councillors, South parish ward by six and West parish ward by six. Hawkwell Parish Council supported the District Council’s proposals.

101 In our draft recommendations, we recommended that the existing parish ward boundaries should be abolished and that the area should be divided into four parish wards – North, North West, South and South West – to be coterminous with the proposed boundaries of Hawkwell North, Hockley West, Hawkwell South and Hawkwell & Rochford West district wards.

102 As a result of our further draft recommendations at district level we recommend that the existing East parish ward should be abolished and replaced by North and South parish wards, to be coterminous with the proposed Hawkwell North and Hawkwell South district wards. We propose that the existing boundaries of West parish ward should be retained. In line with their share of the electorate, we propose that North ward should be represented by five councillors, South ward by six and West ward by six.

Further Draft Recommendation
Hawkwell Parish Council should comprise 17 parish councillors, as at present, representing three wards: North (returning five councillors), South (returning six councillors) and West (returning six councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

103 The parish of Hockley is currently served by 15 councillors and is divided into four wards: Central, North East, South East and West. At Stage One, the District Council proposed that the existing North East ward should be renamed North ward. It proposed that the existing South East, Central and West wards should be abolished to be replaced by South and West wards, to be coterminous with the proposed boundaries of the district wards of Hockley South and Hockley West. Hockley Parish Council supported the District Council’s proposals for the parish.

104 In our draft recommendations, we proposed that the existing parish wards should be abolished and that they should be replaced by four wards – Central, North, Rural and West – to be coterminous with the boundaries of the proposed district wards of Hockley Central, Hockley North, Hullbridge & Hockley Rural and Hockley West respectively.

105 In response to our draft recommendations, Hockley Parish Council objected to the proposed parish wards, particularly the proposed West ward which it asserted would have little connection to the centre of the parish.

106 As a result of our further draft recommendations at district level, we propose that the existing parish wards should be abolished and that they should be replaced by three wards: Central, North and West. The parish wards would be coterminous with the boundaries of the proposed district wards of Hockley Central, Hockley North and Hockley West respectively, and should be represented by 10, two and three councillors respectively, in order to offer a fair representation of the parish ward electorates.

Further Draft Recommendation

Hockley Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Central (returning 10 councillors), North (returning two councillors) and West (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

107 The parish of Rayleigh is currently served by 23 councillors and is divided into seven wards: Central, Downhall, Grange, Lodge, Trinity, Wheatley and Whitehouse. At Stage One, the District Council proposed that the boundaries of all wards should be modified in line with their proposed district wards and that Central, Grange, Lodge, Sweyne Park, Trinity, Wheatley and Whitehouse wards should be represented by three councillors, while Downhall ward should be represented by two. Rayleigh Town Council supported the District Council’s proposals for Rayleigh, arguing that the Town Council should continue to be represented by 23 councillors with seven three-member wards and one two-member ward.

108 Under our draft recommendations, as a result of our proposal to adopt the District Council’s proposed district wards of Rayleigh Central, Lodge, Trinity, Wheatley and Whitehouse, we were content to endorse the proposed parish wards of Central, Lodge, Trinity, Wheatley and Whitehouse, which would be coterminous with these district wards. However, we adopted alternative proposals in the west of the district and, therefore, we proposed the creation of the parish wards of Downhall, Grange and Sweyne Park, whose boundaries would be coterminous with the boundaries of the proposed Downhall & Rawreth, Grange and Sweyne Park district wards. We suggested that these parish wards should return two, three and three councillors respectively, reflecting the number of electors in each ward.

109 In response to our draft recommendations, Rayleigh Town Council reiterated its support for the District Council’s Stage One proposals. However, given that we are adopting our draft recommendations for the district wards of Rayleigh as the basis for our further draft recommendations, with a minor modification to the boundary between Downhall & Rawreth and Grange wards, we propose that the parish wards reflect the proposed district ward boundaries.

Further Draft Recommendation

Rayleigh Parish Council should comprise 23 councillors, as at present, representing eight wards: Central, Grange, Lodge, Sweyne Park, Trinity, Wheatley and Whitehouse, each returning three councillors, and Downhall, returning two councillors. The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

110 The parish of Rochford is currently represented by 17 councillors and is divided into three parish wards: Eastwood, Roche and St Andrews. At Stage One, the District Council proposed that

the existing parish wards should be abolished and that new wards should be created in line with their district level proposals. It proposed that East ward should be coterminous with its proposed Rochford East district ward, while West ward should be coterminous with the proposed Rochford West district ward.

111 In our draft recommendations, we recommended that the existing parish wards of Rochford should be abolished and that they should be replaced by three wards: Central, North and West. The boundaries of these parish wards would be coterminous with the proposed district wards of Rochford, Hawkwell South and Hawkwell & Rochford West respectively, and would be represented by 14, two and one councillors respectively, in line with their share of the parish electorate.

112 Given that our further draft recommendations at district level will not affect the parishing arrangements for the majority of Rochford, we propose retaining the existing boundaries of Eastwood and Roche parish wards. As a result of the proposed district warding arrangements, we propose a minor boundary modification to the north-western boundary of the existing Roche parish ward. In view of our proposal to combine the north-western part of Rochford in Hawkwell South district ward, we propose that this part of the existing St Andrews parish ward should form a North parish ward. The parish wards of Eastwood, North, Roche and St Andrews should be represented by four, two, six and five councillors respectively, in line with their share of the parish electorate.

Further Draft Recommendation
Rochford Parish Council should comprise 17 parish councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Eastwood (returning four councillors), North (returning two councillors), Roche (returning six councillors) and St Andrews (returning five councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of the report.

113 In our draft recommendations report we proposed that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the district, and we are content to adopt this as our further draft recommendation.

Further Draft Recommendation
For parish councils, elections should continue to be held at the same time as elections for the principal authority.

Map 2: The Commission's Further Draft Recommendations for Rochford

6 NEXT STEPS

114 We are putting forward further draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for consultation. We will take fully into account all representations received by 8 January 2001. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment at the offices of the Commission and the District Council, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission after the end of the consultation period.

115 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

Review Manager
Rochford Review
Local Government Commission for England
Dolphyn Court
10/11 Great Turnstile
London WC1V 7JU

Fax: 020 7404 6142
E-mail: reviews@lgce.gov.uk
www.lgce.gov.uk

116 In the light of representations received, we will review our further draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our further draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to the Secretary of State, who cannot make an Order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after he receives them.

APPENDIX A

Draft Recommendations for Rochford

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

Ward name	Constituent areas
Ashingdon & Canewdon	Ashingdon ward (part – the proposed Ashingdon parish ward of Ashingdon parish); Canewdon ward (the parishes of Canewdon, Paglesham and Stambridge)
Barling, Sutton & Great Wakering West	Barling & Sutton ward (the parishes of Barling Magna and Sutton); Great Wakering Central and Great Wakering West wards (part - the proposed West parish ward of Great Wakering parish)
Downhall & Rawreth	Downhall ward (part – the proposed Downhall parish ward of Rayleigh parish); Grange & Rawreth ward (part – the parish of Rawreth)
Foulness & Great Wakering East	Foulness & Great Wakering East ward (the parish of Foulness Island and part of the proposed East ward of Great Wakering parish); Great Wakering Central ward (part – part of the proposed East ward of Great Wakering parish)
Grange	Downhall and Grange & Rawreth wards (part – the proposed Grange parish ward of Rayleigh parish)
Hawkwell North	Ashingdon ward (part – the proposed Ashingdon Heights parish ward of Ashingdon parish); Hawkwell East ward (part – the proposed North parish ward of Hawkwell parish)
Hawkwell & Rochford West	Hawkwell West ward (part – the proposed South West parish ward of Hawkwell parish); Rochford St Andrews ward (part – the proposed West parish ward of Rochford parish)
Hawkwell South	Hawkwell East ward (part – the proposed South parish ward of Hawkwell parish); Rochford St Andrews ward (part – the proposed North parish ward of Rochford parish)
Hockley Central	Ashingdon ward (part – the proposed South West parish ward of Ashingdon parish); Hockley Central and Hockley East wards (part – the proposed Central parish ward of Hockley parish)
Hockley North	Ashingdon ward (part – the proposed West parish ward of Ashingdon parish); Hockley East ward (part – the proposed North parish ward of Hockley parish)
Hockley West	Hawkwell West ward (part – the proposed North West parish ward of Hawkwell parish); Hockley Central and Hockley West wards (part – the proposed West parish ward of Hockley parish)
Hullbridge & Hockley Rural	Hockley East and Hockley West wards (part – the proposed Rural parish ward of Hockley parish); Hullbridge Riverside and Hullbridge South wards (part – the proposed South parish ward of Hullbridge parish)

Ward name	Constituent areas
Hullbridge Riverside	Hullbridge Riverside and Hullbridge South wards (part – the proposed Riverside parish ward of Hullbridge parish)
Lodge	Lodge and Trinity wards (part – the proposed Lodge parish ward of Rayleigh parish)
Rayleigh Central	Lodge, Rayleigh Central and Trinity wards (part – the proposed Central ward of Rayleigh parish)
Rochford	Rochford Eastwood, Rochford Roche and Rochford St Andrews wards (part – the proposed Central parish ward of Rochford parish)
Sweyne Park	Downhall and Grange & Rawreth wards (part – the proposed Sweyne Park parish ward of Rayleigh parish)
Trinity	Lodge, Rayleigh Central, Trinity and Wheatley wards (part – the proposed Trinity parish ward of Rayleigh parish)
Wheatley	Lodge, Rayleigh Central, Trinity and Wheatley wards (part – the proposed Wheatley parish ward of Rayleigh parish)
Whitehouse	Lodge, Rayleigh Central and Whitehouse wards (part – the proposed Whitehouse parish ward of Rayleigh parish)

Figure A2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Ashingdon & Canewdon	2	3,295	1,648	7	3,524	1,762	9
Barling, Sutton & Great Wakering West	2	2,822	1,411	-8	2,953	1,477	-9
Downhall & Rawreth	2	2,982	1,491	-3	3,193	1,597	-1
Foulness & Great Wakering East	2	2,917	1,459	-5	2,985	1,493	-8
Grange	2	2,562	1,281	-17	3,275	1,638	1
Hawkwell North	2	3,234	1,617	5	3,413	1,707	5
Hawkwell & Rochford West	2	3,096	1,548	1	3,215	1,608	-1
Hawkwell South	2	3,310	1,655	8	3,391	1,696	5
Hockley Central	2	3,128	1,564	2	3,128	1,564	-3
Hockley North	1	1,522	1,522	-1	1,646	1,646	2
Hockley West	2	3,076	1,538	0	3,129	1,565	-3
Hullbridge & Hockley Rural	2	3,174	1,587	3	3,200	1,600	-1
Hullbridge Riverside	2	3,163	1,582	3	3,227	1,614	0
Lodge	2	3,165	1,583	3	3,301	1,651	2
Rayleigh Central	2	3,316	1,658	8	3,336	1,668	3
Rochford	3	4,726	1,575	2	5,114	1,705	5

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 %
Sweyne Park	2	2,926	1,463	-5	3,182	1,591	-2
Trinity	2	2,907	1,454	-6	3,107	1,554	-4
Wheatley	2	3,148	1,574	2	3,295	1,648	2
Whitehouse	2	3,109	1,555	1	3,183	1,592	-2
Totals	40	61,578	-	-	64,797	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,539	-	-	1,620	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Rochford 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.

APPENDIX B

Rochford District Council's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Figure B1: Rochford District Council's Proposal: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Ashingdon & Canewdon	Ashingdon ward (part – the proposed Ashingdon parish ward of Ashingdon parish); Canewdon ward (the parishes of Canewdon, Paglesham and Stambridge)
Barling, Sutton & Great Wakering West	Barling & Sutton ward (the parishes of Barling Magna and Sutton); Great Wakering West ward (part – the proposed West parish ward of Great Wakering parish)
Downhall & Rawreth	Downhall ward (part – part of the proposed Downhall parish ward of Rayleigh parish); Grange & Rawreth ward (part – the parish of Rawreth and part of the proposed Downhall parish ward of Rayleigh parish)
Foulness & Great Wakering South East	Foulness & Great Wakering East ward (part – the parish of Foulness Island and part of the proposed South East parish ward of Great Wakering parish); Great Wakering Central ward (part – part of the proposed South East parish ward of Great Wakering parish)
Grange	Downhall and Grange & Rawreth wards (part – the proposed Grange parish ward of Rayleigh parish)
Great Wakering Central	Foulness & Great Wakering East ward (part – part of the proposed Church End parish ward of Great Wakering parish); Great Wakering Central ward (part – part of the proposed Church End and Town Fields parish wards of Great Wakering parish); Great Wakering West ward (part – part of the proposed Town Field parish ward of Great Wakering parish)
Hawkwell North	Ashingdon ward (part – the proposed Ashingdon Heights parish ward of Ashingdon parish); Hawkwell East ward (part – the proposed North parish ward of Hawkwell parish)
Hawkwell South	Hawkwell East ward (part – South parish ward of Hawkwell parish)
Hawkwell West	<i>Unchanged</i> (West parish ward of Hawkwell parish)
Hockley North	Ashingdon ward (part – the proposed Ashingdon West parish ward of Ashingdon parish); Hockley East ward (part – the proposed North parish ward of Hockley parish)
Hockley South	Hockley Central, Hockley East and Hockley West wards (part – the proposed South East parish ward of Hockley parish)
Hockley West	Hockley West ward (part – the proposed West parish ward of Hockley parish)
Hullbridge Riverside	Hullbridge Riverside and Hullbridge South wards (part – the proposed Riverside parish ward of Hullbridge parish)

Ward name	Constituent areas
Hullbridge South	Hullbridge South ward (part – the proposed South parish ward of Hullbridge parish)
Lodge	Lodge, Rayleigh Central and Trinity wards (part – the proposed Lodge parish ward of Rayleigh parish)
Rayleigh Central	Lodge, Rayleigh Central and Trinity wards (part – the proposed Central parish ward of Rayleigh parish)
Rochford East	Rochford Eastwood and Rochford Roche wards (part – the proposed East parish ward of Rochford parish)
Rochford West	Rochford Roche and Rochford St Andrews wards (part – the proposed West parish ward of Rochford parish)
Sweyne Park	Downhall and Grange & Rawreth wards (part – the proposed Sweyne Park parish ward of Rayleigh parish)
Trinity	Lodge, Rayleigh Central, Trinity and Wheatley wards (part – the proposed Trinity parish ward of Rayleigh parish)
Wheatley	Lodge, Rayleigh Central, Trinity and Wheatley wards (part – the proposed Wheatley parish ward of Rayleigh parish)
Whitehouse	Lodge, Rayleigh Central and Whitehouse ward (part – the proposed Whitehouse parish ward of Rayleigh parish)

Figure B2: Rochford District Council's Proposals: 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 %
Ashingdon & Canewdon	2	3,295	1,648	7	3,524	1,762	9
Barling, Sutton & Great Wakering West	1	1,577	1,577	2	1,599	1,599	-1
Downhall & Rawreth	2	3,065	1,533	0	3,276	1,638	1
Foulness & Great Wakering South East	1	1,384	1,384	-10	1,432	1,432	-12
Grange	2	2,288	1,144	-26	3,237	1,619	0
Great Wakering Central	2	2,778	1,389	-10	2,907	1,454	-10
Hawkwell North	2	2,948	1,474	-4	3,127	1,564	-3
Hawkwell South	2	2,970	1,485	-4	3,051	1,526	-6
Hawkwell West	2	3,101	1,551	1	3,220	1,610	-1
Hockley North	2	3,225	1,613	5	3,349	1,675	3
Hockley South	2	3,383	1,692	10	3,436	1,718	6
Hockley West	1	1,665	1,665	8	1,677	1,677	4
Hullbridge Riverside	2	3,679	1,840	19	3,743	1,872	16
Hullbridge South	1	1,779	1,779	16	1,793	1,793	11
Lodge	2	3,165	1,583	3	3,301	1,651	2
Rayleigh Central	2	3,316	1,658	8	3,336	1,668	3
Rochford East	2	2,970	1,485	-4	3,148	1,574	-3
Rochford West	2	2,709	1,355	-12	2,919	1,460	-10
Sweyne Park	2	3,117	1,559	1	3,137	1,569	-3
Trinity	2	2,907	1,454	-6	3,107	1,554	-4

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 %
Wheatley	2	3,148	1,574	2	3,295	1,648	2
Whitehouse	2	3,109	1,555	1	3,183	1,592	-2
Totals	40	61,578	–	–	64,797	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,539	–	–	1,620	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Rochford 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.