

LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT  
COMMISSION  
FOR ENGLAND

FINAL  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
ON THE FUTURE  
ELECTORAL  
ARRANGEMENTS FOR  
BEXLEY

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

*July 1999*

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for Bexley.

Members of the Commission are:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)

Professor Michael Clarke (Deputy Chairman)

Peter Brokenshire

Kru Desai

Pamela Gordon

Robin Gray

Robert Hughes CBE

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

© Crown Copyright 1999

Applications for reproduction should be made to: Her Majesty's Stationery Office Copyright Unit.

The mapping in this report is reproduced from OS mapping by The Local Government Commission for England with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Licence Number: GD 03114G.

This report is printed on recycled paper. 

# CONTENTS

|  | page       |
|--|------------|
| LETTER TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE                   | <i>v</i>   |
| SUMMARY  | <i>vii</i> |
| 1 INTRODUCTION                                     | <i>1</i>   |
| 2 CURRENT ELECTORAL<br>ARRANGEMENTS                | <i>3</i>   |
| 3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS                            | <i>7</i>   |
| 4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION                        | <i>9</i>   |
| 5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL<br>RECOMMENDATIONS            | <i>13</i>  |
| 6 NEXT STEPS                                       | <i>29</i>  |
| APPENDIX   |            |
| A Draft Recommendations for Bexley<br>(March 1999) | <i>31</i>  |

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





## Local Government Commission for England

27 July 1999

Dear Secretary of State

On 4 August 1998 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Bexley under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in March 1999 and undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although some modifications have been made (see paragraphs 125-126) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Bexley.

We recommend that Bexley Borough Council should be served by 63 councillors representing 21 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

We note that you have now set out in the White Paper *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People* (Cm 4014, HMSO), legislative proposals for a number of changes to local authority electoral arrangements. However, until such time as that new legislation is in place we are obliged to conduct our work in accordance with current legislation, and to continue our current approach to periodic electoral reviews.

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

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT  
Chairman



# SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Bexley on 4 August 1998. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 2 March 1999, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

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

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

- **in five 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 one ward varies by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2003 electoral equality shows no overall improvement, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in ten wards, and by more than 20 per cent in two wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 125-126) are that:

- **Bexley Borough Council should be served by 63 councillors, compared to 62 at present;**
- **there should be 21 wards, two fewer than at present, which would involve changes to the boundaries of all but one of the existing wards.**

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

- **In 20 of the 21 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average, with Thamesmead East ward varying by 13 per cent.**
- **This level of electoral equality is forecast to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 1 per cent from the average for the borough in 2003.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 7 September 1999:

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

*Figure 1:  
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary*

| <b>Ward name</b>        | <b>Number of councillors</b> | <b>Constituent areas (existing wards)</b>   |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| 1 Belvedere             | 3                            | Belvedere ward (part); Bostall ward (part); Thamesmead East ward (part)                           |
| 2 Blackfen & Lamorbey   | 3                            | Blackfen ward (part); Lamorbey ward (part)  |
| 3 Blendon & Penhill     | 3                            | Blackfen ward (part); Blendon & Penhill ward (part); St Mary's ward (part)                        |
| 4 Brampton              | 3                            | Bostall ward (part); Brampton ward (part); Northumberland Heath ward (part)                       |
| 5 Christchurch          | 3                            | Christchurch ward (part); Upton ward (part)   |
| 6 Colyers               | 3                            | Barnehurst North ward; Erith ward (part); North End ward (part); Northumberland Heath ward (part) |
| 7 Cray Meadows          | 3                            | Cray ward; St Mary's ward (part); Sidcup East ward (part)   |
| 8 Crayford              | 3                            | Crayford ward (part); North End ward (part); Upton ward (part)                                    |
| 9 Danson Park           | 3                            | Christchurch ward (part); Danson ward (part); Upton ward (part)                                   |
| 10 East Wickham         | 3                            | <i>Unchanged</i>  |
| 11 Erith                | 3                            | Belvedere ward (part); Erith ward (part); North End ward (part); Northumberland Heath ward (part) |
| 12 Falconwood & Welling | 3                            | Blackfen ward (part); Blendon & Penhill ward (part); Danson ward (part); Falconwood ward          |
| 13 Lesnes Abbey         | 3                            | Belvedere ward (part); Bostall ward (part); Thamesmead East ward (part)                           |
| 14 Longlands            | 3                            | Sidcup East ward (part); Sidcup West ward (part)  |
| 15 Mayplace             | 3                            | Barnehurst ward; Christchurch ward (part); Crayford ward (part); Upton ward (part)                |
| 16 North End            | 3                            | North End ward (part)   |
| 17 Northumberland Heath | 3                            | Bostall ward (part); Northumberland Heath ward (part)   |
| 18 Sidcup               | 3                            | Lamorbey ward (part); Sidcup East ward (part); Sidcup West ward (part)                            |

*Figure 1 (continued):  
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary*

|    | <b>Ward name</b> | <b>Number of councillors</b> | <b>Constituent areas (existing wards)</b>      |
|----|------------------|------------------------------|--|
| 19 | St Mary's        | 3                            | St Mary's ward (part); Sidcup East ward (part) |
| 20 | St Michael's     | 3                            | Brampton ward (part); St Michael's ward        |
| 21 | Thamesmead East  | 3                            | Thamesmead East ward (part)                    |

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

Figure 2:  
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Bexley

| Ward name               | Number of councillors | Electorate (1998) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2003) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Belvedere             | 3                     | 8,090             | 2,697                             | 1                       | 8,168             | 2,723                             | 1                       |
| 2 Blackfen & Lamorbey   | 3                     | 8,032             | 2,677                             | 0                       | 8,123             | 2,708                             | 0                       |
| 3 Blendon & Penhill     | 3                     | 8,287             | 2,762                             | 4                       | 8,145             | 2,715                             | 1                       |
| 4 Brampton              | 3                     | 8,349             | 2,783                             | 4                       | 8,181             | 2,727                             | 1                       |
| 5 Christchurch          | 3                     | 8,246             | 2,749                             | 3                       | 8,020             | 2,673                             | -1                      |
| 6 Colyers               | 3                     | 8,212             | 2,737                             | 3                       | 8,036             | 2,679                             | -1                      |
| 7 Cray Meadows          | 3                     | 8,257             | 2,752                             | 3                       | 8,068             | 2,689                             | 0                       |
| 8 Crayford              | 3                     | 7,914             | 2,638                             | -1                      | 8,030             | 2,677                             | -1                      |
| 9 Danson Park           | 3                     | 8,195             | 2,732                             | 3                       | 8,003             | 2,668                             | -1                      |
| 10 East Wickham         | 3                     | 8,249             | 2,750                             | 3                       | 8,065             | 2,688                             | 0                       |
| 11 Erith                | 3                     | 7,211             | 2,404                             | -10                     | 8,142             | 2,714                             | 1                       |
| 12 Falconwood & Welling | 3                     | 8,111             | 2,704                             | 1                       | 8,065             | 2,688                             | 0                       |
| 13 Lesnes Abbey         | 3                     | 8,207             | 2,736                             | 3                       | 8,109             | 2,703                             | 0                       |
| 14 Longlands            | 3                     | 8,001             | 2,667                             | 0                       | 8,109             | 2,703                             | 0                       |
| 15 Mayplace             | 3                     | 7,996             | 2,665                             | 0                       | 8,093             | 2,698                             | 0                       |
| 16 North End            | 3                     | 7,207             | 2,402                             | -10                     | 8,110             | 2,703                             | 0                       |
| 17 Northumberland Heath | 3                     | 7,754             | 2,585                             | -3                      | 8,126             | 2,709                             | 0                       |
| 18 Sidcup               | 3                     | 8,194             | 2,731                             | 3                       | 8,086             | 2,695                             | 0                       |
| 19 St Mary's            | 3                     | 8,384             | 2,795                             | 5                       | 8,052             | 2,684                             | 0                       |

Figure 2 (continued):  
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Bexley

| Ward name          | Number of councillors | Electorate (1998) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2003) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 20 St Michael's    | 3                     | 8,041             | 2,680                             | 1                       | 7,984             | 2,661                             | -1                      |
| 21 Thamesmead East | 3                     | 6,929             | 2,310                             | -13                     | 8,196             | 2,732                             | 1                       |
| <b>Totals</b>      | <b>63</b>             | <b>167,866</b>    | —                                 | —                       | <b>169,911</b>    | —                                 | —                       |
| <b>Averages</b>    | —                     | —                 | <b>2,665</b>                      | —                       | —                 | <b>2,697</b>                      | —                       |

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



# 1. INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the London borough of Bexley.

2 In broad terms, the objective of this periodic electoral review (PER) of Bexley is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor on the Borough Council is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the Borough Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards.

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

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992;
- the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements* contained in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (second edition published in March 1998), which sets out our approach to the reviews. We are not required to have regard to parliamentary constituency boundaries in developing our recommendations. Any new ward boundaries will be taken into account by the Parliamentary Boundary Commission in its reviews of parliamentary constituencies.

5 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the borough as a whole. Wherever possible we try 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.

6 We are not prescriptive on council size but, as indicated in our *Guidance*, would expect the overall number of members on a London borough council usually to be between 40 and 80. We start from the general assumption that the existing council size already secures effective and convenient local government in that borough but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against an 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 borough's electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a borough council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other boroughs.

## The London Boroughs

7 Our programme of periodic electoral reviews of all 386 local authorities in England started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004. The 1992 Act requires us to review most local authorities every 10 to 15 years. However, the Act is silent on the timing of reviews by the Commission of the London boroughs. The Commission has no power to review the electoral arrangements of the City of London.

8 Most London boroughs have not been reviewed since 1977. Following discussions with local authority interests on the appropriate timing of London borough reviews, we decided to start as soon as possible after the May 1998 London local government elections so that all reviews could be completed, and the necessary orders implementing our recommendations made by the Secretary of State, in time for the next London elections scheduled for May 2002. Our reviews of the 32 London boroughs started on a phased basis between June 1998 and February 1999.

9 We have sought to ensure that all concerned were aware of our approach to the reviews. Copies

of our *Guidance* were sent to all London boroughs, along with other major interests. In March 1998 we briefed chief executives at a meeting of the London branch of the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, and we also met with the Association of London Government. Since then we welcomed the opportunity to meet with chief officers and, on an all-party basis, members in the majority of individual authorities. This has enabled us to brief authorities about our policies and procedures, our objective of electoral equality having regard to local circumstances, and the approach taken by the Commission in previous reviews.

10 Before we started our work in London, the Government published for consultation a Green Paper, *Modernising Local Government – Local Democracy and Community Leadership* (February 1998) which, inter alia, promoted the possibility of London boroughs having annual elections with three-member wards so that one councillor in each ward would stand for election each year. In view of this, we decided that the order in which the London reviews are undertaken should be determined by the proportion of three-member wards in each borough under the current arrangements. On this basis, Bexley was in the second phase of reviews.

11 The Government's subsequent White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, published in July 1998, set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. For all unitary councils, including London boroughs, it proposed elections by thirds. It also refers to local accountability being maximised where the whole electorate in a council's area is involved in elections each time they take place, thereby pointing to a pattern of three-member wards in London boroughs to reflect a system of elections by thirds.

12 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1998/99 PER programme, including the London boroughs, that until any direction is received from the Secretary of State, the Commission would continue to maintain the approach to PERs as set out in the March 1998 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we added that local authorities and other interested parties would no doubt 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. Our general experience has been that proposals for three-member ward patterns emerged from most areas in London.

13 Finally, it should be noted that there are no parishes in London, and in fact there is no legislative provision for the establishment of parishes in London. This differentiates the reviews of London boroughs from the majority of the other electoral reviews we are carrying out elsewhere in the country, where parishes feature highly and provide the building blocks for district or borough wards.

## **The Review of Bexley**

14 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements for Bexley. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in July 1977 (Report No. 241).

15 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 4 August 1998, when we wrote to Bexley Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified the local authority associations, the Metropolitan Police, Members of Parliament and the Member of the European Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, and the headquarters of the main political parties. At the start of the review and following publication of our draft recommendations, we placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and other publicity, and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations was 9 November 1998. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

16 Stage Three began on 2 March 1999 with the publication of our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Bexley*, and ended on 26 April 1999. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

## 2. CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

17 The borough of Bexley lies in south-east London. It has a five-mile frontage onto the River Thames in the north, and is bounded to the west by the borough of Greenwich, to the south by the borough of Bromley and to the east by the county of Kent. Bexley, with a population of some 219,000 covering an area of 6,065 hectares, has a population density of just over 36 people per hectare.

18 The borough is mainly residential in character, although there is some local industry in Thamesmead, Belvedere, Erith, Crayford and on the outskirts of Sidcup. Bexley has a variety of parks and open spaces, including Danson Park, Hall Place, Foots Cray Meadows, Sidcup Place and Lesnes Abbey. The borough has good transport links, with a number of railway lines traversing it in a broadly east-west direction from north Kent to central London. Main trunk roads, including the A2 (London to Dover road), run through the middle of the borough and the A20 (London to Folkestone road) forms the southern boundary of the borough. The M25 motorway is also within easy reach.

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 borough 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 borough (February 1998) is 167,866. The Council currently has 62 councillors who are elected from 23 wards (Map 1 and Figure 3). Eighteen wards are each represented by three councillors, three wards elect two councillors each and two wards each elect one councillor. As in all London boroughs, the whole council is elected together every four years.

21 Since the last electoral review, there has been a small increase in electorate in the borough, with around 3 per cent more electors than two decades ago, mainly as a result of new housing developments in the north and north-east of the borough.

22 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,708 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,741 by the year 2003 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 five of the 23 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, and in one ward by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Cray ward where each of the two councillors represents on average 24 per cent fewer electors than the borough average.

*Figure 3:  
Existing Electoral Arrangements*

| Ward name               | Number of councillors | Electorate (1998) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2003) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Barnehurst            | 2                     | 4,844             | 2,422                             | -11                     | 4,784             | 2,392                             | -13                     |
| 2 Barnehurst North      | 1                     | 3,178             | 3,178                             | 17                      | 3,143             | 3,143                             | 15                      |
| 3 Belvedere             | 3                     | 9,392             | 3,131                             | 16                      | 9,477             | 3,159                             | 15                      |
| 4 Blackfen              | 2                     | 5,204             | 2,602                             | -4                      | 5,275             | 2,638                             | -4                      |
| 5 Blendon & Penhill     | 3                     | 7,375             | 2,458                             | -9                      | 7,243             | 2,414                             | -12                     |
| 6 Bostall               | 3                     | 7,434             | 2,478                             | -8                      | 7,231             | 2,410                             | -12                     |
| 7 Brampton              | 3                     | 7,920             | 2,640                             | -2                      | 7,763             | 2,588                             | -6                      |
| 8 Christchurch          | 3                     | 7,933             | 2,644                             | -2                      | 7,675             | 2,558                             | -7                      |
| 9 Cray                  | 2                     | 4,090             | 2,045                             | -24                     | 4,037             | 2,019                             | -26                     |
| 10 Crayford             | 3                     | 8,582             | 2,861                             | 6                       | 8,518             | 2,839                             | 4                       |
| 11 Danson               | 3                     | 7,326             | 2,442                             | -10                     | 7,255             | 2,418                             | -12                     |
| 12 East Wickham         | 3                     | 8,249             | 2,750                             | 2                       | 8,065             | 2,688                             | -2                      |
| 13 Erith                | 3                     | 8,297             | 2,766                             | 2                       | 9,155             | 3,052                             | 11                      |
| 14 Falconwood           | 1                     | 2,963             | 2,963                             | 9                       | 2,956             | 2,956                             | 8                       |
| 15 Lamorbey             | 3                     | 8,223             | 2,741                             | 1                       | 8,261             | 2,754                             | 0                       |
| 16 North End            | 3                     | 8,721             | 2,907                             | 7                       | 9,582             | 3,194                             | 17                      |
| 17 Northumberland Heath | 3                     | 8,075             | 2,692                             | -1                      | 8,471             | 2,824                             | 3                       |
| 18 St Mary's            | 3                     | 8,748             | 2,916                             | 8                       | 8,406             | 2,802                             | 2                       |
| 19 St Michael's         | 3                     | 7,749             | 2,583                             | -5                      | 7,698             | 2,566                             | -6                      |

Figure 3 (continued):  
Existing Electoral Arrangements

| Ward name          | Number of councillors | Electorate (1998) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2003) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 20 Sidcup East     | 3                     | 8,617             | 2,872                             | 6                       | 8,703             | 2,901                             | 6                       |
| 21 Sidcup West     | 3                     | 7,917             | 2,639                             | -3                      | 7,677             | 2,559                             | -7                      |
| 22 Thamesmead East | 3                     | 9,236             | 3,079                             | 14                      | 10,534            | 3,511                             | 28                      |
| 23 Upton           | 3                     | 7,793             | 2,598                             | -4                      | 8,002             | 2,667                             | -3                      |
| <b>Totals</b>      | <b>62</b>             | <b>167,866</b>    | —                                 | —                       | <b>169,911</b>    | —                                 | —                       |
| <b>Averages</b>    | —                     | —                 | <b>2,708</b>                      | —                       | —                 | <b>2,741</b>                      | —                       |

Source: Electorate figures are based on Bexley Borough Council's Stage One submission.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1998, electors in Cray ward were relatively over-represented by 24 per cent, while electors in Barnehurst North ward were relatively under-represented by 17 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Map 1:  
Existing Wards in Bexley



© Crown Copyright 1999

### 3. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

<sup>23</sup> During Stage One we received seven representations. The Borough Council, the Bexley Labour Party & Bexley Council Labour Group, the Bexley Borough Liberal Democrat Party and two local residents all submitted borough-wide schemes. We also received representations from one other local resident and the Bexley Civic Society. 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 Bexley*.

<sup>24</sup> We put forward the Labour Group's scheme in its entirety as our draft recommendations, which achieved improved electoral equality having regard to the electorate forecasts, generally provided for good boundaries while having regard to the statutory criteria and proposed a pattern of entirely three-member wards. We proposed that:

- (a) Bexley Borough Council should be served by 63 councillors;
- (b) there should be 21 wards, involving changes to the boundaries of all but one of the existing wards.

#### **Draft Recommendation**

Bexley Borough Council should comprise 63 councillors serving 21 wards.

<sup>25</sup> Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 20 of the 21 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with all wards expected to vary by no more than 1 per cent from the borough average in 2003.



## 4. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

26 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 113 representations were received. A list of respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Bexley Borough Council and the Commission, by appointment.

### **Bexley Borough Council**

27 The Borough Council generally accepted our draft recommendations, but proposed a few modifications which it believed would better reflect the interests and identities of local communities. It stated that there was “considerable opposition” to breaching the A2 as a boundary but acknowledged that “if a high level of electoral equality is to be achieved, at some point a ward crossing the A2 has to exist”. The Council suggested modifying the boundaries of the proposed Blackfen & Lamorbey West, Blendon & Penhill, Danson Park and South Welling wards, which would result in only one ward, South Welling, breaching the A2. Electoral equality would remain virtually unchanged in this area, as none of the Council’s revised wards would vary by more than 1 per cent from the borough average by 2003.

28 The Council proposed slight modifications to the proposed Cray Meadows ward, which would transfer properties in Etfield Grove into Sidcup Central & Lamorbey ward, and include the eastern end of Faraday Avenue in Cray Meadows ward. It also considered our proposed boundary between Crayford and Mayplace wards to be “artificial”, contending that an area around Manor Road and Star Hill should be included in Mayplace ward, and that an area around the eastern end of Parkside Avenue should be retained in Crayford ward.

29 The Council also stated that “ward names should adequately reflect the communities and areas which are contained within the ward” and suggested four alternative ward names in relation to our draft recommendations. It proposed that South Welling ward be named Falconwood & Welling, Blackfen & Lamorbey West ward be named Blackfen & Lamorbey, Sidcup Central & Lamorbey ward be named Sidcup, and Mayplace ward be named Barnehurst.

### **Bexley Borough Council Labour Group**

30 The Bexley Borough Council Labour Group supported our draft recommendations, which were wholly based on its Stage One submission. It acknowledged that the proposals to breach the A2 had “caused some concern” locally, but it contended that the need to cross the A2 “was necessary to achieve the high level of electoral equality which rightly is a key consideration for [the Commission]”. It stated that “it is a democratic right for an elector that their vote carries equal representation to the vote of another elector”. In order to address some minor boundary anomalies, the Labour Group suggested slight amendments to the western and northern boundary of the proposed Northumberland Heath ward. It also proposed modifying the western boundary of Crayford ward so that Crayford Manor House and Crayford War Memorial would be retained in Crayford ward.

31 The Labour Group opposed the Council’s suggested modifications to the proposed Cray Meadows ward and to the boundary between Crayford and Mayplace wards, and submitted further evidence and argumentation in support of our draft recommendations for these areas. It supported almost all of the Council’s suggested ward names, where they varied from our draft recommendations which it believed to be “more succinct”. However, it opposed the Council’s proposal to name Mayplace ward Barnehurst, arguing that the Mayplace name would reflect the fact that the revised ward would comprise a wider area than just the existing Barnehurst ward.

### **Bexley Borough Liberal Democrat Party**

32 The Bexley Borough Liberal Democrat Party supported our draft recommendations for the 11 wards in the north and north-eastern part of the borough. However, it was opposed to any ward breaching the A2, arguing that it was “a very effective physical barrier” and that few residents

use the footway and subway across the A2. It proposed a number of boundary modifications to the 10 wards in the centre and south of the borough in order to give “greater attention ... to maintaining local community ties and observing identifiable natural boundaries” (ie. the A2). Under its proposals, electoral equality would worsen in comparison to our draft recommendations with electoral equality in four of its ten revised wards varying by more than 3 per cent from the borough average by 2003, with one ward varying by 5 per cent.

## Member of Parliament

33 Mr Nigel Beard (Member of Parliament for the Bexleyheath & Crayford constituency) supported our proposals in full, believing that they “properly recognise the various communities that exist within and around [the Bexleyheath and Crayford] constituency, and fairly divide the area into wards”. He also noted that our proposals would provide for minimal disturbance to parliamentary constituency boundaries.

## Elected Members

34 We received representations from 11 borough councillors. The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council, Councillor Standen (who represents Danson ward) believed that our proposals gave “insufficient weight to community identity” and supported the amendments proposed by Bexley Liberal Democrat Party. He argued that in order to retain the A2 as a strong boundary, “it is not unreasonable for four wards to have a variance from the average of over 3 per cent” which would “recognise and maintain local community ties and be responsive to local community interest and feelings”. On behalf of the Bexley Liberal Democrat Council Group, he supported the Council’s proposed ward name amendments, except the proposal to name Mayplace ward as Barnehurst, arguing that “the new ward so enlarges the old Barnehurst ward, bringing in areas formerly in Crayford and Upton, that the new name of Mayplace would be appropriate”.

35 Councillor Cammish (who represents Blackfen ward) strongly opposed our proposal to breach the A2 and include local electors in a ward traversing the A2. She considered the A2 to be a “natural boundary between Welling and Sidcup”, stating that “Blackfen, as it is now, has a strong

community spirit”, further claiming that there is “a difference between buying a property in Welling and Sidcup, the latter being considered the more desirable”. Councillor Oliver (who represents East Wickham ward) stated that the populations of Welling and Bexleyheath did not have a shared identity with those of Blackfen and Blendon, and that “any new wards that crossed the A2 would be unnatural”.

36 Councillor Brooks, who represents Barnehurst ward, concurred with the Council’s proposed amendments to the boundary between our proposed Mayplace and Crayford wards. He believed that they would “better meet the need to secure convenient and effective local government, to reflect the identities and interests of local communities and to achieve easily identifiable electoral boundaries”. He also proposed that the revised Mayplace ward should be named Barnehurst ward, arguing that Barnehurst “is an identifiable part of ... Bexley”.

37 Councillor Joel Briant, who represents Cray ward, supported our proposed Cray Meadows ward as it would “keep the North Cray and Foots Cray communities united in the same ward”. He submitted further evidence supporting our draft proposals, arguing that the new ward “unites the three primary school catchment areas [North Cray, Sidcup Hill and Royal Park], with the secondary school [Cleeve Park] within the same new ward”.

38 Councillor Shephard, who represents Crayford ward, supported our draft recommendations, particularly our revised Crayford ward. He opposed the Council’s suggested amendments to our proposed Crayford ward, arguing that they would move part of Crayford’s “historical town centre” out of the ward. Councillor Shephard submitted further evidence in support of our draft recommendations, including details of the boundaries of the Iron Mill Lane and Star Hill conservation areas. He also supplied information to support his assertion that children from the area which the Council proposed moving into Mayplace ward do not go to Mayplace Primary School (to show that the proximity to Mayplace School “is not an issue” in deciding the position of the boundary between Mayplace and Crayford wards).

39 Councillor Ives (who represents North End ward) and Councillor Donna Briant (who represents Thamesmead East ward) both supported our draft recommendations affecting their wards.

Councillors Clement, Morgan and Wilkinson, who represent Bostall ward, opposed our proposal to join part of the current Thamesmead East ward with parts of Bostall and Belvedere wards to create a new Lesnes Abbey ward, arguing that the North Kent railway line was a natural boundary between these areas. Councillor Wilkinson also suggested that the existing ward name of Bostall be retained.

## Other Representations

40 A further 98 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations, from four political associations, two residents' associations and 92 local residents. The Liberal Democrat 'Focus Team' for Blackfen submitted a petition containing 503 signatures opposing our proposed Blackfen & Lamorbey West and Blendon & Penhill wards, and expressed its support for the Bexley Liberal Democrat Party's proposed modifications to the draft recommendations. The Blackfen Residents' Committee also opposed our proposals for Blackfen ward and was in favour of retaining the existing ward unchanged. It also submitted a petition opposing our proposals, containing 215 signatures (some of which were duplicated on the Liberal Democrats' petition).

41 We received direct representations from 58 local residents who were opposed to our proposals in the Blackfen and Blendon & Penhill areas. Almost all of them were opposed to breaching the A2, arguing that it was a natural boundary, while some of them believed that our proposals could be detrimental to value of their houses. The Bexleyheath & Crayford Conservative Association and 11 local residents supported the Council's suggested amendment to the boundary between the proposed Mayplace and Crayford wards and its proposal that Mayplace ward should be named Barnehurst.

42 A local resident opposed our proposed wards in the Old Bexley & Sidcup parliamentary constituency and submitted an alternative scheme for wards in that area. However, his scheme was based on the 1999 electorate, did not take into account the five-year projected electorate and was not compatible with our draft recommendations in the rest of the borough. Another local resident broadly agreed with our draft recommendations, except for the boundaries between Belvedere, Lesnes Abbey and Thamesmead East wards, and suggested changes to four ward names. He proposed that North End ward be named Slade

Green, that South Welling ward be named Falconwood, that Danson Park ward be named Danson and that Lamorbey & Sidcup Central ward be named Lamorbey.

43 The Crayford Ward Labour Party and a local resident supported our proposed Crayford ward, particularly as St Paulinus Church and the Star Hill conservation area would be retained in the ward. Both also suggested that Crayford Manor House and the Crayford War Memorial should be retained in Crayford ward. The Cray Branch Labour Party, the Bedensfield Residents' Association and four local residents all expressed their support for our proposed Cray Meadows ward.

44 Two local residents specifically opposed our proposed Lesnes Abbey ward, while three other local residents opposed our draft recommendations in general. Six other local residents expressed their support for our draft recommendations in general, while five local residents expressed their support for our proposed ward boundaries in their own areas.



## 5. ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

45 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Bexley is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so, we have regard to the statutory criteria set out in the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the interests and identities of local communities – and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

46 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 must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken.

47 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.

48 Our *Guidance* states that, while we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, the objective of electoral equality 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 electoral equality, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates. We will require particular justification for schemes which result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over

10 per cent in any ward. In reviews of predominantly urban areas such as the London boroughs, our experience suggests that we would expect to achieve a high degree of electoral equality in all wards.

### Electorate Forecasts

49 At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2003, projecting an increase in the electorate of just over 1 per cent from 167,866 to 169,911 over the five-year period from 1998 to 2003. It expected most of the growth to be in the northern and north-eastern parts of the borough, particularly in the Thamesmead East, Erith and North End wards, with a slight decrease in the electorate in the southern part of the borough. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to the unitary development plan for the borough, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries was obtained.

50 In our draft recommendations report we accepted that forecasting electorate 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.

51 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

52 We indicated in our *Guidance* that we would normally expect the number of councillors serving a London borough to be in the range of 40 to 80. As already explained, the Commission's starting point is to assume that the current council size facilitates convenient and effective local government.

53 Bexley Borough Council currently has 62 members. At Stage One we received proposals based on a number of different council sizes. The Borough Council and the Labour Group both proposed increasing council size by one member to 63. However, all of the other borough-wide schemes we received at that stage proposed reducing council size. The most radical reduction was put forward by a local resident who proposed that the borough should be represented by 51 councillors, a reduction of 11 members.

54 In our draft recommendations report we 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 statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would best be met by a council of 63 members.

55 At Stage Three, no further comments were received regarding this aspect of the review. Given the general support for a council of 63 members, which would facilitate a good electoral scheme providing good electoral equality having regard to the five year forecast of electorate, we are confirming our draft recommendation for a council size of 63 as final.

## Electoral Arrangements

56 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including the borough-wide schemes submitted by the Borough Council, the Labour Group, the Bexley Borough Liberal Democrat Party and two local residents. We expressed our gratitude for the representations, from which some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations.

57 The current electoral arrangements provide for a pattern of predominantly three-member wards in Bexley, although there are also three two-member wards and two single-member wards. We noted that all the borough-wide schemes that we received were based on patterns of entirely three-member wards, and that there was consensus between the Council and the Labour Group for a small increase in council size to 63, based on 21 three-member wards. Both these borough-wide, 63-member schemes provided for substantially improved electoral equality, although to varying degrees.

58 We were faced with a difficult choice in choosing between these two Stage One submissions. However, our draft recommendations report for Bexley set out in some detail our reasons for endorsing the Labour Group's Stage One scheme, in its entirety, as our draft recommendations. The scheme would provide much improved electoral equality compared to the current arrangements and would, in our view, generally secure good boundaries, having regard to the statutory criteria.

59 In response to our draft recommendations report, the Bexley Liberal Democrat Party, Councillor Standen (the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council), Councillor Cammish, Councillor Oliver, the Liberal Democrat 'Focus Team' for Blackfen, the Blackfen Residents' Committee and 58 local residents all expressed opposition to our proposal to breach the A2 as a ward boundary in the south-western part of the borough. In contrast, however, the Labour Group contended that the need to cross the A2 "was necessary to achieve a high level of electoral equality" arguing that "it is a democratic right for an elector that their vote carries equal representation as the vote of another elector". The Council argued in its submission that "if a high level of electoral equality is to be achieved, at some point a ward crossing the A2 has to exist".

60 We have considered the suggested boundary modifications put forward during Stage Three, particularly given the strength of opposition to our proposals to breach the A2 as a ward boundary. However, we remain of the view that it is quite clear, in terms of electoral equality, that a ward which crosses the A2 is necessary in order to secure an appropriate balance of representation across the borough as a whole. Under a 63-member council size, the area to the south of the A2 trunk road would be entitled to 18.8 councillors initially; however, by 2003 it is projected that this southern area would be entitled to 18.4 councillors. Therefore, to attain optimum electoral equality, some electors from south of the A2 would need to be included in a ward which straddles the A2.

61 If the whole length of the A2 was retained as a ward boundary, as suggested by the Liberal Democrat Party under its modified scheme, the six wards south of the A2 would all be slightly under-represented, while the five wards in the centre of the borough (between the A2 and the railway line) would all be slightly over-represented. We are of

the view that our proposal to breach the A2 as a ward boundary, supported by the Council and the Labour Group, remains appropriate for our scheme in Bexley.

62 In the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three, we have reviewed our draft recommendations and conclude, in the light of local support, that amendments should be made to some ward boundaries in the western part of the borough to better reflect local community interests. We also conclude that three ward names should be amended, in the light of local consensus, and that a number of boundary anomalies should be addressed by minor modifications to some of our proposed wards. The following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Thamesmead East, Bostall and Belvedere wards;
- (b) Erith, North End, Northumberland Heath and Barnehurst North wards;
- (c) East Wickham, St Michael's and Brampton wards;
- (d) Falconwood, Danson, Christchurch and Upton wards;
- (e) Crayford and Barnehurst wards;
- (f) Blendon & Penhill, St Mary's, Sidcup East and Cray wards;
- (g) Blackfen, Lamorbey and Sidcup West wards.

63 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover of the report.

### **Thamesmead East, Bostall and Belvedere wards**

64 These three wards are situated in the northern part of the borough. The three-member Thamesmead East ward is currently under-represented, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average by 14 per cent. This level of electoral inequality is forecast to further worsen to 28 per cent above the average by 2003, when it is forecast to be the most under-represented ward in the borough. The three-member ward of Belvedere is also under-represented, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average by 16 per cent (15 per cent by 2003). The three-member Bostall ward is currently over-represented,

with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average by 8 per cent (12 per cent by 2003).

65 As detailed earlier in this chapter, we adopted the Labour Group's scheme in its entirety as our draft recommendations. We had noted that the Council's proposals for this area would provide for improved levels of electoral equality, but that the Labour Group's scheme would provide for even better levels of electoral equality. We were also of the view that the Labour Group's submission contained more detailed argumentation in support of its proposals, and noted its consultation with local interested parties. We were of the view that this consultation had resulted in a scheme with a high regard for community identity and interests, while also achieving excellent levels of electoral equality and providing for convenient and identifiable boundaries. We decided, therefore, to endorse the Labour Group's proposals.

66 Given the fairly high level of under-representation in the existing Thamesmead East ward, the Labour Group proposed transferring the southern part of the ward into a new Lesnes Abbey ward, and modifying its eastern boundary so that it followed Yarnton Way. It also proposed creating a new three-member Lesnes Abbey ward, which would comprise all of Lesnes Abbey Park and Woods, and the local residential communities to the north and south. The ward would include the southern part of Thamesmead East ward, the north-western part of Belvedere ward and the northern and central areas of the existing Bostall ward. The Labour Group also proposed transferring the south-western part of the current Bostall ward into a revised Brampton ward, and the south-eastern part into a revised Northumberland Heath ward. In order to improve electoral equality, it put forward a revised three-member Belvedere ward which would include the north-eastern corner of the current Bostall ward, but would exclude the area transferred into Lesnes Abbey ward (as detailed earlier). An area to the east of Upper Park Road in Belvedere ward would be transferred into a revised Erith ward.

67 Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor in the revised three-member Thamesmead East ward would be 13 per cent below the borough average initially. However, due to a projected increase in the electorate, this level of electoral equality was forecast to improve by 2003,

when the number of electors per councillor would be just 1 per cent above the average for the borough. The number of electors per councillor in the new Lesnes Abbey and revised Belvedere wards would be 3 per cent above and 1 per cent above the borough average initially, almost equal to the average and 1 per cent above by 2003.

68 At Stage Three the Labour Group and the Bexley Liberal Democrat Party supported our draft recommendations in this area. Nigel Beard MP and six local residents also supported our draft recommendations in this area, while the Council “generally accepted” them. Councillor Donna Briant, who represents Thamesmead East ward, endorsed our proposals for a revised Thamesmead East ward and stated that our proposals for a new Lesnes Abbey ward were “the best way forward not only to address the under-representation [in Thamesmead East ward] ... but to focus on the community that contains the historic area of Lesnes Abbey park and woods”.

69 Four local residents opposed our draft recommendations for the borough in general, while Councillors Clement, Morgan and Wilkinson (who currently represent Bostall ward) and four other local residents expressed their opposition to the inclusion of the southern part of Thamesmead East ward in a new Lesnes Abbey ward. They argued that the area had nothing in common with the rest of the proposed ward and that the railway line should be retained as the natural boundary between the wards. Councillor Wilkinson also suggested that the existing ward name of Bostall should be retained.

70 We have considered the representations received regarding our proposed wards in this area both for and against. We are not convinced that there is sufficient evidence to justify substantial changes to our draft recommendations. While we acknowledge that the railway line is an identifiable boundary, we remain of the view that our draft recommendations are appropriate to address the under-representation that currently exists in Thamesmead East and Belvedere wards. There is broad cross-party support for our proposals, which would secure a good level of electoral equality, having regard to the forecast increase in electorate in the area, and would provide for convenient boundaries having regard to local community interests. Given this, we are confirming as final our draft recommendations for these three wards, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of the report. Given that there was general support for

our suggested ward names in this area we are also confirming our proposed ward names for these wards as final.

### **Erith, North End, Northumberland Heath and Barnehurst North wards**

71 These four wards are situated in the north-eastern part of the borough. The three-member wards of Erith and North End are both currently under-represented, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average by 2 per cent and 7 per cent respectively (expected to be 11 per cent and 17 per cent by 2003 due to a projected increase in electorate). The number of electors per councillor in the three-member ward of Northumberland Heath is currently 1 per cent below the borough average (3 per cent above by 2003). The single-member Barnehurst North ward is currently under-represented, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average by 17 per cent (15 per cent by 2003).

72 In our draft recommendations report we noted that the Council and the Labour Group put forward quite different proposals for this area of the borough. While the Council’s scheme would secure good levels of electoral equality, the Labour Group’s scheme would provide for an even better level of electoral equality. We considered Bexley borough as a whole, and noted that under a council size of 63, the part of the borough to the north of the Bexleyheath railway merits almost exactly 30 councillors by 2003. The Labour Group’s scheme overall would provide for 30 councillors in the northern area, in addition to achieving an excellent level of electoral equality throughout the borough by 2003. Given the detailed evidence that the Labour Group submitted with regard to community interests in the area, and in the light of the excellent level of electoral equality and recognisable boundaries that would result, we endorsed the Labour Group’s proposals as our draft recommendations.

73 The Labour Group’s scheme would create four revised wards, each represented by three councillors. It proposed modifying the boundaries of the Erith ward to include an area in the south-eastern part of Belvedere ward, an area to the east of Brook Street (from Northumberland Heath ward) and the new shopping area on the Deep Wharf site. It also proposed transferring an area in the most southern part of the current Erith ward into a new Colyers ward. The Labour Group put

forward a revised North End ward, which took into account the forecast increase in electorate in that area, proposing to transfer the south-western part of the existing ward (around Hurstwood Avenue) into a new Colyers ward. While it proposed maintaining the majority of the ward's southern boundary to follow the Bexleyheath railway line, the Labour Group put forward one slight modification in order to transfer two electors in Willow Walk (on the Crayford Marshes) into Crayford ward with which, it was argued, they share more natural links.

74 Notwithstanding the good level of electoral equality that presently exists in the Northumberland Heath ward, the Labour Group proposed modifications to its existing boundaries in order to accommodate the knock-on effects of its proposals for other wards in the northern part of the borough. As detailed earlier, it proposed moving the ward's western boundary further westwards to include part of Bostall ward, in addition to transferring an area in the northern part of the ward into the revised Erith ward and an area in the south of the ward into a new Colyers ward. The Labour Group proposed a minor modification to the southern boundary of the current Northumberland Heath ward to correct a boundary anomaly affecting 85 electors in Birchington Close, which it argued should be included in Brampton ward.

75 The Labour Group also proposed a new three-member Colyers ward, based on the existing single-member ward of Barnehurst North together with the southern part of Erith ward, an eastern part of North End ward and part of Northumberland Heath ward (as detailed earlier). It proposed maintaining the Bexleyheath railway line as the new ward's southern boundary, as it recognised this as being a strong and identifiable boundary.

76 The number of electors per councillor in the Labour Group's revised Erith and North End wards would be 10 per cent below the borough average initially in both wards, improving to 1 per cent above and almost equal to the average by 2003 due to a projected increase in electorate. The number of electors per councillor in the revised Northumberland Heath ward and the new Colyers ward would be 3 per cent below and 3 per cent above the borough average initially (almost equal to and 1 per cent below the average by 2003).

77 At Stage Three, the Labour Group and the Bexley Liberal Democrat Party supported our draft

recommendations for wards in this area. Nigel Beard MP and six local residents also supported our draft recommendations in this area, while the Council "generally accepted" them. Councillor Ives (who represents North End ward) supported our proposed North End ward, two local residents supported our proposed Northumberland Heath ward and one local resident supported our proposed Erith ward. Two local residents supported our proposed Colyers ward, one of which expressed his support for the inclusion of Colyers Primary School (and its catchment area) within the new Colyers ward, also stating that Colyers ward was the best name for the new ward as "the main road Colyers Lane runs through the heart of the ward". One local resident suggested that North End ward could be named Slade Green ward, while four local residents opposed our draft recommendations in general.

78 The Labour Group suggested two minor amendments to the proposed Northumberland Heath ward. Although the electorate figures in the draft recommendations report included all of the electors from Long Lane in Brampton ward, our mapping did not reflect this, therefore we have adjusted the western boundary of the proposed Northumberland Heath ward accordingly on the large map. The second amendment would ensure that the Franciscan Monastery on Carlton Road was included in the same ward as its associated church on Bexley Road, and would result in 10 electors being transferred from the proposed Erith ward into the proposed Northumberland Heath ward. A local resident noted a slight anomaly in the mapping of our proposed ward boundary between Erith and North End wards. Although our electorate figures included all of the electors from Manor Road in Erith ward, our mapping did not reflect this, therefore we have adjusted the large map accordingly.

79 Having considered all the representations received at Stage Three, we have noted the broad support in favour of our proposed ward boundaries in this area. In view of the excellent level of electoral equality that would be secured, particularly taking into account the five-year forecast of electorate, we are confirming our draft recommendations as final, subject to the minor boundary amendments proposed by the Labour Group and a local resident.

80 The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Erith, North End, Northumberland

Heath and Colyers wards (as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report) would be respectively 10 per cent below, 10 per cent below, 3 per cent below and 3 per cent above the borough average initially (1 per cent above, almost equal to, almost equal to and 1 per cent below the borough average by 2003). Given that there was only very limited support in favour of modifying any of the ward names in this area we are also confirming our proposed ward names for these wards as final.

### **East Wickham, St Michael's and Brampton wards**

81 The number of electors per councillor in the three-member wards of East Wickham, St Michael's and Brampton, situated in the north-western part of the borough, is 2 per cent above, 5 per cent below and 2 per cent below the borough average respectively (2 per cent below, 6 per cent below and 6 per cent below by 2003).

82 In our draft recommendations report we noted that the Labour Group's and the Council's Stage One proposals for this area were broadly similar. Both schemes proposed retaining the existing East Wickham ward unchanged, and both contended that the whole of Gypsy Road should be situated within one ward, a proposal which was also put forward by the Liberal Democrat Party and a local resident. However, we agreed with the Labour Group that the Bexleyheath railway line is a strong and identifiable boundary, and given that the Labour Group's scheme would provide for better levels of electoral equality throughout the borough overall, we put forward the Labour Group's proposals for these three wards as our draft recommendations.

83 Under a 63-member council size, an unchanged East Wickham ward would retain good levels of electoral equality. The number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the average initially (almost equal to the average in 2003). The Labour Group put forward relatively minor modifications to the present St Michael's ward, proposing to include both sides of Gypsy Road in the revised ward. As a consequence of its revised St Michael's ward and in order to achieve a good level of electoral equality, it also proposed modifications to the northern boundary of the existing Brampton ward. This would result in the inclusion of part of Bostall ward, in addition to the 85 electors in Birchington Close from Northumberland Heath ward (as detailed earlier).

The Labour Group proposed maintaining the Bexleyheath railway line as a southern boundary for all three of the wards in this area. The number of electors per councillor in the revised St Michael's and Brampton wards would be 1 per cent above and 4 per cent above the borough average initially (1 per cent below and 1 per cent above the average by 2003).

84 At Stage Three the Labour Group and the Bexley Liberal Democrat Party supported our draft recommendations for wards in this area. Nigel Beard MP and six local residents also supported our draft recommendations in this area, while the Council "generally accepted" them. A local resident, who submitted alternative warding arrangements for the Old Bexley & Sidcup parliamentary constituency area, also supported the retention of East Wickham ward unchanged, while four local residents opposed our draft recommendations in general.

85 Given the broad support in favour of our proposals for the three wards in this area, and in the light of the excellent level of electoral equality and good boundaries that would be secured, we are confirming our draft recommendations for the proposed East Wickham, St Michael's and Brampton wards as final, subject to a minor modification to the northern boundary of the proposed Brampton ward (as detailed in paragraph 78 earlier).

### **Falconwood, Danson, Christchurch and Upton wards**

86 These four wards are situated in the centre and west of the borough, to the south of the Bexleyheath railway line and to the north of the A2 trunk road. The single-member ward of Falconwood is currently under-represented, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average by 9 per cent (8 per cent by 2003). The three-member wards of Danson, Christchurch and Upton are all over-represented at present with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average by 10 per cent, 2 per cent and 4 per cent respectively (12 per cent, 7 per cent and 3 per cent by 2003).

87 In our draft recommendations report we noted that both the Labour Group and the Council proposed moving away from using the A2 as a boundary, although the Liberal Democrat Party had argued that the A2 should not be breached as it is a natural boundary and "physical barrier". We

acknowledged that the A2 is a distinct topographical feature, but given the local consensus between the Labour Group and the Council in favour of placing electors from both sides of the A2 within the same ward, and having considered the evidence submitted to support this, we decided to put forward such a proposal for consultation. Given the better levels of electoral equality achieved under the Labour Group's scheme we put forward its proposals in this area as our draft recommendations.

88 The Labour Group proposed creating a new South Welling ward, comprising the whole of the existing single-member Falconwood ward in addition to an area from the eastern part of Danson ward, the north-eastern part of Blackfen ward and 15 electors from Westwood Lane, currently in Blendon & Penhill ward. The latter two constituent parts of the proposed new ward (624 electors) would be from the southern side of the A2. The Labour Group contended that it had been necessary to cross the A2 trunk road in order to achieve greater electoral equality.

89 As a consequence of its proposal for a new South Welling ward, the Labour Group also proposed significant modifications to the remaining three wards in this area. It proposed a new Danson Park ward comprising areas from the western parts of both Christchurch and Upton wards and an area to the south of the A2 from Blendon & Penhill ward. It also proposed a modified Christchurch ward comprising the central area of the existing Christchurch ward and part of the central area of Upton ward. It proposed transferring the eastern part of Christchurch ward and an area to the east of Gravel Hill into a new Mayplace ward, while a further part of Upton ward would be transferred into a revised Crayford ward (see later paragraphs). The number of electors per councillor in the Labour Group's proposed South Welling and Danson Park wards would be 2 per cent above and 3 per cent above the borough average initially (almost equal to the average in both wards by 2003). The number of electors per councillor in the Labour Group's revised Christchurch ward would be 3 per cent above the borough average initially (1 per cent below by 2003).

90 At Stage Three the Labour Group acknowledged that the proposed South Welling and Danson Park wards, which would breach the A2, had "caused some concern", but it contended that the need to cross the A2 "was necessary to achieve the

high level of electoral equality which rightly is a key consideration for the [Local Government Commission]". The Council contended that "it is not necessary and not desirable for two wards to cross the A2" and proposed modifications to the boundaries of the proposed Blackfen & Lamorbey West, Blendon & Penhill, Danson Park and South Welling wards which would result in only one ward, South Welling, breaching the A2.

91 The Bexley Liberal Democrat Party reiterated its initial proposal that the whole length of the A2 be retained as a ward boundary as it is a "natural boundary" and proposed modifications to the boundaries of 10 wards in the centre and south of the borough (which were supported by the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group and the Liberal Democrat 'Focus Team' for Blackfen) in order to give "greater attention ... to maintaining local community ties and observing identifiable natural boundaries". We also received two petitions (submitted by the Blackfen Residents' Committee and the Liberal Democrat 'Focus Team' for Blackfen) containing over 700 signatures in total (some of which had been duplicated on both petitions) and direct representations from Councillors Cammish and Oliver and 58 local residents, all opposing our draft proposals to include parts of the current Blackfen and Blendon & Penhill wards in revised wards which would straddle the A2.

92 As outlined earlier in this chapter we have noted the strength of opposition to breaching the A2 as a ward boundary and have carefully considered the alternative proposals put forward during Stage Three. If the whole length of the A2 was retained as a ward boundary, as suggested by the Liberal Democrat Party under its modified scheme, the six wards to the south of the A2 would all be slightly under-represented, while the five wards in the centre of the borough (between the A2 and the railway line) would all be slightly over-represented. Electoral equality would also deteriorate under the Liberal Democrat Party's modifications, as four of its 10 revised wards would vary by 4 per cent or more from the borough average by 2003. Given the level of electoral imbalance that would result under the Liberal Democrats' modifications and in the light of the poorer level of overall electoral equality that would be secured, we are not adopting them as our final recommendations.

93 The Council and the Labour Group both acknowledged that breaching the A2 was necessary in order to achieve a high level of electoral equality.

However, the Council put forward boundary modifications, affecting four wards, which would result in only one ward (South Welling) breaching the A2. Its amendments included retaining a longer section of the A2 as the southern boundary of Danson Park ward, and consequential amendments to other ward boundaries, which would transfer 395 electors from the proposed Blackfen & Lamorbey ward to the proposed South Welling ward; 419 electors from the proposed South Welling ward to the proposed Danson Park ward; 490 electors from the proposed Danson Park ward to the proposed Blendon & Penhill ward and 389 electors from the proposed Blendon & Penhill ward to the proposed Blackfen & Lamorbey ward.

94 These modifications would not have an adverse effect on electoral equality overall, as all of the revised wards would vary by 1 per cent or less from the borough average by 2003. We consider that the Council's proposals would have a slightly better regard for local community interests than our draft proposals, and that they would provide for more effective and convenient local government as only one ward would contain electors from both sides of the A2. We therefore propose adopting the Council's modified South Welling and Danson Park wards, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report, although subject to one ward name change (see below). The number of electors per councillor in the two revised wards would initially be 1 per cent above and 3 per cent above the borough average (almost equal to and 1 per cent below the borough average by 2003). Electoral equality in the proposed Christchurch ward would be the same as under our draft recommendations with the number of electors per councillor being 3 per cent above the borough average initially (1 per cent below by 2003).

95 We have also considered the alternative ward names put forward at Stage Three. The Council proposed that South Welling ward be named Falconwood & Welling, a suggestion which was also supported by the Labour Group and the Bexley Liberal Democrat Party. A local resident suggested that South Welling ward be named Falconwood, as all of the current Falconwood ward would be contained within the new ward, which would have focal points at Falconwood railway station and the Falconwood parade of shops. He also proposed that Danson Park ward be named simply Danson ward. Given the consensus in favour of a reference to Falconwood being included in the proposed ward name, we are proposing to

endorse the Council's suggestion that the ward name Falconwood & Welling be adopted as part of our final recommendations. However, we do not believe that there is sufficient support in favour of amending the Danson Park ward name and are therefore retaining it as part of our final recommendations.

### **Crayford and Barnehurst wards**

96 Situated in the east of the borough, the three-member ward of Crayford is under-represented by 6 per cent (4 per cent by 2003), while the two-member Barnehurst ward is currently over-represented by 11 per cent (13 per cent by 2003). In our draft recommendations report we stated that in this area the Labour Group had provided more evidence on community identity to support its scheme, in addition to achieving an excellent level of electoral equality for the borough overall. We concluded, therefore, that we should put forward its proposals as our draft recommendations.

97 At Stage One the Labour Group proposed creating two three-member wards in this area. It put forward a new Mayplace ward, which would comprise the whole of the existing Barnehurst ward, an area from the eastern part of Christchurch ward, an area to the east of Gravel Hill currently in Upton ward, and the north and north-western parts of the current Crayford ward. It also put forward a modified Crayford ward and proposed that it should remain represented by three members. The revised ward would comprise the majority of the existing Crayford ward, less the area transferred into the new Mayplace ward, but would include an area from the eastern part of the current Upton ward and two electors transferred from the existing North End ward. The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Mayplace and Crayford wards would be almost equal to and 1 per cent below the borough average initially (almost equal to and 1 per cent below the average by 2003).

98 During Stage Three the Council stated that it considered our proposed boundary between Crayford and Mayplace wards to be "artificial". It contended that an area around Manor Road and Star Hill should be included in Mayplace ward, as this area was on top of a steep hill which acted as "a natural boundary", and as children in this area go to school within Mayplace ward. The Council also argued that the proposed north-western

boundary of Crayford ward would “leave a wedge of properties south of the railway line [in Parkside Avenue] quite isolated”. It stated that this area should be retained within Crayford ward, which would offset its proposed modification to Crayford ward’s western boundary. The Council also contended that the existing ward name of Barnehurst should be retained, arguing that “Mayplace has no resonance within the community” and stating that the golf course in the centre of the ward is known as Barnehurst golf course, not Mayplace golf course. The Council’s proposals were supported by Councillor Brooks, the Bexleyheath & Crayford Conservative Association and 11 local residents.

99 The Labour Group opposed the Council’s proposed modification to the boundary between Crayford and Mayplace wards as “it [did] not appear to be based on improving community links or improving electoral equality”. It stated that the amendment would separate St Paulinus church from St Paulinus school which would be unwelcome, and argued that the area which was proposed to be moved out of Crayford is part of the Crayford Conservation area and that the community at the top of Crayford High Street is strongly associated with Crayford. However, the Labour Group suggested that Crayford Manor House and Crayford War Memorial should be retained within Crayford ward (a modification affecting only two electors).

100 Councillor Shepherd (who represents Crayford ward) also opposed the Council’s modification to the proposed Crayford ward, arguing that it would move part of Crayford’s “historical town centre” out of the ward. He submitted evidence to support the draft proposal, providing details of the Iron Mill Lane and Star Hill conservation areas (which would be divided between wards under the Council’s modifications). He also provided evidence to support his assertion that children from the area which the Council proposed moving into Mayplace ward do not go to Mayplace Primary School, which, he contended, demonstrated that the proximity to Mayplace School “is not an issue” in deciding the position of the boundary between Mayplace and Crayford wards. Councillor Shepherd also stated that some local residents had expressed concern that the Crayford Manor House and Crayford War Memorial would no longer be included in Crayford ward and he suggested that this area could be kept in the ward “without affecting the overall integrity of the proposals”.

101 The Crayford Ward Labour Party and one local resident broadly supported our draft proposals for Crayford ward, but wanted the Crayford Manor House and the War Memorial to remain in Crayford ward. One local resident supported our proposed Mayplace ward stating that “as Mayplace roads run through the middle of the ward and the historical Mayplace Estate covers much of the recommended ward; it is correct to name the area Mayplace ward”.

102 The Labour Group and Councillor Standen (the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group) were both opposed to the Council’s proposal to name Mayplace ward as Barnehurst. The Labour Group argued that the Mayplace ward name would reflect the fact that the revised ward would comprise a wider area than just the existing Barnehurst ward. Councillor Standen asserted that “the new ward [Mayplace] so enlarges the old Barnehurst ward, bringing in areas formerly in Crayford and Upton, that the new name of Mayplace would be appropriate”.

103 We have considered the modifications put forward by the Council and Councillor Brooks, affecting the boundary between the proposed Crayford and Mayplace wards. However, in the light of the representations we have received opposing these amendments, the further evidence received in support of our draft recommendations and with officers from the Commission having visited the areas concerned, we are not of the view that the Council’s proposals would improve community links. We agree that St Paulinus Church should be retained in the same ward as St Paulinus Rectory and St Paulinus Primary School, and that the boundaries of the Iron Mill and Star Hill conservation areas should be reflected. We are not, therefore, adopting the Council’s suggested boundary amendments as part of our final recommendations.

104 We are proposing, however, to endorse the suggestion put forward by the Labour Group, Councillor Shepherd, the Crayford Ward Labour Party and a local resident, to include Crayford Manor House and Crayford War Memorial in Crayford ward. This would involve transferring two electors from our proposed Mayplace ward into our proposed Crayford ward. The number of electors per councillor in our revised Crayford and Mayplace wards would be 1 per cent below and equal to the borough average respectively, both initially and by 2003. Our final recommendations for ward boundaries in this area are shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

105 We have also considered the representations received regarding ward names in this area. While we acknowledge that there is some merit in the Council's proposal to retain the existing ward name of Barnehurst, we concur with the Labour Group and Councillor Standen that the ward names put forward in our draft recommendations remain appropriate for this area. Given the majority of local support in favour of the ward names of Mayplace and Crayford, we are therefore confirming our proposed ward names in this area as final.

### **Blendon & Penhill, St Mary's, Sidcup East and Cray wards**

106 These four wards are situated to the south of the A2 trunk road, in the most southern part of the borough. The number of electors per councillor in the three-member wards of Blendon & Penhill, St Mary's and Sidcup East is currently 9 per cent below, 8 per cent above and 6 per cent above the borough average respectively (12 per cent below, 2 per cent above and 6 per cent above by 2003). The two-member Cray ward is currently the most over-represented ward in the borough with the number of electors per councillor varying from the average by 24 per cent. This level of electoral inequality is forecast to worsen still to 26 per cent below the average by 2003.

107 We noted in our draft recommendations report that while the Council's Stage One proposals would achieve a good level of electoral equality for this area, the Labour Group's Stage One proposals would provide a better level of electoral equality; the number of electors per councillor in all three of its proposed wards would be almost equal to the borough average by 2003. We also concurred with the Labour Group's proposal to include Foots Cray and North Cray within the same ward, a proposal which was also suggested by the Liberal Democrat Party. We concluded that the Labour Group's scheme would provide for the best balance between the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria, and therefore put forward its proposals as our draft recommendations.

108 As a consequence of its proposed Danson Park ward, the Labour Group put forward a revised Blendon & Penhill ward, in order to achieve an improved level of electoral equality. In addition to transferring an area from the north into a neighbouring ward, it also proposed modifying Blendon & Penhill ward's western boundary to

include an area from the eastern part of Blackfen ward and modifying its eastern boundary to include an area to the north of the river Shuttle, currently in St Mary's ward. The Labour Group put forward three relatively minor modifications to St Mary's ward, in order to provide for a slightly clearer southern boundary, and also proposed creating a new three-member Cray Meadows ward. This new ward would include an area from the north-eastern part of the current Sidcup East ward, together with the whole of the existing Cray ward. The number of electors per councillor in the Labour Group's proposed Blendon & Penhill, St Mary's and Cray Meadows wards would be 2 per cent above, 5 per cent above and 3 per cent above the borough average initially (almost equal to the average in all three wards by 2003).

109 As outlined earlier in this chapter, the Council's Stage Three representation opposed our draft recommendations affecting Blendon & Penhill ward. It believed that they were not "convenient local electoral arrangements", contending that "it is not necessary and not desirable for two wards to cross the A2". It proposed modifications to the boundaries of the proposed Blendon & Penhill, Blackfen & Lamorbey West, Danson Park and South Welling wards which would result in only one ward, South Welling, breaching the A2. The Council also put forward two relatively minor modifications to the proposed Cray Meadows ward. It proposed transferring properties in Etfield Grove into Sidcup Central & Lamorbey ward, stating that they were "quite dissimilar to the other adjoining properties in Durham Road, Oxford Road [and] Sussex Road". It also proposed transferring the eastern end of Faraday Avenue out of Sidcup Central & Lamorbey ward, to include it with Melville Road and Wren Road in Cray Meadows ward, as it was of the view that these roads were "inextricably linked". It also proposed that Sidcup Central & Lamorbey ward instead be named Sidcup.

110 The Labour Group supported our draft recommendations in this area, and opposed the Council's proposed modifications to the boundary between the proposed Cray Meadows and Sidcup Central & Lamorbey wards. It argued that Etfield Grove was "most closely associated in character and community links with the new Cray Meadows ward", stating that the boundary between Etfield Grove and Church Avenue followed the boundary of the local conservation area for The Green at Sidcup. The Labour Group also argued against

bisecting Faraday Avenue, contending that “the road most similar in nature to Faraday Avenue is the other half of Faraday Avenue”.

111 Councillor Joel Briant, who represents Cray ward, supported the proposed Cray Meadows ward as it would “keep the North Cray and Foots Cray communities united in the same ward”, believing that “the two are inextricably linked through history and common association”. He opposed the Council’s suggested modifications to the proposed Cray Meadows ward and submitted further detailed evidence, regarding school catchment areas, to support the draft proposals. He argued that the proposed ward “unites the three primary school catchment areas [North Cray, Sidcup Hill and Royal Park], with the secondary school [Cleeve Park] within the same new ward”.

112 As outlined earlier, the Bexley Liberal Democrat Party opposed our proposals to breach the A2 as a ward boundary. It reiterated its earlier proposal that the whole length of the A2 be retained as a ward boundary and proposed boundary modifications to 10 wards in the centre and south of the borough (which were supported by the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group and the Liberal Democrat ‘Focus Team’ for Blackfen). Councillor Cammish opposed our proposal to breach the A2, as did Councillor Oliver who stated that the residents of Welling and Bexleyheath do not have a shared identity with the population of Blackfen and Blendon, and that “any new wards that crossed the A2 would be unnatural”. We also received two petitions (submitted by the Blackfen Residents’ Committee and the Liberal Democrat ‘Focus Team’ for Blackfen) and 58 direct representations from local residents, all opposing our draft proposals to include parts of the current Blendon & Penhill and Blackfen wards in revised wards which would straddle the A2.

113 The Cray Branch Labour Party, the Bedensfield Residents’ Association and four local residents specifically supported the proposed Cray Meadows ward, while Nigel Beard MP and six local residents supported our draft recommendations in the area. One local resident suggested that Sidcup Central & Lamorbey ward be named Lamorbey “as Lamorbey playing fields, school [and] park are focal points within the ward”. A local resident opposed our proposed wards in the Old Bexley & Sidcup parliamentary constituency and submitted an alternative scheme for wards in that area. Two local residents were opposed to the linking of

North Cray and Foots Cray within the proposed Cray Meadows ward and four local residents were generally opposed to our draft recommendations.

114 At Stage Three we considered all the representations received. The alternative scheme for wards in the Old Bexley & Sidcup parliamentary constituency area, submitted by a local resident, was based on the 1999 electorate and did not take into account the five-year projected electorate. As a result, these proposals were not compatible with our draft recommendations in the rest of the borough and we are therefore unable to adopt them. However, in the light of local opposition to breaching the A2 as a ward boundary, we are endorsing the Council’s revised Blendon & Penhill ward as part of our final recommendations (as detailed earlier in paragraphs 93-94). The number of electors per councillor in the revised Blendon & Penhill ward would be 4 per cent above the borough average initially (1 per cent above the average by 2003). This revised ward is shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

115 We also considered the Council’s proposed modifications to the proposed Cray Meadows ward. However, in the light of the representations we have received opposing its amendments, the further evidence received in support of our draft recommendations and with officers from the Commission having visited the areas concerned, we are not of the view that the Council’s proposals would improve community links or secure more effective and convenient boundaries. We are therefore confirming our proposed Cray Meadows and St Mary’s wards as final, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

### **Blackfen, Lamorbey and Sidcup West wards**

116 These three wards are situated to the south of the A2 trunk road, in the south-western part of the borough. The number of electors per councillor in the two-member Blackfen ward is 4 per cent below the borough average (4 per cent below by 2003). The number of electors per councillor in the three-member wards of Lamorbey and Sidcup West is 1 per cent above and 3 per cent below the borough average respectively (almost equal to and 7 per cent below the average in 2003).

117 In our draft recommendations report we noted that the Council and the Labour Group put forward quite different proposals for this area of the

borough. The Labour Group's scheme would secure an excellent level of electoral equality; the number of electors per councillor in all three of its proposed wards would be almost equal to the borough average in 2003. We therefore put forward the Labour Group's proposed wards in this area as our draft recommendations.

118 The Labour Group proposed three new three-member wards for this part of the borough. As a consequence of its proposals to transfer parts of Blackfen ward into a new South Welling ward and a revised Blendon & Penhill ward, it proposed a new Blackfen & Lamorbey West ward which would include the western half of the existing Lamorbey ward. The Labour Group also put forward a new Sidcup Central & Lamorbey ward which would comprise the central and eastern parts of the current Lamorbey ward, the north-western part of the current Sidcup East ward and the western side of Station Road from Sidcup West ward. A new Longlands ward was also proposed which would comprise all of the existing Sidcup West ward (less the area transferred into the Sidcup Central & Lamorbey ward) and an area around Sidcup Place and Queen Mary's hospital in the southern part of the existing Sidcup East ward. The number of electors per councillor in the Labour Group's proposed Blackfen & Lamorbey West, Sidcup Central & Lamorbey and Longlands wards would be 1 per cent above, 3 per cent above and almost equal to the borough average initially (almost equal to the average in all three wards by 2003).

119 As outlined earlier in this chapter, we have noted the opposition to breaching the A2 as a ward boundary. The Liberal Democrat Party opposed our proposals and put forward boundary modifications to 10 wards in the centre and south of the borough (which were supported by the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group and the Liberal Democrat 'Focus Team' for Blackfen). We also received two petitions (submitted by the Blackfen Residents' Committee and the Liberal Democrat 'Focus Team' for Blackfen) and direct representations from Councillor Cammish, Councillor Oliver and 58 local residents, all opposing our draft proposals to include parts of the current Blendon & Penhill and Blackfen wards in revised wards which would straddle the A2. One local resident, who was strongly opposed to any electors from his current ward, Blackfen, being included in a ward crossing the A2, also argued that there was little "commonality of interest" within the proposed Blackfen & Lamorbey West ward.

120 As discussed earlier, the Council's Stage Three boundary modifications in this area, affecting four wards, would result in only one ward (South Welling) breaching the A2. These modifications would not have an adverse effect on electoral equality overall, as all of the revised wards would vary by 1 per cent or less from the borough average by 2003.

121 Given the levels of electoral imbalance that would result under the Liberal Democrat Party's modifications (as discussed earlier in this chapter) and in the light of the poorer level of overall electoral equality that would result, we do not propose adopting them as our final recommendations. However, we consider that the Council's proposals would have a better regard for local community interests than our draft proposals, and that they would provide for more effective and convenient local government in that only one ward would contain electors from both sides of the A2. We therefore propose adopting the Council's modified Blackfen & Lamorbey West ward as part of our final recommendations, subject to a minor ward name amendment.

122 The Council contended that the proposed Blackfen & Lamorbey West ward should instead be named Blackfen & Lamorbey, a suggestion which was supported by the Labour Group and Councillor Standen. Given the broad support in favour of this amendment, we propose endorsing the Council's Blackfen & Lamorbey ward name as part of our final recommendations. The number of electors per councillor in the revised Blackfen & Lamorbey ward would be almost equal to the borough average both initially and by 2003.

123 We also considered the Council's proposed boundary amendments to our proposed Sidcup Central & Lamorbey ward, but we are not endorsing those modifications as part of our final recommendations, (as outlined earlier), and are confirming our draft proposals for boundaries in this area as final. However, the Council also proposed that Sidcup Central & Lamorbey ward be named simply Sidcup ward. It noted that the proposed ward would contain parts of both Sidcup and the Lamorbey area, but was of the view that Sidcup would be a better description of the area overall. The Labour Group and Councillor Standen supported the revised ward name, which the Labour Group believed to be "more succinct". A local resident, however, suggested that the ward be named Lamorbey as it would include the Lamorbey playing fields, school and park.

124 Given the broad consensus in favour of naming the proposed ward Sidcup, we concur with the Council's amendment that the suggested Sidcup Central & Lamorbey ward instead be named Sidcup ward. Given the broad support in favour of our proposed Longlands ward we are also confirming it as a final recommendation. The number of electors per councillor in our proposed Sidcup and Longlands wards would be 3 per cent above and almost equal to the borough average initially (almost equal to the borough average in both wards by 2003).

## Conclusions

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

- (a) transferring 395 electors from the proposed Blackfen & Lamorbey ward to the proposed South Welling ward; 419 electors from the proposed South Welling ward to the proposed Danson Park ward; 490 electors from the proposed Danson Park ward; to the proposed Blendon & Penhill ward; and 389 electors from the proposed Blendon & Penhill ward to the proposed Blackfen & Lamorbey ward;

- (b) transferring 10 electors from the proposed Erith ward to the proposed Northumberland Heath ward;
- (c) transferring two electors from the proposed Mayplace ward to the proposed Crayford ward;
- (d) amending three ward names so that Blackfen & Lamorbey West ward be named Blackfen & Lamorbey, that South Welling ward be named Falconwood & Welling and that Sidcup Central & Lamorbey ward be named Sidcup.

126 We conclude that, in Bexley:

- (a) there should be an increase in council size from 62 to 63;
- (b) there should be 21 wards, two less than at present, which would involve changes to the boundaries of all but one of the existing wards.

127 Figure 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1998 and 2003 electorate figures.

128 As shown in Figure 4, our final recommendations for Bexley Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards where the number of electors per councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from five to one. The balance of representation is

*Figure 4 :  
Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements*

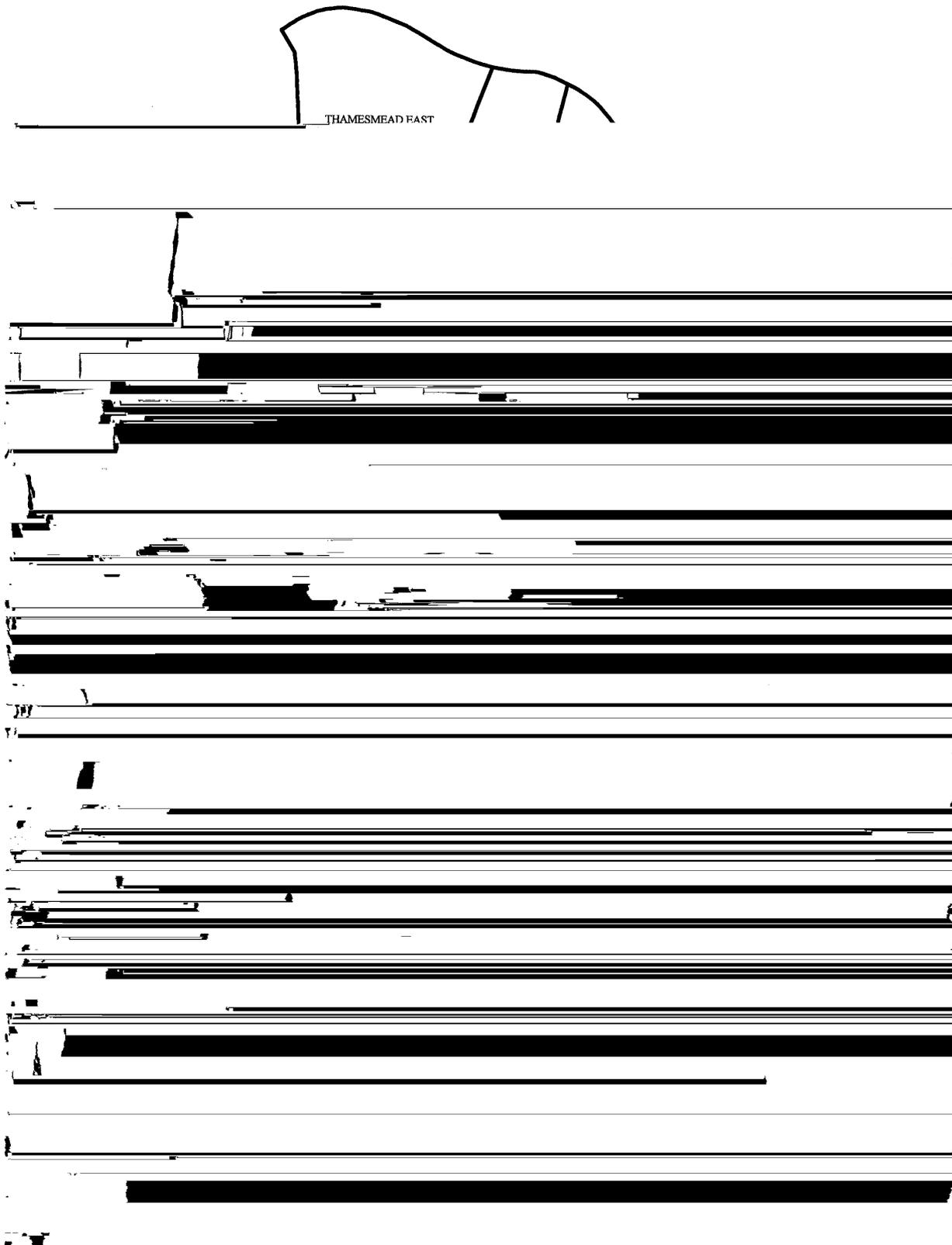
|  | 1998 electorate      |                       | 2003 forecast electorate |                       |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
|  | Current arrangements | Final recommendations | Current arrangements     | Final recommendations |
| Number of councillors  | 62                   | 63                    | 62                       | 63                    |
| Number of wards  | 23                   | 21                    | 23                       | 21                    |
| Average number of electors per councillor                              | 2,708                | 2,665                 | 2,741                    | 2,697                 |
| Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average | 5                    | 1                     | 10                       | 0                     |
| Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average | 1                    | 0                     | 2                        | 0                     |

expected to improve further, with all wards expected to vary by no more than 1 per cent by 2003. Our final recommendations are set out in more detail in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of this report.

### **Final Recommendation**

Bexley Borough Council should comprise 63 councillors serving 21 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map in the back of the report.

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





## 6. NEXT STEPS

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

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

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

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



# APPENDIX A

## Draft Recommendations for Bexley

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ substantively from those we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of eight wards where our draft proposals are set out below. The only other change between our draft and final recommendations, which is not included in Figure A1, is that we propose renaming Sidcup Central & Lamorbey ward as Sidcup.

*Figure A1:*

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

| Ward name                | Number of councillors | Electorate (1998) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2003) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Blackfen & Lamorbey West | 3                     | 8,038             | 2,679                             | 1                       | 8,129             | 2,710                             | 0                       |
| Blendon & Penhill        | 3                     | 8,186             | 2,729                             | 2                       | 8,054             | 2,685                             | 0                       |
| Crayford                 | 3                     | 7,912             | 2,637                             | -1                      | 8,028             | 2,676                             | -1                      |
| Danson Park              | 3                     | 8,266             | 2,755                             | 3                       | 8,068             | 2,689                             | 0                       |
| Erith                    | 3                     | 7,221             | 2,407                             | -10                     | 8,152             | 2,717                             | 1                       |
| Mayplace                 | 3                     | 7,998             | 2,666                             | 0                       | 8,095             | 2,698                             | 0                       |
| Northumberland Heath     | 3                     | 7,744             | 2,581                             | -3                      | 8,116             | 2,705                             | 0                       |
| South Welling            | 3                     | 8,135             | 2,712                             | 2                       | 8,085             | 2,695                             | 0                       |

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

