

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Thurrock

Report to the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and
the Regions

December 2001

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

WHAT IS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND?

The Local Government Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament. Our task is to review and make recommendations on whether there should be changes to local authorities' electoral arrangements.

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

We are required by law to review the electoral arrangements of every principal local authority in England. Our aim is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, the number of councillors, ward names and the frequency of elections.

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

SUMMARY

We began a review of Thurrock's electoral arrangements on 28 November 2000. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 19 June 2001, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

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

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

- **In three of the 20 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough.**
- **By 2005 electoral equality is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in nine wards and by more than 20 per cent in one ward.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 56-57) are that:

- **Thurrock Borough Council should have 49 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 20 wards, as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 18 of the existing wards should be modified, and two wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In 15 of the proposed 20 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This level of electoral equality is forecast to improve, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2005.**

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, who will not make an Order implementing them before 15 January 2002:

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

Table 1: Final Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Aveley & Uplands	3	Part of Aveley ward; part of Belhus ward; part of West Thurrock ward	Large map
2	Belhus	3	Part of Belhus ward; part of West Thurrock ward	Large map
3	Chadwell St Mary	3	Part of Chadwell St Mary ward; part of East Tilbury ward; part of Little Thurrock Blackshots ward; part of Little Thurrock Rectory ward	Large map
4	Chafford & North Stifford	2	Part of Chafford Hundred ward; part of Grays Riverside ward; part of Stifford ward	Large map
5	Corringham & Fobbing	2	Part of Corringham & Fobbing ward; part of Corringham West ward	Maps 2 and A2
6	East Tilbury	2	Part of Chadwell St Mary ward; part of East Tilbury ward	Large map and Map 2
7	Grays Riverside	3	Part of Grays Riverside ward	Large map
8	Grays Thurrock	3	Part of Grays Riverside ward; part of Grays Thurrock ward	Large map
9	Little Thurrock Blackshots	2	Part of Little Thurrock Blackshots ward; part of Stifford ward	Large map
10	Little Thurrock Rectory	2	Part of Little Thurrock Rectory ward	Large map
11	Ockendon	3	Part of Belhus ward; part of Ockendon ward	Large map
12	Orsett	2	<i>Unchanged</i>	Large map and Maps 2 and A2
13	South Chafford	2	Part of Chafford Hundred ward	Maps 2 and A2
14	Stanford East & Corringham Town	3	Part of Corringham West ward; part of Stanford-le-Hope West ward	Maps 2 and A2
15	Stanford-le-Hope West	2	Part of Stanford-le-Hope East ward; part of Stanford-le-Hope West ward	Maps 2 and A2
16	Stifford Clays	2	Part of Stifford ward	Large Map
17	The Homesteads	3	Part of Corringham West ward; The Homesteads ward	Maps 2 and A2
18	Tilbury Riverside & Thurrock Park	2	Part of Grays Riverside ward; part of Little Thurrock Rectory ward; part of Tilbury Riverside ward	Large map
19	Tilbury St Chads	2	<i>Unchanged</i>	Large map
20	West Thurrock & South Stifford	3	Part of Aveley ward; part of Belhus ward; part of West Thurrock ward	Large map

Notes: 1 The whole borough is unparished.

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

Table 2: Final Recommendations for Thurrock

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Aveley & Uplands	3	6,411	2,137	2	6,520	2,173	-4
2	Belhus	3	6,458	2,153	2	6,473	2,158	-4
3	Chadwell St Mary	2	7,195	2,398	14	7,208	2,403	6
4	Chafford & North Stifford	2	2,836	1,418	-33	4,247	2,124	-6
5	Corringham & Fobbing	2	4,466	2,233	6	4,490	2,245	-1
6	East Tilbury	2	4,532	2,266	8	4,589	2,295	2
7	Grays Riverside	3	6,131	2,044	-3	7,285	2,428	8
8	Grays Thurrock	3	6,322	2,107	0	6,243	2,081	-8
9	Little Thurrock Blackshots	2	4,503	2,252	7	4,464	2,232	-1
10	Little Thurrock Rectory	2	4,357	2,179	4	4,571	2,286	1
11	Ockendon	3	6,705	2,235	6	6,685	2,228	-1
12	Orsett	2	4,493	2,247	7	4,707	2,354	4
13	South Chafford	2	2,043	1,022	-51	4,468	2,234	-1
14	Stanford East & Corringham Town	3	6,803	2,268	8	6,770	2,257	0
15	Stanford-le-Hope West	2	4,542	2,271	8	4,661	2,331	3
16	Stifford Clays	2	4,887	2,444	16	4,867	2,434	8
17	The Homesteads	3	6,804	2,268	8	6,984	2,298	2
18	Tilbury Riverside & Thurrock Park	2	4,203	2,102	0	4,238	2,119	-6
19	Tilbury St Chads	2	4,008	2,004	-5	4,124	2,062	-9
20	West Thurrock & South Stifford	3	5,244	1,748	-17	7,159	2,386	6
	Totals	49	102,943	–	–	110,663	–	–
	Averages	–	–	2,101	–	–	2,258	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Thurrock 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 borough of Thurrock. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to finish in 2004.

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Thurrock. Thurrock's last review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in September 1976 (Report no. 140). Since that review was undertaken, Thurrock became a unitary authority in 1996, as a consequence of which the Local Government Boundary Commission undertook a directed review (1996). The change to unitary status led to a gain of 10 borough councillors, increasing the total number of councillors for Thurrock from 39 to 49.

3 In carrying out these reviews, we must have regard to:

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

4 Full details of the legislation under which we work are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (fourth edition published in December 2000). This *Guidance* sets out our approach to the reviews.

5 Our task is to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards.

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

7 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as possible, equal representation across a district as a whole. Schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward will have to be fully justified. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

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

or that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

9 In July 1998 the Government published a White Paper called *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, i.e. in year one, half of the district council would be elected, in year two, half the county council would be elected, and so on. In unitary authorities the White Paper proposed elections by thirds. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas and three-member wards in unitary authority areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral wards in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities. The proposals were taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, provides that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities' electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Orders under the 2000 Act we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in two-tier areas, and our current *Guidance*.

10 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 28 November 2000, when we wrote to Thurrock Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Essex Police Authority, the Members of Parliament with constituencies in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the Essex region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 19 February 2001. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

11 Stage Three began on 15 May 2001 with the publication of our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Thurrock*, and ended on 9 July 2001. During this period we sought comments from the public and other interested parties 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

12 The borough of Thurrock is situated to the south of Essex on the north side of the River Thames. It has 18 miles of riverfront and covers an area of 18,443 hectares, more than half of which is green belt land. The borough also contains the largely residential areas of Aveley, Belhus, Chadwell St Mary, Chafford Hundred, Corringham, Little Thurrock, Osuth Ockendon, Stanford-le-Hope, Tilbury, West Thurrock and the commercial centre of the borough, the Grays area. The riverside area is highly industrialised; it contains the large modern container port of Tilbury, oil refineries at Coryton and Shell Haven and bulk storage installations at Purfleet, South Stifford and West Thurrock. The borough also contains the Lakeside regional shopping centre. While the rural parts of the borough contain some thriving agricultural communities, of 52,000 domestic properties in the borough, 13,000 are Council owned. The borough is well connected to London and the North by the A13 and the M25, and by railway. The Queen Elizabeth road bridge and high-speed rail links connect Thurrock to Kent and the South. Thurrock became a unitary authority in April 1996 and is entirely unparished.

13 The electorate of the borough is 102,943 (February 2000). The Council presently has 49 members who are elected from 20 wards, two of which are relatively rural in character, the remainder being predominantly urban. Nine of the wards are each represented by three councillors and 11 are represented by two councillors, the remainder being single-member wards. The Council is elected by thirds.

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

15 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,101 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,258 by the year 2005 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in three of the 20 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average. The worst imbalance is in Little Thurrock Rectory ward where each of the three councillors represents 15 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Thurrock

Table 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Aveley	3	5,709	1,903	-9	5,781	1,927	-15
2	Belhus	3	6,459	2,153	2	6,476	2,159	-4
3	Chadwell St Mary	3	7,025	2,342	11	7,212	2,404	6
4	Chafford Hundred	2	4,549	2,275	8	8,381	4,191	86
5	Corringham & Fobbing	2	4,413	2,207	5	4,437	2,219	-2
6	Corringham West	2	3,984	1,992	-5	3,972	1,986	-12
7	East Tilbury	2	4,281	2,141	2	4,338	2,169	-4
8	Grays Riverside	3	6,131	2,044	-3	7,285	2,428	8
9	Grays Thurrock	3	6,322	2,107	0	6,243	2,081	-8
10	Little Thurrock Blackshots	2	3,859	1,930	-8	3,806	1,903	-16
11	Little Thurrock Rectory	2	4,815	2,408	15	5,029	2,515	11
12	Ockendon	3	6,705	2,235	6	6,685	2,228	-1
13	Orsett	2	4,493	2,247	7	4,707	2,345	4
14	Stanford-le-Hope East	2	4,413	2,207	5	4,473	2,237	-1
15	Stanford-le-Hope West	2	3,858	1,929	-8	3,896	1,948	-14
16	Stifford	3	6,122	2,041	-3	6,102	2,034	-10
17	The Homesteads	3	5,947	1,982	-6	6,037	2,012	-11
18	Tilbury Riverside	2	3,745	1,873	-11	3,780	1,890	-16
19	Tilbury St Chads	2	4,168	2,084	-1	4,124	2,062	-9
20	West Thurrock	3	5,945	1,982	-6	7,899	2,633	17
	Totals	49	102,943	–	–	110,663	–	–
	Averages	–	–	2,101	–	–	2,258	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Thurrock 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. For example, in 2000, electors in Tilbury Riverside ward were relatively over-represented by 11 per cent, while electors in Little Thurrock Rectory ward were under-represented by 15 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

16 During Stage One we received two representations, a borough-wide scheme from Thurrock Council and a submission from South Stifford Residents Association. 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 Thurrock in Essex*.

17 Our draft recommendations were based on the Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality, and provided a mixed pattern of two- and three-member wards. However, we moved away from the Borough Council's scheme in a number of areas, affecting seven wards, using some of our own proposals. We proposed that:

- Thurrock Council should be served by 49 councillors, as at present, representing 20 wards, as at present;
- the boundaries of 18 of the existing wards should be modified, while two wards should retain their existing boundaries.

Draft Recommendation

Thurrock Council should comprise 49 councillors, serving 20 wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

18 Our proposals would result in improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 15 of the 20 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve, with no ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2005.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

19 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, we received two representations. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Thurrock Council.

Thurrock Council

20 The Council broadly supported our draft recommendations but proposed two boundary modifications in the Chadwell St Marys area. It argued that the Orsett Heath area, which we proposed warding with Chadwell St Marys, should in fact be retained in the Little Thurrock Blackshots ward which stretches to the west of the A1089. It argued that the area had little in common with the rest of the proposed Chadwell St Marys ward and stated that “Orsett Heath is a small community with its own separate identity...members saw little advantage in ‘attaching’ this community with either Orsett Heath or Chadwell St Mary ward.” It also argued that the polling station situated in Orsett Heath was proof of the independence of the community and that it was an area that would not “suffer” from being warded with the area to the west of the A1089. The Council also proposed that the western part of our proposed East Tilbury ward, formerly within the existing Chadwell St Marys ward, should in fact be retained within Chadwell St Marys ward. It argued that the proposed development in the area would lead to the area having more in common with Chadwell St Marys than the rural ward of East Tilbury, stating that “whilst the area is on the rural fringe of Chadwell St Mary the development will grow to become an extension of the built area of Chadwell”.

South Stifford Residents Association

21 South Stifford Residents Association reiterated its Stage One submission, arguing that the area covered by the former parish of Stifford should be contained within a single district ward. However, it went on to state that if this was not possible, then the boundary of the proposed West Thurrock ward should be modified and moved from the back of the properties on Palmerston Road to run along Mill Lane and Warren Lane, the former parish boundary of Stifford parish, arguing that “our community and that of West Thurrock identify with our historic parish boundary...Pilgrims Lane, Mill Lane”. It argued that our proposed West Thurrock ward should be represented by four councillors in order to provide for more effective and convenient local government for an area of deprivation. It also argued that our proposed West Thurrock ward should be renamed West Thurrock & South Stifford in order to better reflect the constituent parts of the ward.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

22 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Thurrock is, so far as reasonably practicable and consistent with the statutory criteria, to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 – which stresses the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the identities and interests of local communities – and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

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

24 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which results in 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.

25 Our Guidance states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for an authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be minimised, the aim 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 make electoral equality their starting point, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorates must also be considered, and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

Electorate Forecasts

26 Since the last directed review in 1996 there has been a 5 per cent increase in the electorate of Thurrock. At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 7 per cent from 102,943 to 110,663 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expects most of the growth to be in Chafford Hundred ward where work is continuing on the Chafford Hundred housing development of more than 4,000 residential units plus schools and local facilities. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. We accept that this is an inexact science and, having considered the forecast electorates, we stated in our draft recommendations report that we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

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

Council Size

28 As already explained, we start by assuming that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case.

29 In our draft recommendations report we adopted the Council's proposal for a council of 49 members as we considered that it achieved a good level of electoral equality and met the statutory criteria.

30 During Stage Three we received no representations regarding the issue of council size, and having considered the size and the distribution of the electorate, the geography and the other characteristics of the area, we remain of the view that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 49 members.

Electoral Arrangements

31 Having considered the representations received during Stage One, we decided to base our draft recommendations on Thurrock Council's proposals. We noted that they did not receive any opposition as a result of consultation and we recognised that they had received support from both political parties and the independent members of the council.

32 At Stage Three Thurrock Council commented on our proposed wards of Chadwell St Marys, East Tilbury and Little Thurrock Blackshots. South Stifford Residents Association commented on our proposed West Thurrock ward, arguing that boundary of the ward should be changed to follow the boundary of the former Stifford parish, that the ward should be represented by four councillors and that the name of the ward should be changed from West Thurrock to West Thurrock & South Stifford.

33 We have reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- a) Aveley, Belhus, Ockendon and West Thurrock wards;
- b) Chafford Hundred, Grays Riverside, Grays Thurrock and Stifford wards;
- c) Chadwell St Mary, East Tilbury, Little Thurrock Blackshots, Little Thurrock Rectory, Tilbury Riverside and Tilbury St Chads wards;
- d) Corringham & Fobbing, Corringham West, Orsett, Stanford-le-Hope East, Stanford-le-Hope West and The Homesteads wards.

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

Aveley, Belhus, Ockendon and West Thurrock wards

35 The existing three-member wards of Aveley, Belhus, Ockendon and West Thurrock cover the western part of the borough. Under the current arrangements the number of electors per councillor in each of the four wards varies from the borough average by 9 per cent, 2 per cent, 6 per cent and 6 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to deteriorate over the next five years in Aveley, Belhus and West Thurrock wards, to vary by 15 per cent, 4 per cent and 17 per cent, while improving in Ockendon ward, to vary by 1 per cent from the borough average in 2005.

36 At Stage One we received a borough-wide submission from Thurrock Council proposing that this area should comprise four three-member wards. It proposed that there should be no change to the existing wards of Belhus and Ockendon and that there should be boundary modifications to the existing wards of Aveley and West Thurrock in order to create a new ward of Aveley & Uplands and a modified West Thurrock ward. Having considered the Council's proposals we decided to largely adopt them in this area. However, in order to improve community representation, we proposed using the more clearly identifiable boundaries of the M25 and the A13 between the proposed wards of Aveley & Uplands and West Thurrock. We were concerned that the Council's proposed boundary between Grays Riverside and West Thurrock wards would divide communities, so we proposed retaining the existing boundary despite the marginal worsening of electoral equality that would result. We also proposed a minor amendment to the boundary between the proposed Belhus and Ockendon wards in order to tie the boundaries to clearer ground detail. This change did not affect any electors.

37 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would vary from the borough average in Aveley & Uplands, Belhus, Ockendon and West Thurrock wards by 2 per cent, 2 per cent, 6 per cent and 17 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality was projected to improve over the next five years in Ockendon and West Thurrock wards, with the number of electors per councillor varying by 1 per cent and 6 per cent from the borough average. The level of electoral equality in Aveley & Uplands and Belhus wards was projected to deteriorate marginally, to vary by 4 per cent from the borough average in each ward in 2005.

38 At Stage Three the Borough Council expressed support for our draft recommendations in this area. South Stifford Residents Association expressed a number of reservations over our proposed West Thurrock ward. It reiterated its Stage One proposal that the whole of the area contained within the former parish of Stifford should be contained within the same borough ward. It stated that the boundary between our proposed West Thurrock and South Chafford ward should be modified to run along Mill Lane and Warren Lane to the boundary of the former parish of Stifford. It argued that this would better reflect community identity in the area, stating that "Our community and that of West Thurrock identify with our historic parish boundary – Pilgrims Lane, Mill Lane and the Chase." It also argued that the socio-economic status of our proposed West Thurrock ward necessitated the allocation of an extra councillor. It argued that the ward needed four councillors to cope with the levels of deprivation and to cope with large geographical spread. It also proposed changing the name of our proposed West Thurrock ward to West Thurrock & South Stifford, in order to reflect the composition of the ward more accurately.

39 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to endorse our draft recommendations for Aveley & Uplands, Belhus, Ockendon and West Thurrock wards as final as they would achieve reasonable electoral equality and have received some local support. We have noted the representation of South Stifford Residents Association proposing a boundary

modification to our proposed West Thurrock ward. However, we have not been persuaded to adopt this boundary modification as it would result in part of the Chafford Hundred development being divided from the remainder of the development and we consider that this would not be a good reflection of community identity in this area, and would also result in a poorer level of electoral equality. We also noted the Residents Association's proposal to increase the number of councillors representing West Thurrock ward from three to four. However, under a 49-member council this area is only entitled to three councillors and therefore we do not propose adopting this amendment. However, we have been persuaded to change the name of the proposed West Thurrock ward to West Thurrock & South Stifford, as we believe this would better reflect the constituent parts of the proposed ward. The electoral variances for these wards would remain as at draft, with the number of electors per councillor in West Thurrock & South Stifford ward varying from the average by 17 per cent in 2000 and improving to vary by 6 per cent in 2005. Our final recommendations are detailed in Tables 1 and 2 and are illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large map at the back of the report.

Chafford Hundred, Grays Riverside, Grays Thurrock and Stifford wards

40 The existing wards of Chafford Hundred, Grays Riverside, Grays Thurrock and Stifford cover the western centre of the borough. Under the current arrangements the number of electors per councillor in the two-member Chafford Hundred and three-member Grays Riverside and Stifford wards varies from the borough average by 8 per cent, 3 per cent and 3 per cent respectively, while equalling the borough average in Grays Thurrock ward. The level of electoral equality is projected to deteriorate over the next five years in Chafford Hundred, Grays Riverside, Grays Thurrock and Stifford wards, to vary by 86 per cent, 8 per cent, 8 per cent and 10 per cent from the borough average in 2005.

41 At Stage One we received representations from the Borough Council and South Stifford Residents Association concerning this area. The Council proposed that the area should comprise five mixed-member wards. It proposed boundary modifications to the existing Grays Riverside and Grays Thurrock wards and suggested creating three new wards; Chafford & North Stifford, South Chafford and Stifford Clays, from the existing Chafford Hundred and Stifford wards. South Stifford Residents Association proposed combining North and South Stifford in a single ward. Having considered the representations received we largely adopted the Council's proposals in this area, subject to amendments to improve community identity and provide more identifiable boundaries. In order to better reflect community identity we proposed retaining the existing boundary between our proposed Grays Riverside and West Thurrock wards. We believed that using the existing boundaries of Orsett and Stanley Road would better reflect the boundary between Grays Town Centre and the outlying area of the town and we considered that the slightly worse levels of electoral equality which resulted from this boundary modification were justified, given the enhanced reflection of community identity which resulted. We also proposed minor amendments to the boundaries between the proposed Chafford & North Stifford and Grays Riverside wards, Grays Riverside and Grays Thurrock wards, and Grays Riverside and Tilbury Riverside & Thurrock Park wards on the advice of Ordnance Survey in order to tie the boundaries to ground detail. These did not affect any electors. We noted the comments of South Stifford Residents Association, but we were not convinced by its arguments. A ward containing North and South Stifford would have to include part of the Chafford Hundred estate, given that the estate lies directly between North and South Stifford. Having visited the area we were not convinced that splitting this still developing housing estate would be a good reflection of community identity in the area.

42 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would vary from the borough average in Chafford & North Stifford, Grays Riverside, South Chafford and Stifford Clays wards by 33 per cent, 3 per cent, 51 per cent and 16 per cent respectively, while equalling the borough average in Grays Thurrock ward. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years in Chafford & North Stifford, South Chafford and Stifford Clays wards, with the number of electors per councillor varying by 6 per cent, 1 per cent and 8 per cent from the borough average. The level of electoral equality in Grays Riverside and Grays Thurrock wards is projected to deteriorate marginally to vary by 8 per cent from the borough average in each ward by 2005.

43 At Stage Three the Borough Council expressed its support for our draft recommendations in this area. South Stifford Residents Association reiterated its Stage One representation, arguing that the whole of the former parish of Stifford should be contained within one district ward and proposing boundary modifications, as detailed in an earlier paragraph. We note the comments of the Residents Association; however, as at Stage One, we are not convinced that warding North and South Stifford together, a boundary modification which would necessitate the splitting of the Chafford Hundred housing development, would be a good reflection of community identity in the area. We are therefore content to endorse our draft recommendations in this area as final. The electoral variances would be unchanged from our draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are detailed in Tables 1 and 2 and are illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large map at the back of the report.

Chadwell St Mary, East Tilbury, Little Thurrock Blackshots, Little Thurrock Rectory, Tilbury Riverside and Tilbury St Chads wards

44 The six wards of Chadwell St Mary, East Tilbury, Little Thurrock Blackshots, Little Thurrock Rectory, Tilbury Riverside and Tilbury St Chads cover the eastern centre of the borough. Chadwell St Mary is represented by three councillors, while the remainder of the wards are each represented by two councillors. Under the current arrangements the number of electors per councillor varies from the borough average by 11 per cent, 2 per cent, 8 per cent, 15 per cent, 11 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to deteriorate over the next five years in East Tilbury, Little Thurrock Blackshots, Tilbury Riverside and Tilbury St Chads wards to vary by 4 per cent, 16 per cent, 16 per cent, and 9 per cent from the borough average, while improving in Chadwell St Mary and Little Thurrock Rectory wards, to vary by 6 per cent and 11 per cent from the borough average in 2005.

45 At Stage One Thurrock Council proposed boundary modifications to all six wards in this area. It also proposed changing the name of Tilbury Riverside ward to Tilbury Riverside & Thurrock Park. Having considered the Council's proposals we decided to largely base our draft recommendations in this area on their proposals. However, we proposed a number of boundary changes to the Council's proposed wards in order to better reflect community identity and provide for better electoral equality. We proposed amending the boundary between the Council's proposed Chadwell St Marys and Little Thurrock Blackshots wards. We were of the opinion that the Orsett Heath area to the east of the A1089 should be warded with the Chadwell St Mary area rather than the Little Thurrock Blackshots ward in order to reflect the predominant road links in the area and to utilise the strong natural boundary of the A1089. We also proposed boundary modifications to the Council's proposed Tilbury St Chads and East Tilbury wards. We were not convinced by its proposal to place the south-eastern part of the existing Chadwell St Marys ward within its proposed Tilbury St Chads ward. We were of the opinion that the lack of road links between this area and the rest of Tilbury St Chads ward and the significant differences between the two areas would lead to the proposed ward not reflecting community

identities. Therefore, since the area could not be retained within the existing Chadwell St Mary ward, we proposed that it should be combined with the existing East Tilbury ward. We were of the opinion that this would unite two areas of a rural nature and, despite the slight worsening of electoral equality, would better reflect community identity in the area.

46 On the advice of Ordnance Survey we proposed minor amendments to the boundaries between the proposed Chadwell St Mary and East Tilbury, and Grays Riverside and Tilbury Riverside & Thurrock Park wards in order to tie boundaries to ground detail. These changes would not affect any electors.

47 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would vary from the borough average in Chadwell St Mary, East Tilbury, Little Thurrock Blackshots, Little Thurrock Rectory and Tilbury St Chads wards by 14 per cent, 8 per cent, 7 per cent, 4 per cent and 5 per cent respectively. It was expected to equal the borough average in Tilbury Riverside & Thurrock Park ward. In 2005 the number of electors per councillor was expected to vary from the borough average in Chadwell St Mary, East Tilbury, Little Thurrock Blackshots, Little Thurrock Rectory and Tilbury St Chads ward by 6 per cent, 2 per cent, 1 per cent, 1 per cent and 9 per cent respectively in 2005. The level of electoral equality in Tilbury Riverside & Thurrock Park was expected to deteriorate to 6 per cent from the borough average in 2005.

48 At Stage Three the Borough Council broadly welcomed our draft recommendations for this area but reiterated its support for one of its proposed Stage One boundaries and suggested another new boundary modification. It argued, as at Stage One, that the Orsett Heath area should be retained within the Little Thurrock Blackshots area. It argued that the area has no community links with the Chadwell St Mary ward, stating that “Orsett Heath is a small community with its own separate identity” and going on to state that “Members saw little advantage in attaching this community with either Orsett Heath or Chadwell St Marys Ward.” It also argued that the south-eastern part of the existing Chadwell St Marys ward, the Sandy Lane area, should not be warded with East Tilbury, but should be warded with Chadwell St Mary’s ward. It argued that this area has community links with Chadwell and stated that “whilst the area is on the rural fringe of Chadwell St Mary the development will grow to become an extension of the built area of Chadwell. The emerging community is more likely to develop as part of Chadwell than as part of the sparsely populated rural East Tilbury Ward.”

49 We have carefully considered the representations received during this consultation period, and while we note the arguments of the Borough Council, we are confirming our draft recommendations as final. We consider that the Orsett Heath area should remain within Chadwell St Marys ward, recognising the road links the area has with the Chadwell area. We have not been convinced by the Council’s argument to retain Orsett Heath area in the Little Thurrock Blackshots ward. We remain of the opinion that the A1089 constitutes a significant and identifiable boundary and that it should be used as a boundary between Little Thurrock Blackshots and Chadwell St Marys. We also consider that the Sandy Lane area of East Tilbury ward should remain within our proposed East Tilbury ward rather than being retained in the existing Chadwell St Marys ward. We do not consider that the Council has provided sufficient evidence and argumentation to convince us that the proposed developments in the area will create community ties between the area and the rest of Chadwell St Marys. The Council itself argued at Stage One that the area has “no association with the rest of Chadwell St Marys”, and we remain more convinced by this argument.

50 The electoral variances for our final recommendations, will remain the same as our draft recommendations, and the proposed wards are detailed in Tables 1 and 2 and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large map at the back of the report.

Corringham & Fobbing, Corringham West, Orsett, Stanford-le-Hope East, Stanford-le-Hope West and The Homesteads wards

51 The existing wards of Corringham & Fobbing, Corringham West, Orsett, Stanford-le-Hope East, Stanford-le Hope West and The Homesteads cover the north-eastern part of the borough. The Homesteads ward returns three members, while the remaining wards each currently return two members. Under the current arrangements the number of electors per councillor varies from the borough average in each of the six wards by 5 per cent, 5 per cent, 7 per cent, 5 per cent, 8 per cent and 6 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to deteriorate over the next five years in Corringham West, Stanford-le-Hope West and The Homesteads wards, to vary by 12 per cent, 14 per cent and 11 per cent, while improving in Corringham & Fobbing, Orsett and Stanford-le-Hope East wards, to vary by 2 per cent, 4 per cent and 1 per cent from the borough average in 2005.

52 At Stage One Thurrock Council proposed that this area should comprise five wards. It proposed retaining the existing boundaries of Orsett ward and suggested a minor boundary change to Corringham & Fobbing. It proposed creating a new ward of Stanford East & Corringham Town and making boundary modifications to Stanford-le-Hope West and The Homesteads wards. We came to the conclusion that the Council's proposals in the area offered the best balance between electoral equality and community identity by recognising communities such as The Homesteads and Stanford-le-Hope and using readily identifiable boundaries such as The Manorway and the Southend Road. Consequently we adopted the Council's proposals in full as part of our draft recommendations. Under our draft recommendations there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average in Corringham & Fobbing, Orsett, Stanford East & Corringham Town, Stanford-le-Hope West and The Homesteads by 6 per cent, 7 per cent, 8 per cent, 8 per cent and 8 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years in Corringham & Fobbing, Orsett, Stanford-le-Hope West and The Homesteads wards, with the number of electors per councillor varying by 1 per cent, 4 per cent, 3 per cent and 2 per cent from the borough average, while equalling the borough average in Stanford East & Corringham Town ward.

53 At Stage Three the Council fully endorsed our draft recommendations in this area. Since no other representations were received we are confirming our draft recommendations in this area as final. Our final recommendations are detailed in Figures 1 and 2, and are illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large map at the back of the report.

Electoral Cycle

54 At Stage One we received no proposals in relation to the electoral cycle of the district. Accordingly, we made no recommendation for change to the present system of whole-council elections by thirds.

55 At Stage Three no further comments were received to the contrary, and we are content to confirm our draft recommendation as final.

Conclusions

56 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided to endorse our draft recommendations as final, except in Thurrock West ward which we propose renaming Thurrock West & South Stifford.

57 We conclude that, in Thurrock:

- there should be a council size of 49, as at present;
- there should be 20 wards, as at present;
- the boundaries of 18 of the existing wards should be modified;
- the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

58 Table 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2000 and 2005 electorate figures.

Table 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2001 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	49	49	49	49
Number of wards	20	20	20	20
Average number of electors per councillor	2,101	2,101	2,258	2,258
Number of wards with a variance of more than 10 per cent from the average	3	5	9	0
Number of wards with a variance of more than 20 per cent from the average	0	2	1	0

59 As Table 4 shows, our recommendations would initially result in an increase in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from three to five, with two wards varying by more than 20 per cent from the borough average. However, this level of electoral equality would improve in 2005, with no ward varying by more than 8 per cent from the average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, while also having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Thurrock Borough Council should comprise 49 councilors serving 20 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Map 2: Final Recommendations for Thurrock

6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

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

61 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 15 January 2002.

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

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

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for Thurrock: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for the Thurrock area.

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

Map A2 illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for the east of Thurrock.

The **large map** inserted at the back of this report illustrates the proposed warding arrangements for the centre and west of Thurrock.

Map A1: Final Recommendations for Thurrock: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Warding Arrangements for the East of Thurrock.