

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Breckland in Norfolk

March 2002

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Large maps illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for Attleborough, Dereham and Thetford are 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:

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. We can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils.

With effect from 1 April 2002, the Electoral Commission will assume the functions of the Local Government Commission for England and take over responsibility for making Orders putting in place the new arrangements resulting from periodic electoral reviews (powers which currently reside with the Secretary of State). As part of this transfer, the Electoral Commission has set up a Boundary Committee which will take over responsibility for the conduct of PERs from the Local Government Commission. The Boundary Committee will conduct electoral reviews following the same rules and in the same manner as the Local Government Commission for England. Its final recommendations on future electoral arrangements will then be presented to the Electoral Commission which will be able to accept, modify or reject the Boundary Committee's findings. Under these new arrangements there will remain a further opportunity to make representations directly to the Electoral Commission after the publication of the final recommendations. Interested parties will have a further six weeks to send comments to the Electoral Commission.

SUMMARY

We began a review of Breckland's electoral arrangements on 31 July 2001.

- **This report summarises the submissions we received during the first stage of the review, and makes draft recommendations for change.**

We found that the current arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Breckland:

- **in 28 of the 41 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and 12 wards vary by more than 20 per cent;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 27 wards and by more than 20 per cent in 14 wards.**

Our main proposals for Breckland's future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 99-100) are that:

- **Breckland District Council should have 54 councillors, one more than at present;**
- **there should be 36 wards, instead of 41 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 36 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of five, and five wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **whole-council elections should continue to take place every four years.**

The purpose of these proposals is to ensure that, in future, each district councillor represents approximately the same number of electors, bearing in mind local circumstances.

- **In 30 of the proposed 36 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **This level of electoral equality is expected to improve further with the number of electors per councillor in 34 wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2006.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Attleborough, Dereham and Thetford;**
- **new warding arrangements for Besthorpe Parish Council.**

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

- **We will consult on these proposals for eight weeks from 26 March 2002. We take this consultation very seriously. We may decide to move away from our draft recommendations in the light of comments or suggestions that we receive. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission which, with effect from 1 April 2002, will be responsible for implementing change to local authority electoral arrangements.**
- **The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. It will also decide when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to us at the address below by 20 May 2002:

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Breckland Review
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Dolphyn Court
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E-mail: reviews@lgce.gov.uk
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Table 1: Draft Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1 All Saints	1	The parishes of Great Ellingham, Little Ellingham, Rocklands and Scoulton	Map 2
2 Buckenhams & Besthorpe	1	The proposed Besthorpe Rural parish ward of Besthorpe parish and the parishes of New Buckenham and Old Buckenham	Map 2 and large map
3 Burgh & Haverscroft	2	The proposed Burgh & Haverscroft parish ward of Attleborough parish	Large map and Map 2
4 Conifer	1	The parishes of Cranwich, Didlington, Hilborough, Ickburgh, Mundford, Stanford, Sturston and Tottington	Map 2
5 Dereham-Central	2	The proposed Dereham-Central parish ward of Dereham parish	Large map and Map 2
6 Dereham- Neatherd	2	The proposed Dereham-Neatherd parish ward of Dereham parish	Large map and Map 2
7 Dereham-St Withburga	1	The proposed Dereham-St Withburga parish ward of Dereham parish	Large map and Map 2
8 Dereham-Toftwood	2	The proposed Dereham-Toftwood parish ward of Dereham parish	Large map and Map 2
9 East Guiltcross	1	The parishes of Banham, Quidenham and Snetterton	Map 2
10 Eynsford	1	The parishes of Bawdeswell, Bylaugh, Foxley, Lyng and Sparham	Map 2
11 Haggard de Toni	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Bradenham and Saham Toney	Map 2
12 Harling & Heathlands	2	The parishes of Brettenham, Bridgham, Garboldisham, Harling, Kilverstone, Riddlesworth and Roudham	Map 2
13 Hermitage	1	The parishes of Colkirk, Horningtoft, Stanfield, Tittleshall, Weasenham All Saints, Weasenham St Peter, Wellingham and Whissonsett	Map 2
14 Launditch	1	The parishes of Beeston with Bittering, Great Dunham, Kempstone, Lexham, Litcham, Little Dunham and Rougham & Larling	Map 2
15 Mid Forest	1	The parishes of Beachamwell, Cockley Cley, Foulden, Gooderstone, Great Cressingham, Little Cressingham, Oxborough and South Pickenham	Map 2
16 Nar Valley	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Narborough, Narford, Newton by Castle Acre, South Acre and Sporle with Palgrave	Map 2
17 Necton	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parish of Necton	Map 2
18 Queen's	3	The proposed Queen's parish ward of Attleborough parish and the proposed Besthorpe Village parish ward of Besthorpe parish	Large map and Map 2
19 Shipdham	1	The parish of Shipdham	Map 2
20 Springvale & Scarning	2	The parishes of Fransham, Gressenhall, Longham, Scarning and Wendling	Map 2
21 Swaffham	3	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parish of Swaffham	Map 2
22 Swanton Morley	1	The parishes of Elsing, Hoe and Swanton Morley	Map 2
23 Taverner	1	The parishes of Beetley, Brisley and Mileham	Map 2

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
24 Templar	1	The parishes of Carbrooke, Caston, Griston and Ovington	Map 2
25 Thetford-Abbey	2	The proposed Thetford-Abbey parish ward of Thetford parish	Large map and Map 2
26 Thetford-Castle	1	The proposed Thetford-Castle parish ward of Thetford parish	Large map and Map 2
27 Thetford-Guildhall	3	The proposed Thetford-Guildhall parish ward of Thetford parish	Large map and Map 2
28 Thetford-Saxon	3	The proposed Thetford-Saxon parish ward of Thetford parish	Large map and Map 2
29 Two Rivers	2	The parishes of East Tuddenham, Hockering, Mattishall and North Tuddenham	Map 2
30 Upper Wensum	1	The parishes of Billingford, Bintree, Gateley, Guist, North Elmham and Twyford	Map 2
31 Upper Yare	1	The parishes of Cranworth, Garvestone, Hardingham, Whinburgh & Westfield and Yaxham	Map 2
32 Watton	3	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parish of Watton	Map 2
33 Wayland	1	The parishes of Hockham, Merton, Shropham, Stow Bedon, Thompson and Wretham	Map 2
34 Weeting	1	The parishes of Croxton, Lynford and Weeting-with-Broomhill	Map 2
35 West Guiltcross	1	The parishes of Blo' Norton, Kenninghall, North Lopham and South Lopham	Map 2
36 Wissey	1	The parishes of Ashill, Holme Hale and North Pickenham	Map 2

Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.

2 The wards in the above table are illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and the large maps at the back of the report.

3 We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors.

Table 2: Draft Recommendations for Breckland

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 All Saints	1	1,773	1,773	8	1,811	1,811	6
2 Buckenhams & Besthorpe	1	1,592	1,592	-3	1,700	1,700	-1
3 Burgh & Haverscroft	2	2,797	1,399	-15	3,252	1,626	-5
4 Conifer	1	1,582	1,582	-4	1,526	1,526	-11
5 Dereham-Central	2	2,165	1,083	-34	3,695	1,848	8
6 Dereham-Neatherd	2	3,318	1,659	1	3,505	1,753	2
7 Dereham-St Withburga	1	1,981	1,981	21	1,840	1,840	7
8 Dereham-Toftwood	2	4,364	2,182	33	3,768	1,884	10
9 East Guiltcross	1	1,507	1,507	-8	1,582	1,582	-8
10 Eynsford	1	1,712	1,712	4	1,760	1,760	3
11 Haggard de Toni	1	1,748	1,748	7	1,765	1,765	3
12 Harling & Heathlands	2	3,178	1,589	-3	3,267	1,634	-5
13 Hermitage	1	1,702	1,702	4	1,749	1,749	2
14 Launditch	1	1,565	1,565	-5	1,608	1,608	-6
15 Mid Forest	1	1,564	1,564	-5	1,609	1,609	-6
16 Nar Valley	1	1,748	1,748	7	1,808	1,808	5
17 Necton	1	1,463	1,463	-11	1,631	1,631	-5
18 Queen's	3	4,702	1,567	-4	4,635	1,545	-10
19 Shipdham	1	1,635	1,635	0	1,685	1,685	-2
20 Springvale & Scarning	2	3,560	1,780	8	3,613	1,807	5
21 Swaffham	3	5,150	1,717	5	5,341	1,780	4
22 Swanton Morley	1	1,616	1,616	-2	1,632	1,632	-5
23 Taverner	1	1,718	1,718	5	1,759	1,759	3
24 Templar	1	1,691	1,691	3	1,843	1,843	7
25 Thetford-Abbey	2	3,236	1,618	-1	3,249	1,625	-5
26 Thetford-Castle	1	1,561	1,561	-5	1,572	1,572	-8
27 Thetford-Guildhall	3	4,432	1,477	-10	5,026	1,675	-2
28 Thetford-Saxon	3	5,063	1,688	3	5,227	1,742	2
29 Two Rivers	2	3,126	1,563	-5	3,203	1,602	-7
30 Upper Wensum	1	1,747	1,747	6	1,786	1,786	4

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
31 Upper Yare	1	1,771	1,771	8	1,848	1,848	8
32 Watton	3	5,035	1,678	2	5,277	1,759	3
33 Wayland	1	1,524	1,524	-7	1,670	1,670	-3
34 Weeting	1	1,754	1,754	7	1,767	1,767	3
35 West Guiltcross	1	1,640	1,640	0	1,672	1,672	-3
36 Wissey	1	1,897	1,897	16	1,925	1,925	12
Totals	54	88,617	–	–	92,606	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,641	–	–	1,715	–

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

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our proposals for the electoral arrangements for the district of Breckland in Norfolk, on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the seven districts in Norfolk as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is expected to finish in 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Breckland. Breckland's last review was carried out by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in August 1978 (Report no. 283). The electoral arrangements of Norfolk County Council were last reviewed in June 1984 (Report no. 472). We expect to begin reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements towards the end of the year.

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 on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also propose changes to the electoral arrangements for parish and town councils in the district.

6 In our *Guidance*, we state that we wish wherever possible to build on schemes which have been created locally on the basis of careful and effective consultation. Local people are normally in a better position to judge what council size and ward configurations 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, as far as possible, equal representation across the 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, nor 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 The review is in four stages (see Table 3).

Table 3: Stages of the Review

Stage	Description
One	Submission of proposals to us
Two	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	Final deliberation and report to the Electoral Commission

10 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 of the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral 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, states that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities' electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Order 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*.

11 Stage One began on 31 July 2001, when we wrote to Breckland District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Norfolk County Council, Norfolk Police Authority, the local authority associations, Norfolk County Association of Town and Parish Councils, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituencies in the district, the Members of the European Parliament for the Eastern Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Breckland District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of submissions (the end of Stage One) was 22 October 2001.

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

13 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 26 March 2002 and will end on 20 May 2002, involves publishing the draft proposals in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.**

14 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to modify them, and submit final recommendations to the Electoral Commission. The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If the Electoral Commission accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, it will make an Order and decide when any changes come into effect.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

15 With a population of around 121,000, Breckland District covers an area of approximately 130,510 hectares and is situated in the south-west of the County of Norfolk, bordering North Norfolk district to the north, the borough of Broadland to the east and the counties of Suffolk and Cambridgeshire to the south and to the west respectively. Breckland is predominantly rural with the majority of the population centred in the five main market towns of Attleborough, Dereham, Swaffham, Thetford and Watton. The district is parished in its entirety and contains 112 parishes.

16 The electorate of the district is 88,617 (February 2001). The Council presently has 53 members who are elected from 41 wards, 11 of which are relatively urban in Thetford, Dereham and Attleborough, with the remainder being mainly rural. Three of the wards are each represented by three councillors, six are each represented by two councillors and 32 are single-member wards. The Council is elected as a whole every four years.

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

18 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,672 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,747 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic change and migration since the last review, the number of electors per councillor in 28 of the 41 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, 12 wards by more than 20 per cent and five wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Queen's ward where the councillor represents 142 per cent more electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Breckland

Table 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 All Saints	1	1,583	1,583	-5	1,619	1,619	-7
2 Beetley & Gressenhall	1	1,892	1,892	13	1,939	1,939	11
3 Besthorpe	1	2,050	2,050	23	2,362	2,362	35
4 Buckenham	1	1,336	1,336	-20	1,381	1,381	-21
5 Conifer	1	1,941	1,941	16	1,988	1,988	14
6 East Dereham-Neatherd	2	3,318	1,659	-1	3,636	1,818	4
7 East Dereham-Toftwood	2	4,387	2,194	31	4,777	2,389	37
8 East Dereham- Town	2	2,142	1,071	-36	2,342	1,171	-33
9 East Dereham-St Withburga	1	1,981	1,981	18	2,053	2,053	17
10 East Guiltcross	1	1,362	1,362	-19	1,431	1,431	-18
11 Eynsford	1	1,441	1,441	-14	1,491	1,491	-15
12 Haggard de Toni	1	1,748	1,748	5	1,765	1,765	1
13 Harling	1	1,724	1,724	3	1,782	1,782	2
14 Haverscroft	1	1,667	1,667	0	1,672	1,672	-4
15 Heathlands	1	1,549	1,549	-7	1,579	1,579	-10
16 Hermitage	1	1,230	1,230	-26	1,257	1,257	-28
17 Launditch	1	1,462	1,462	-13	1,511	1,511	-14
18 Mattishall	1	2,080	2,080	24	2,107	2,107	21
19 Mid-Forest	1	1,023	1,023	-39	1,067	1,067	-39
20 Nar Valley	1	1,748	1,748	5	1,808	1,808	3
21 Necton	1	1,463	1,463	-13	1,631	1,631	-7
22 Peddars Way	1	1,592	1,592	-5	1,636	1,636	-6
23 Queen's	1	4,038	4,038	142	4,172	4,172	139
24 Shipworth	1	1,948	1,948	17	2,000	2,000	14
25 Springvale	1	2,789	2,789	67	2,821	2,821	61
26 Swaffham	3	5,150	1,717	3	5,341	1,780	2
27 Swanton Morley	1	1,406	1,406	-16	1,419	1,419	-19
28 Taverner	1	1,172	1,172	-30	1,201	1,201	-31
29 Templar	1	1,169	1,169	-30	1,285	1,285	-26
30 Thetford-Abbey	2	3,317	1,659	-1	3,330	1,665	-5

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
31 Thetford-Barnham Cross	2	2,643	1,322	-21	2,645	1,323	-24
32 Thetford-Guildhall	3	5,912	1,971	18	6,517	2,172	24
33 Thetford-Saxon	2	2,420	1,210	-28	2,582	1,291	-26
34 Two Rivers	1	1,693	1,693	1	1,754	1,754	0
35 Upper Wensum	1	1,581	1,581	-5	1,610	1,610	-8
36 Upper Yare	1	1,458	1,458	-13	1,533	1,533	-12
37 Watton	3	5,035	1,678	0	5,277	1,759	1
38 Wayland	1	1,347	1,347	-19	1,399	1,399	-20
39 Weeting	1	1,412	1,412	-16	1,421	1,421	-19
40 West Guiltcross	1	1,441	1,441	-14	1,470	1,470	-16
41 Wissey	1	1,967	1,967	18	1,995	1,995	14
Totals	53	88,617	-	-	92,606	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,672	-	-	1,747	-

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Mid-Forest ward were relatively over-represented by 39 per cent, while electors in Queen's ward were relatively under-represented by 142 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

19 At the start of this review we invited members of the public and other interested parties to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Breckland District Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

20 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the LGCE visited the area and met officers and members from the District Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received nine submissions during Stage One, including a district-wide scheme from the District Council, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the District Council.

Breckland District Council

21 The District Council proposed a council of 53 members, the same as at present, serving 39 wards, compared to the existing 41. It consulted on a draft scheme before submitting its proposals to the Commission. It included copies of all the representations it had received in its submission. The proposals were based on largely single-member wards in the rural areas and multi-member wards in the urban areas. The District Council's submission provided for improved electoral equality, although 10 wards were projected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the district average, with three wards varying by more than 20 per cent. By 2006 this level of electoral equality was projected to improve, although seven wards were still projected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the district average.

Parish and Town Councils

22 We received responses from seven parish councils. Ashill Parish Council proposed retaining the status quo in Wissey district ward, in which Ashill parish is situated, stating that "We, along with the existing parishes, have been served very well over many years by the District Councillor for this ward and do not wish this to change". Holme Hale Parish Council also objected to any change to Wissey ward.

23 Caston, Colkirk, Great Ellingham and Griston parish councils proposed retaining the current arrangements in their areas.

24 Cranworth Parish Council expressed support for the District Council's proposals for the parish.

Other Submissions

25 We received one further submission. Councillor Monument provided argumentation for removing the prefix 'East' from the four ward names in Dereham. The Councillor also proposed that the proposed East Dereham Town ward be renamed Dereham-Central ward, stating that it "would be an improvement in the interests of clarity".

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

26 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Breckland and welcome comments from all those interested relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, electoral cycle, ward names, and parish and town council electoral arrangements. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

27 As described earlier, our primary aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Breckland is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the identities and interests of local communities – and Schedule 11 of 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”.

28 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 over the next five years. We must also have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and maintaining local ties.

29 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.

30 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 electorate must also be considered and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

Electorate Forecasts

31 Since 1975 there has been a 41 per cent increase in the electorate of Breckland district. The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 5 per cent from 88,617 to 92,606 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in Dereham and Thetford. 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. Advice from the District Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

32 We know that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having looked at the District Council’s figures, accept that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council Size

33 As explained earlier, 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.

34 Breckland District Council presently has 53 members. The District Council proposed retaining the existing council size, stating that it had “sought to avoid” increasing council size, commenting, “It is understood that the Commission prefers that any scheme does not increase the number of district councillors”.

35 We have carefully considered the issue of council size, and have noted that, given the configuration of parishes and the spread of electorate, it is not possible to secure the correct balance of electorate between the towns of Attleborough, Dereham and Thetford and the remainder of the district (the rural areas) under the current council size of 53. We therefore considered a number of options which could facilitate the provision of a better balance of representation across the district.

36 We noted that Besthorpe Parish Council submitted its own proposals for the Attleborough area as part of the Council’s consultation, providing argumentation for Besthorpe remaining a part of Attleborough for district warding purposes and objecting to being combined with Old and New Buckenham parishes in a new Buckenhams & Besthorpe ward. It stated that, “We have no community of interest with the Buckenhams but plenty with Attleborough, with which we are grouped at present”. We therefore considered combining the residential village with the residential area in the east of Attleborough with which it is contiguous. This would facilitate the provision of a better balance of representation across the district, but would entail a minor increase in council size.

37 We noted that under a council size of 53, this area overall would be entitled to 4.52 councillors by 2006 and therefore should be allocated an additional councillor. We have noted that the Council did not consider a minor increase in council size as an option, but we have not been persuaded that the retention of a notable imbalance of representation between the town areas and the rural areas would be acceptable. In any event, our proposed council size of 54 members only moves some way to securing a good balance, as a completely balanced level of representation would not be possible without a significant change in council size or significant parish warding. Furthermore, this slight modification to the proposed council size would not have too great an impact on the level of electoral equality achieved under the Council’s proposed wards.

38 Having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we conclude that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 54 members.

Electoral Arrangements

39 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, including the district-wide scheme submitted by the District Council. In view of the support given to large elements of the Council’s proposals, and the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, we have based our recommendations on the District Council’s scheme, as we consider that the scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the

statutory criteria than the existing arrangements. However, as detailed above, in order to facilitate a better allocation of councillors between the towns of Attleborough, Dereham and Thetford and the rural parts of the district, we propose adopting a council size of 54 members. This would result in the warding of Besthorpe parish and the inclusion of the village of Besthorpe in a ward with part of Attleborough. Overall, the Attleborough area would be allocated five councillors. This slight increase in council size would have a minimal effect on the levels of electoral equality achieved under the District Council's scheme. However, to improve electoral equality further and bearing in mind local community identities and interests, we are moving away from the District Council's proposals in a number of areas. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Besthorpe, Haverscroft and Queen's wards
- (b) Buckenham, East Guiltcross and West Guiltcross wards
- (c) Harling and Heathlands wards
- (d) Thetford (four wards)
- (e) Peddars Way and Wayland wards
- (f) Conifer, Mid-Forest and Weeting wards
- (g) Nar Valley, Necton, Swaffham and Wissey wards
- (h) All Saints, Haggard de Toni, Templar and Watton wards
- (i) Mattishall, Shipworth, Two Rivers and Upper Yare wards
- (j) Dereham (four wards)
- (k) Eynsford, Swanton Morley and Upper Wensum wards
- (l) Beetley & Gressenhall, Hermitage, Launditch, Springvale and Taverner wards

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

Besthorpe, Haverscroft and Queen's wards

41 The three wards of Besthorpe, Haverscroft and Queen's are situated in the south-east of the district and broadly cover the town of Attleborough. The three wards are each represented by a single councillor. Haverscroft and Queen's wards are coterminous with the Haverscroft and Queen's parish wards of Attleborough parish and Besthorpe ward comprises the parish of Besthorpe and Burgh parish ward of Attleborough parish. At present, Besthorpe and Queen's wards are significantly under-represented with 23 per cent and 142 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (35 per cent and 139 per cent more by 2006). Haverscroft ward has equal to the district average number of electors per councillor (4 per cent fewer by 2006).

42 At Stage One, the District Council proposed combining the parish of Besthorpe, currently in Besthorpe ward, with the current Buckenham ward to form a new single-member Buckenham & Besthorpe ward, arguing that "the under-representation is addressed by transferring the Parish of Besthorpe". In conjunction with this proposal, the Council proposed broadly retaining the existing Queen's ward, with the addition of an extra councillor to make it a two-member ward. However, it proposed transferring the area to the south of West Carr Road and Long Street (including the properties to the north of these roads) into the single-member Haverscroft ward. The remaining part of the current Besthorpe ward, Burgh parish ward of Attleborough parish, would form a single-member Burgh ward. During the District Council's consultation process Besthorpe Parish Council objected to the District Council's proposals for their parish. The District Council acknowledged that Besthorpe parish has a "natural affinity with Attleborough", but stated that the alternative of leaving Besthorpe

within one of the Attleborough wards would have meant “an additional member, i.e. a total of 5” for the three Attleborough wards. It further stated that this could only be achieved by increasing the total number of District Councillors by one member “something which these proposals have sought to avoid”. Under the District Council’s proposals, based on a council size of 53, the proposed Burgh, Buckenhams & Besthorpe, Haverscroft and Queen’s wards would have 1 per cent fewer, 4 per cent more, equal to the average and 21 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (9 per cent, 5 per cent, 7 per cent and 14 per cent more by 2006).

43 We have noted that Besthorpe Parish Council submitted its own proposals for the Attleborough area as part of the Council’s consultation, providing argumentation for Besthorpe remaining a part of Attleborough for district warding purposes and objecting to being combined with Old and New Buckenham parishes in a new Buckenhams & Besthorpe ward. It stated that “we have no community of interest with the Buckenhams but plenty with Attleborough, with which we are grouped at present”.

44 Having considered all the representations received, and as detailed above, we propose combining the residential village of Besthorpe with the residential area in the east of Attleborough with which it is contiguous. This would facilitate the provision of a better balance of representation across the district as detailed earlier. Under the existing council size of 53, this area overall would be entitled to 4.52 councillors by 2006 and therefore we propose allocating an additional councillor and basing the draft recommendations on a council size of 54, as detailed above.

45 As outlined above, we propose warding Besthorpe parish and including the village of Besthorpe in the revised three-member Queen’s ward, creating the new Besthorpe Village parish ward. As a consequence, the remaining part of Besthorpe parish would form a new Besthorpe Rural parish ward and be combined with the current Buckenham ward to form a new single-member Buckenhams & Besthorpe ward. We further propose departing from the Council’s proposals in Attleborough to provide for a better balance between electoral equality and reflecting communities while also providing for better boundaries. We propose combining the proposed Haverscroft ward (less the area to the north of Swanagey Lane and West Carr Road) and the proposed Burgh ward (less the properties to the north of Thieves Lane and Arlington Gardens), to form a new two-member Burgh & Haverscroft ward. We are also proposing a number of minor amendments to existing boundaries to tie them to firm ground detail and to avoid defaced boundaries. As a result, we propose amending the boundary between Queen’s ward and Burgh & Haverscroft ward in order for all of Constable Close to be included in the revised Queen’s ward and all the properties in Thorpe Drive to be included in the new Burgh & Haverscroft ward. We also propose that 27 Beech Avenue be included in the new Burgh & Haverscroft ward.

46 Under our draft recommendations, based on a council size of 54, the proposed Burgh & Haverscroft ward would have 15 per cent fewer electors than the district average (5 per cent fewer by 2006). The proposed Queen’s and Buckenhams & Besthorpe wards would have 4 per cent and 3 per cent fewer electors than the district average respectively (10 per cent and 1 per cent fewer by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2, Map A2 and the large maps at the back of the report.

Buckenham, East Guiltcross and West Guiltcross wards

47 The three wards of Buckenham, East Guiltcross and West Guiltcross are situated in the south-east of the district and to the south of Attleborough. The single-member Buckenham

ward comprises the parishes of Old Buckenham and New Buckenham. East Guiltcross is currently a single-member ward and comprises the parishes of Banham and Quidenham. West Guiltcross is a single-member ward and comprises the parishes of Kenninghall, North Lopham and South Lopham. Buckenham, East Guiltcross and West Guiltcross wards are over-represented with 20 per cent, 19 per cent and 14 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (21 per cent, 18 per cent and 16 per cent fewer by 2006).

48 At Stage One, the District Council proposed combining the parish of Besthorpe, currently in Besthorpe ward, with the current Buckenham ward to form a new single-member Buckenham & Besthorpe ward, as detailed above. It proposed including the parish of Snetterton, currently in Peddars Way ward, in the current East Guiltcross ward to form a revised single-member East Guiltcross ward. The Council also proposed including the parish of Blo' Norton, currently in Heathlands ward, in the current West Guiltcross ward to form a revised single-member West Guiltcross ward. Under the District Council's proposals, based on a council size of 53, Buckenham & Besthorpe, East Guiltcross and West Guiltcross wards would have 4 per cent more, 10 per cent fewer and 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (5 per cent more, 9 per cent fewer and 4 per cent fewer by 2006).

49 Having considered the District Council's proposals, we are of the view that they provide for a good balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in the area and have decided to adopt them as part of our draft recommendations, subject to one amendment. We propose warding Besthorpe parish and including the village of Besthorpe in the Queen's ward, as detailed above. As a consequence, the remaining part of Besthorpe parish would form a new Besthorpe Rural parish ward and be included in a new Buckenham & Besthorpe ward, as detailed above.

50 Under our draft recommendations, based on a council size of 54, the proposed Buckenham & Besthorpe, East Guiltcross and West Guiltcross wards would have 3 per cent fewer, 8 per cent fewer and equal to the district average number of electors per councillor respectively (1 per cent fewer, 8 per cent fewer and 3 per cent fewer by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

Harling and Heathlands wards

51 The single-member wards of Harling and Heathlands are situated in the south of the district and to the east of Thetford. Harling ward is coterminous with the parish of Harling. Heathlands ward is currently a detached ward and comprises the parishes of Blo' Norton, Brettenham, Croxton, Garboldisham, Kilverstone and Riddlesworth. At present, Harling ward has 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (2 per cent more by 2006). Heathlands ward is slightly over-represented with 7 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (10 per cent fewer by 2006).

52 At Stage One, the District Council proposed retaining the current Harling ward. The Council proposed combining the existing Heathlands ward, less the parishes of Blo' Norton and Croxton, with the parish of Roudham (currently in Peddars Way ward) to form a revised single-member Heathlands ward. The remaining part of the current Heathlands ward, the parish of Blo' Norton, would be included in a revised West Guiltcross ward, as detailed above. Finally, the Council proposed including the remaining part of the current Heathlands ward, the parish of Croxton, in a revised Weeting ward, as detailed below. Under the District Council's proposals, based on a council size of 53, Harling and Heathlands wards would have 3 per cent more and 13 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (2 per

cent more and 15 per cent fewer by 2006). We received no other representations concerning this area.

53 Having considered the District Council's proposals, we propose departing from them to avoid the retention of a detached ward, as we have concerns over the ability of detached wards to provide convenient and effective local government, and in order to achieve a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. The Council's proposed Heathlands ward would be a detached ward and would have 11 per cent fewer electors than the district average (13 per cent fewer by 2006) under a council size of 53. We therefore propose combining the existing Harling ward with the proposed Heathlands ward to form a new two-member Harling & Heathlands ward. This would provide for improved electoral equality, with the new ward containing 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (5 per cent fewer by 2006) and would avoid the provision of a detached Heathlands ward.

54 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Harling & Heathlands ward would be as detailed above. We recognise that this new two-member ward would result in a ward covering a large geographic area. We would welcome views on whether this ward could be divided into two single-member wards, without necessitating a detached ward. Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

Thetford (four wards)

55 The four wards of Thetford-Abbey, Thetford-Barnham Cross, Thetford-Guildhall and Thetford-Saxon are situated in the south-west of the district and cover the town of Thetford. Thetford-Abbey, Thetford-Barnham Cross and Thetford-Saxon are each represented by two councillors and Thetford-Guildhall is represented by three councillors. The four wards are coterminous with Thetford-Abbey, Thetford-Barnham Cross, Thetford-Guildhall and Thetford-Saxon parish wards of Thetford parish. At present, Thetford-Abbey, Thetford-Barnham Cross and Thetford-Saxon are over-represented with 1 per cent, 21 per cent and 28 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (5 per cent, 24 per cent and 26 per cent fewer by 2006). Thetford-Guildhall is under-represented with 18 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (24 per cent more by 2006).

56 At Stage One, the District Council proposed two boundary amendments in Thetford in order to improve electoral equality, stating that "some realignment of ward boundaries is necessary to give more balanced representation". It proposed that the area to the north of Fulmerston Road and east of Kimms Belt, currently in Thetford-Barnham Cross ward, be included in a revised two-member Thetford-Saxon ward. It also proposed combining the remaining part of the current Thetford-Barnham Cross ward with the area to the south of Furth Way and Norwich Road (currently in Thetford-Guildhall ward) to form a new two-member Thetford-Castle ward. The remaining part of the current Thetford-Guildhall ward would become a revised three-member Thetford-Guildhall ward. Finally, the Council proposed retaining the current two-member Thetford-Abbey ward. Under the District Council's proposals, based on a council size of 53, the proposed Thetford-Abbey, Thetford-Castle, Thetford-Guildhall and Thetford-Saxon wards would have 1 per cent fewer, 8 per cent more, 12 per cent fewer and 12 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (5 per cent fewer, 3 per cent more, 4 per cent fewer and 11 per cent fewer by 2006). We received no other representations concerning this area.

57 Having considered the District Council's proposals, we propose departing from them in order to provide for more identifiable boundaries and a better reflection of local communities.

We noted that the Council's proposed Thetford-Castle ward would breach the Little Ouse River and the River Thet. Having visited the area we noted that the only access between the two areas either side of the two rivers is by a small narrow bridge. Furthermore, we are of the view that the ward's western boundary would divide the residential estates either side of Fulmerston Road. Therefore, we propose combining the current Thetford-Saxon and Thetford-Barnham Cross wards to create a single three-member Thetford-Saxon ward, using the river as a strong identifiable northern boundary. In the north of Thetford (to the north of the river) we propose adopting the Council's proposed three-member Thetford-Guildhall ward, but we propose alternative arrangements for the remaining area. We propose that the area to the north of the river and to the south of the London Road/Norwich Road/Hurth Road inner ring-road should form a new single-member Thetford-Castle ward and that the remainder of the current Thetford-Abbey ward form a revised two-member Thetford-Abbey ward. These proposals would provide for more identifiable boundaries and the 'old town' area, currently in Thetford-Guildhall ward, would be placed in its own ward rather than linked with the area to the south of the river with which it has few links and limited means of access.

58 Under our proposals, based on a council size of 54, the levels of electoral equality would also be improved, with the proposed Thetford-Saxon ward having 3 per cent more electors than the district average (2 per cent more by 2006). In the north, the proposed Thetford-Abbey, Thetford-Castle and Thetford-Guildhall wards would have 1 per cent, 5 per cent and 10 per cent fewer electors than the district average respectively (5 per cent, 8 per cent and 2 per cent fewer by 2006). We have noted that in its submission, the council pointed out that "Thetford Town Council is happy with what the District Council is proposing". While we are of the view that our proposed district wards provide for the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria at district level, we would welcome views as to whether any further modifications could be made with regard to Town Council electoral arrangements, as discussed later in this report. Our draft recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and the large maps at the back of the report.

Peddars Way and Wayland wards

59 The single-member Peddars Way and Wayland wards are situated in the south and in the centre of the district. Peddars Way ward comprises the parishes of Bridgham, Hockham, Roudham, Shropham, Snetterton and Wretham. Wayland ward comprises the parishes of Caston, Griston, Merton, Stow Bedon, Thompson and Tottington. At present, Peddars Way and Wayland wards are over-represented, with 5 per cent and 19 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (6 per cent and 20 per cent fewer by 2006).

60 At Stage One, the District Council proposed combining the parishes of Hockham, Shropham and Wretham, currently in Peddars Way ward, with the parishes of Stow Bedon, Merton and Thompson, currently in Wayland ward, to form a revised single-member Wayland ward. The Council proposed combining part of the remaining part of the current Wayland ward, the parishes of Caston and Griston, with the parishes of Carbrooke and Ovington (currently in Templar ward) to form a revised single-member Templar ward. Part of the remaining part of the current Peddars Way ward, the parishes of Bridgham and Roudham, would form part of the revised Heathlands ward, as detailed above. The remaining part of the current Wayland ward, the parish of Tottington, would form part of a revised Conifer ward, as detailed below, while the remaining part of Peddars Way ward, the parish of Snetterton, would form part of a revised East Guiltcross ward, as detailed above. Under the District Council's proposals, based on a council size of 53, the proposed Templar ward would have 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (5 per cent more by 2006).

Wayland ward would have 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (4 per cent fewer by 2006).

61 Caston Parish Council and Griston Parish Council proposed retaining the existing single-member Wayland ward. Griston Parish Council stated that their “Parish Councillors can see no fundamental reason for any change”.

62 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we have decided to adopt the District Council’s proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations, without amendment. While we note the concerns of Caston Parish Council and Griston Parish Council, we consider that the Council’s proposals provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We have also been unable to determine any viable alternatives that would not have a negative effect on electoral equality.

63 Under our draft recommendations, based on a council size of 54, Templar and Wayland wards would have 3 per cent more and 7 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (7 per cent more and 3 per cent fewer by 2006). Our draft recommendations are illustrated on Map 2.

Conifer, Mid-Forest and Weeting wards

64 The largely rural wards of Conifer, Mid-Forest and Weeting are situated in the west and south of the district, to the north of Thetford. The three wards are each represented by a single councillor. Conifer ward comprises the parishes of Cranwich, Didlington, Gooderstone, Ickburgh, Mundford and Foulden. Mid-Forest ward comprises the parishes of Beachamwell, Cockley Cley, Hillborough, Great Cressingham, Little Cressingham and Oxborough. Weeting ward comprises the parishes of Lynford, Stanford, Sturston and Weeting-with-Broomhill. Conifer ward is under-represented, with 16 per cent more electors than the district average (14 per cent more by 2006). Mid-Forest and Weeting wards are over-represented with 39 per cent and 16 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (39 per cent and 19 per cent fewer by 2006).

65 At Stage One, the District Council proposed combining part of the current Conifer ward, the parishes of Mundford, Cranwich, Didlington and Ickburgh, with the parish of Hilborough (currently in Mid-Forest ward), the parishes Stanford and Sturston (currently in Weeting ward) and the parish of Tottington (currently in Wayland ward) to form a revised single-member Conifer ward. The Council proposed combining the remainder of Mid-Forest ward with the parishes of Foulden and Gooderstone (currently in Conifer ward) to form a revised single-member Mid-Forest ward. In addition, the Council also proposed combining the remaining part of Weeting ward, the parishes of Lynford and Weeting-with-Broomhill, with the parish of Croxton from the neighbouring Heathlands ward to form a revised single-member Weeting ward. It provided justification for the electoral inequality in the proposed Conifer ward, stating that “this is considered to be inevitable in a large geographical area” and stated that the proposals for the Mid-Forest and Conifer wards were “supported by those parish councils affected”. Under the District Council’s proposals, the proposed Conifer, Mid-Forest and Weeting wards would have 12 per cent fewer, 11 per cent fewer and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (13 per cent fewer, 12 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more by 2006).

66 Having considered the District Council’s proposals, we are of the view that they provide for a reasonable balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in the area and have decided to adopt them as part of our draft recommendations, subject to one amendment.

We propose transferring the parish of South Pickenham from the revised Wissey ward to the revised Mid-Forest ward to provide for a better level of electoral equality. We have noted that Foulden and Mundford Parish Councils supported the District Council's proposals (for their parishes) during its consultation period. In adopting the Council's proposed Conifer ward we have taken into consideration the rural nature of the area and we have been unable to determine any viable alternatives that would not have a negative effect on electoral equality or the reflection of local communities. We also consider that in this entirely parished district the configuration and location of parishes and settlements is restrictive.

67 Under our draft recommendations, based on a council size of 54, Conifer, Mid-Forest and Weeting wards would have 4 per cent fewer, 5 per cent fewer and 7 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (11 per cent fewer, 6 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more by 2006). Our draft recommendations are illustrated on Map 2.

Nar Valley, Necton, Swaffham and Wissey wards

68 The four wards of Nar Valley, Necton, Swaffham and Wissey are situated in the centre and in the west of the district. Nar Valley ward is currently represented by a single councillor and comprises the parishes of Narborough, Narford, Newton-by-Castleacre, Southacre and Sporle with Palgrave. Necton ward is a single-member ward and is coterminous with the parish of Necton. Swaffham ward is a three-member ward and is coterminous with the parish of Swaffham. At present, Wissey ward is a single-member ward and comprises the parishes of Ashill, Holme Hale, North Pickenham and South Pickenham. Nar Valley, Swaffham and Wissey wards are under-represented, with 5 per cent, 3 per cent and 18 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent, 2 per cent and 14 per cent more by 2006). Necton ward is relatively over-represented with 13 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (7 per cent fewer by 2006).

69 At Stage One, the District Council proposed retaining the current Swaffham and Nar Valley wards. In relation to the current Necton ward, the Council proposed combining the ward with the parish of Holme Hale, currently in Wissey ward, to form a new single-member Necton & Holme Hale ward. The remaining part of the Wissey ward would form a revised single-member Wissey ward. Under the District Council's proposals, based on a council size of 53, the proposed Nar Valley, Necton & Holme Hale, Swaffham and Wissey wards would have 5 per cent more, 9 per cent more, 3 per cent more and 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent more, 14 per cent more, 2 per cent more and 6 per cent fewer by 2006).

70 We received two further representations in relation to this area. Ashill Parish Council proposed retaining the status quo in Wissey district ward, in which Ashill parish is situated, stating that "we, along with the existing parishes, have been served very well over many years by the District Councillor for this ward and do not wish this to change". Holme Hale Parish Council also objected to any change to Wissey ward.

71 Having carefully considered all the representations received for this area, we propose broadly adopting the District Council's proposals, subject to one amendment in order to achieve a broadly better level of electoral equality overall and a better reflection of local community identity. The Council's proposed Necton & Holme Hale ward would have 9 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (14 per cent more by 2006); therefore we propose combining the parish of Holme Hale with the proposed Wissey ward to form a revised single-member Wissey ward (less the parish of South Pickenham which would be included in a revised Mid-Forest ward). We propose retaining the existing Necton ward

unchanged. The revised Wissey and Necton wards, under a council size of 54, would have 16 per cent more and 11 per cent fewer electors than the district average respectively (12 per cent more and 5 per cent fewer by 2006).

72 Under our draft recommendations, based on a council size of 54, the proposed NarValley, Necton, Swaffham and Wissey wards would have 7 per cent more, 11 per cent fewer, 5 per cent more and 16 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (5 per cent more, 5 per cent fewer, 4 per cent more and 12 per cent more by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

All Saints, Haggard de Toni, Templar and Watton wards

73 The four wards of All Saints, Haggard de Toni, Templar and Watton are situated in the east of the district. The three wards of All Saints, Haggard de Toni and Templar are each represented by a single councillor and Watton ward is represented by three councillors. All Saints ward comprises the parishes of Great Ellingham, Little Ellingham and Rocklands. Haggard de Toni ward comprises the parishes of Bradenham and Saham Toney, while Templar ward comprises the parishes of Carbrooke, Ovington and Scoulton. Watton ward is coterminous with the parish of Watton. At present, All Saints and Templar wards are over-represented, with 5 per cent and 30 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (7 per cent and 26 per cent fewer by 2006). Haggard de Toni and Watton wards contain 5 per cent more and equal to the district average number of electors per councillor respectively (1 per cent more for both wards by 2006).

74 At Stage One, the District Council proposed combining the parish of Scoulton (currently in Templar ward) with the current All Saints ward to form a revised single-member All Saints ward. The Council also proposed combining the remaining part of Templar ward, the parishes of Carbrooke and Ovington, with the parishes of Caston and Griston (currently in Wayland ward) to form a revised single-member Templar ward, as detailed earlier. In relation to Haggard de Toni and Watton wards, the Council proposed retaining the existing wards. Under the Council's proposals, based on a council size of 53, the proposed All Saints ward would have 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (4 per cent more by 2006). Haggard de Toni and Watton wards would have 5 per cent more and equal to the district average number of electors per councillor respectively (1 per cent more for both wards by 2006).

75 Great Ellingham Parish Council proposed retaining the present number of parish councillors in the parish, stating that, "We would wish to stay within the boundary of All Saints ward, along with the parishes of Little Ellingham and Rocklands with whom we have a good working relationship".

76 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we have decided to adopt the District Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations, without amendment. We consider that the Council's proposals provide a good balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and are largely based on the existing warding arrangements. We note that this arrangement meets the concerns of Great Ellingham Parish Council.

77 Under our draft recommendations, based on a council size of 54, the proposed All Saints ward would have 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (6 per cent more by 2006). Haggard de Toni and Watton wards would have 7 per cent more and 2 per

cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent more for both wards by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

Mattishall, Shipworth, Two Rivers and Upper Yare wards

78 The four wards of Mattishall, Shipworth, Two Rivers and Upper Yare are situated in the north-east of the district and to the east of Dereham. The four wards are each represented by a single councillor. Mattishall ward is coterminous with the parish of Mattishall. At present, Shipworth ward comprises the parishes of Cranworth and Shipdham, and Two Rivers ward comprises the parishes of East Tuddenham, Hockering, Lying and North Tuddenham. Upper Yare ward comprises the parishes of Garverstone, Hardingham, Whinburgh & Westfield and Yaxham. Mattishall, Shipworth and Two Rivers wards are under-represented, with 24 per cent, 17 per cent and 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (21 per cent more, 14 per cent more and equal to the average by 2006). Upper Yare ward is over-represented with 13 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (12 per cent fewer by 2006).

79 At Stage One, the District Council proposed combining the parish of Cranworth (currently in Shipworth ward) with the current Upper Yare ward to form a revised single-member Upper Yare ward. It proposed that the remaining part of the current Shipworth ward, the parish of Shipdham, become the new single-member Shipdham ward. The Council also proposed combining the current Mattishall ward with the current Two Rivers ward, less the parish of Lyng, to form a revised two member Two-Rivers ward. The Council stated that Mattishall ward is “too small to justify two members, but [is] too far above the average for [a] single member [ward]”. The recommended solution was therefore to create a new two-member ward. The Council proposed transferring the remaining part of the current Two-Rivers ward, the parish of Lyng, into the current Eynsford ward, as detailed below. Under the District Council’s proposals, based on a council size of 53, the proposed Shipdham, Two Rivers and Upper Yare wards would have two per cent fewer, 7 per cent fewer and 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (4 per cent fewer, 8 per cent fewer and 6 per cent more by 2006).

80 Cranworth Parish Council expressed support for the District Council’s proposals for the parish.

81 Having considered the District Council’s proposals, we are of the view that they provide for a good balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in the area and have received some local support. We have decided to adopt them as part of our draft recommendations, without amendment.

82 Under our draft recommendations, based on a council size of 54, the proposed Shipdham, Two Rivers and Upper Yare wards would have equal to the district average number of electors per councillor and have 5 per cent fewer and 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (2 per cent fewer, 7 per cent fewer and 8 per cent more by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

Dereham (four wards)

83 The four wards of East Dereham-Neatherd, East Dereham-Toftwood, East Dereham-Town and East Dereham-St Withburga are situated in the north-east of the district and cover the town of Dereham. East Dereham-Neatherd, East Dereham-Toftwood and East Dereham-Town wards are each represented by two councillors and are coterminous with the parish wards of

the same name of Dereham parish. East Dereham-St Withburga is a single-member ward and is coterminous with East Dereham-St Withburga parish ward of Dereham parish. East Dereham-Neatherd and East Dereham-Town wards are over-represented with 1 per cent and 36 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (4 per more and 33 per cent fewer by 2006). East Dereham-Toftwood and East Dereham-St Withburga wards are under-represented with 31 per cent and 18 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (37 per cent and 17 per cent more by 2006).

84 At Stage One, the District Council proposed retaining four wards in Dereham, subject to boundary amendments in order to improve electoral equality. It proposed that the area to the east of the properties on the eastern side of Shipdham Road and the area to the north of the A47 around South Green, from the current East Dereham-Toftwood ward, be included in a revised two-member Dereham-Town ward, together with the area to the south of Norwich Road and Cherry Lane, east of the railway and north of the A47 (currently in East Dereham-Neatherd ward). The Council argued that “the transfer of the properties to the east of Shipdham Road into the Town ward was considered preferable to an alternative whereby the ‘Middlemarch’ development to the west of Shipdham Road would transfer”. The remainder of East Dereham-Toftwood ward would form a revised two-member Dereham-Toftwood ward. It also proposed including the area to the east of Quebec Road, currently in St Withburga ward, in a revised two-member Neatherd ward, with the remainder of East Dereham-St Withburga ward forming a revised single-member Dereham-St Withburga ward. It also proposed that the prefix ‘East’ be removed from the four ward names. Under the District Council’s proposals, based on a council size of 53, the proposed Dereham-Neatherd, Dereham-St Withburga, Dereham-Toftwood and Dereham-Town wards would have 1 per cent fewer, 18 per cent more, 31 per cent more and 36 fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (equal to the average, 5 per cent more, 8 per cent more and 5 per cent more by 2006).

85 We received one further representation. Councillor Monument provided argumentation for removing the prefix ‘East’ from the four ward names in Dereham. The Councillor also proposed that the proposed East Dereham Town ward be renamed Dereham-Central ward, stating that it “would be an improvement in the interests of clarity”.

86 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to adopt the District Council’s proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations, subject to one minor boundary modification to improve electoral equality. We propose transferring The Woodlands and The Sycamores from the proposed Dereham-Toftwood ward into the proposed Dereham-Town ward. We also propose removing the prefix ‘East’ from the district ward names and renaming Dereham-Town ward as Dereham-Central ward to better reflect community identities. We recognise that the A47 dissects the proposed Dereham-Central ward. However, we have assessed alternative warding arrangements and are of the opinion that to facilitate an acceptable ward pattern in Dereham, our proposals offer the most acceptable option for this area. Furthermore, we have noted that this is a locally derived proposal.

87 Under our draft recommendations, based on a council size of 54, the proposed Dereham-Central, Dereham-Neatherd, Dereham-St Withburga and Dereham-Toftwood wards would have 34 per cent fewer, 1 per cent more, 21 per cent more and 33 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (8 per cent more, 2 per cent more, 7 per cent more and 10 per cent more by 2006). Our draft recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large maps at the back of the report.

Eynsford, Swanton Morley and Upper Wensum wards

88 The three wards of Eynsford, Swanton Morley and Upper Yare are situated in the north-east of the district and to the north of Dereham. The three wards are each represented by a single councillor. Eynsford ward comprises the parishes of Bawdeswell, Billingford, Bylaugh, Elsing, Foxley and Sparham. Swanton Morley ward comprises the parishes of Hoe and Swanton Morley. Upper Wensum ward comprises the parishes of Bintree, Gateley, Guist, North Elmham and Twyford. At present, Eynsford, Swanton Morley and Upper Wensum wards are relatively over-represented with 14 per cent, 16 per cent and 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (15 per cent, 19 per cent and 8 per cent fewer respectively by 2006).

89 At Stage One, the District Council proposed combining the current Eynsford ward, less the parishes of Billingford and Elsing, with the neighbouring parish of Lyng (currently in Two Rivers ward) to form a revised single-member Eynsford ward. It further proposed combining the current Swanton Morley ward with the parish of Elsing, currently in Eynsford ward, to form a new single-member ward (the Council did not provide a ward name). The Council proposed combining the remaining part of the current Eynsford ward, the parish of Billingford, with the current Upper Wensum ward to form a revised single-member Upper Wensum ward. Under the District Council's proposals, based on a council size of 53, the proposed Eynsford and Upper Wensum wards would have 2 per cent more and 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (1 per cent more and 2 per cent more by 2006). Its unnamed single-member ward would have 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (7 per cent fewer by 2006).

90 Having considered the District Council's proposals, we are of the view that they provide for a good balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in the area and have decided to adopt them as part of our draft recommendations. In relation to the Council's unnamed new single-member ward, we propose naming the ward Swanton Morley to reflect the largest local community contained in the ward.

91 Under our draft recommendations, based on a council size of 54, the proposed Eynsford, Swanton Morley and Upper Wensum wards would have 4 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer and 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent more, 5 per cent fewer and 4 per cent more by 2006). Our draft recommendations are illustrated on Map 2.

Beetley & Gressenhall, Hermitage, Launditch, Springvale and Taverner wards

92 The five wards of Beetley & Gressenhall, Hermitage, Launditch, Springvale and Taverner are situated in the north-west of the district and are each represented by a single councillor. At present, Beetley & Gressenhall ward comprises the parishes of Beetley and Gressenhall while Hermitage ward comprises the parishes of Great Dunham, Lexham, Litcham, Kempstone, Rougham, Weasenham All Saints, Weasenham St Peters and Wellingham. The current Launditch ward comprises the parishes of Beeston with Bittering, Longham, Mileham, Stanfield and Tittleshall. Springvale ward comprises the parishes of Fransham, Little Dunham, Scarning and Wending. Taverner ward comprises the parishes of Brisley, Colkirk, Horningtoft and Whissonsett. Beetley & Gressenhall and Springvale wards are under-represented with 13 per cent and 67 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (11 per cent more and 61 per cent more by 2006). Hermitage, Launditch

and Taverner wards are over-represented with 26 per cent fewer, 13 per cent fewer and 30 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (28 per cent fewer, 14 per cent fewer and 31 per cent fewer by 2006).

93 At Stage One, the District Council proposed combining the parish of Beetley (currently in Beetley & Gressenhall ward), the parish of Brisley (currently in Taverner ward) and the parish of Mileham (currently in Launditch ward) to form a revised single-member Taverner ward. It proposed combining the remaining part of the Beetley & Gressenhall ward, the parish of Gressenhall, with the parishes of Fransham and Wending (currently in Springvale ward) and the parish of Longham (currently in Launditch ward) to form a revised single-member Springvale ward. Part of the remainder of the current Springvale ward, the parish of Little Dunham, would be combined with the parishes of Great Dunham, Kempstone, Lexham, Litcham and Rougham (currently in Hermitage ward) and the parish of Beeston with Bittering (currently in Launditch ward) to form a revised single-member Launditch ward. The parish of Scarning would then comprise a new single-member Scarning ward. Finally, the remaining part of the current Launditch ward, the parishes of Stanfield and Tittleshall, the remaining part of the current Hermitage ward, the parishes of Weasenham All Saints, Weasenham St Peter and Wellingham and the remaining part of the current Taverner ward, the parishes of Colkirk, Horningcroft and Whissonsett, would all be combined to form a revised single-member Hermitage ward. The Council's proposals, based on a council size of 53, would result in the proposed Hermitage, Launditch, Scarning, Springvale and Taverner wards having 2 per cent more, 6 per cent fewer, 18 per cent more, 5 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (equal to the average, 8 per cent fewer, 14 per cent more, 8 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more by 2006).

94 During the District Council's consultation process the parishes of Mileham and Brisley objected to the District Council's proposals for their respective parishes, with Mileham Parish Council expressing concern about the representation of smaller parishes where they are grouped with larger ones. In its submission the District Council stated that, "It would be difficult to address these concerns without a knock-on-effect ... and, although these parishes will be used to groupings with others, they are situated closely together with no obvious natural barriers between them".

95 We received one further representation. Colkirk Parish Council stated that, "We would not wish to see any changes to the current arrangements".

96 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to adopt the District Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations, subject to one amendment to improve electoral equality under a council size of 54. The Council's proposed Scarning ward would have 18 per cent more electors than the district average (14 per cent by 2006); therefore we propose combining the proposed Scarning and Springvale wards to form a new two-member Springvale & Scarning ward. Under our proposed council size of 54, this would provide for a ward containing 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (5 per cent more by 2006). We have also noted the concerns raised about the regrouping of parishes in this area. However, we have been unable to devise any viable alternatives in this area which would not have a detrimental effect on electoral equality.

97 Under our draft recommendations, based on a council size of 54, the proposed Hermitage, Launditch, Springvale & Scarning and Taverner wards would have 4 per cent more, 5 per cent fewer, 8 per cent more and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (2 per cent more, 6 per cent fewer, 5 per cent more and 3 per cent more by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

Electoral Cycle

98 We received one representation regarding the District Council's electoral cycle. The District Council stated that there should be no change to the present system of whole-council elections every four years. Accordingly, having received no other proposals in relation to the electoral cycle of the district during Stage One, we make no recommendations for change to the present system of whole-council elections every four years.

Conclusions

99 Having considered all the evidence and submissions received during the first stage of the review, we propose that:

- there should be an increase in council size from 53 to 54;
- there should be 36 wards;
- the boundaries of 36 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of five, and five wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- elections should continue to be held for the whole council every four years.

100 Our draft recommendations would involve modifying all but five of the existing wards in Breckland district. As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the District Council's proposals, but propose departing from them in the following areas:

- We propose that the council should comprise 54 councillors, rather than 53 as proposed by the District Council.
- We propose warding Besthorpe parish and including the village of Besthorpe in a revised Queen's ward (in Attleborough). We propose that the remainder of Besthorpe parish be included in a revised Buckenhams & Besthorpe ward;
- In Attleborough we propose a modified three-member Queen's ward and a new two-member Burgh & Haverscroft ward;
- In Dereham we propose renaming the proposed Dereham-Town ward as Dereham-Central ward. We propose amending the boundary between the proposed Dereham-Toftwood and Dereham-Town wards and we also propose including all of Vicarage Meadows in a revised Dereham-St Withburga ward;
- In Thetford we propose combining the current Thetford-Barnham Cross and Thetford-Saxon wards to form a revised three-member Thetford-Saxon ward. We also propose a modified Thetford-Abbey ward and a new single-member Thetford-Castle;
- We propose combining the proposed Harling and Heathlands wards to form a new two-member Harling & Heathlands ward;
- We propose combining the proposed Scarning and Springvale wards to form a new two-member Scarning & Springvale ward;

- We propose combining the parish of Holme Hale with the proposed Wissey ward (less South Pickenham parish) to form a revised Wissey ward, and propose retaining the existing Necton ward. We also propose combining the parish of South Pickenham with the proposed Mid-Forest ward to form a revised Mid-Forest ward.

101 Table 5 shows how our draft recommendations will affect electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements (based on 2001 electorate figures) and with forecast electorates for the year 2006.

Table 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	53	54	53	54
Number of wards	41	36	41	36
Average number of electors per councillor	1,672	1,641	1,747	1,715
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	28	6	27	2
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	12	3	14	0

102 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for Breckland District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 28 to six. By 2006 only two wards, Conifer and Wissey, are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent.

Draft Recommendation

Breckland District Council should comprise 54 councillors serving 36 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large maps inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

103 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule states that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Attleborough, Besthorpe, Dereham and Thetford to reflect the proposed district wards.

104 At Stage One, Colkirk Parish Council stated that it did not see any reason to change the number of parish councillors representing the parish. Similarly, Great Ellingham Parish Council stated that “the present number of nine parish councillors to be eminently

satisfactory”. Given this local support, and in the absence of any proposition for change in these areas, we do not propose any amendments to their parish electoral arrangements.

105 Attleborough Town Council is currently served by 15 councillors representing three wards: Burgh, Haverscroft and Queen’s returning four, four and seven councillors respectively. In order to reflect our draft recommendations for district wards in this area, we propose creating a new Burgh & Haverscroft parish ward and a revised Queen’s parish ward of Attleborough parish. The proposed Burgh & Haverscroft and Queen’s wards would be coterminous with the district wards of the same name. The new Burgh & Haverscroft ward would return six councillors and the revised Queen’s ward would return nine councillors.

Draft Recommendation
Attleborough Town Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Burgh & Haverscroft (returning six councillors) and Queen’s (returning nine councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report

106 The parish of Besthorpe is currently served by seven councillors and is not warded. In order to reflect our draft recommendations for district warding purposes, we propose creating new Besthorpe Village and Besthorpe Rural parish wards of Besthorpe parish. The Besthorpe Village ward would reflect the Besthorpe village area to be included in the revised Queen’s district ward and the Besthorpe Rural ward would comprise the remainder of Besthorpe parish. The new Besthorpe Village and Besthorpe Rural parish wards would return two and five councillors respectively. We would very much welcome the Parish Council’s views on our proposals at Stage Three.

Draft Recommendation
Besthorpe Parish Council should comprise seven councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Besthorpe Village (returning two councillors) and Besthorpe Rural (returning five councillors). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

107 Dereham Town Council is currently served by 12 councillors representing four parish wards: East Dereham-Neatherd, East Dereham-St Withburga, East Dereham-Toftwood and East Dereham-Town, returning three, two, four and three councillors respectively. In our draft recommendations we propose modifying the boundaries of all four district wards in the town. In order to reflect the revised district warding arrangements we propose that the boundaries of East Dereham-Neatherd, East Dereham-St Withburga, East Dereham-Toftwood and East Dereham-Town parish wards are amended accordingly to be coterminous with the district wards of the same name. We propose removing the prefix ‘East’ from the parish ward names to reflect the proposed district ward names. We also propose renaming Dereham-Town parish ward as Dereham-Central parish ward to further reflect the proposed district ward names. The proposed Dereham-Central, Dereham-Neatherd, Dereham-St Withburga and Dereham-Toftwood parish wards would be represented by three, three, two and four parish councillors respectively. We would welcome the Town Council’s views on these recommendations at Stage Three.

Draft Recommendation

Dereham Town Council should comprise 12 parish councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Dereham-Central (returning three councillors), Dereham-Neatherd (returning three councillors), Dereham-St Withburga (returning two councillors) and Dereham-Toftwood (returning four councillors). The parish boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

108 Thetford Town Council is currently served by 16 councillors representing four parish wards: Thetford-Abbey, Thetford-Barnham Cross, Thetford-Guildhall and Thetford-Saxon, returning four, three, six and three councillors respectively. In our draft recommendations we propose modifying the boundaries of all four district wards in the town. Therefore, in order to reflect the revised district warding arrangements we propose that the boundaries of Thetford-Abbey, Thetford-Barnham Cross, Thetford-Guildhall and Thetford-Saxon parish wards are amended accordingly to be coterminous with the district wards of the same names. We also propose that the revised parish ward names reflect the proposed district ward names. The revised Thetford-Abbey, Thetford-Guildhall and Thetford-Saxon parish wards would be represented by four, five and five councillors respectively. The new Thetford-Castle parish ward would be represented by two councillors. We would very much welcome the Town Council's views on our proposals at Stage Three.

Draft Recommendation

Thetford Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Thetford-Abbey (returning four councillors), Thetford-Castle (returning two councillors), Thetford-Guildhall (returning five councillors) and Thetford-Saxon (returning five councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large maps at the back of the report.

109 We are not proposing any changes to the electoral cycle of parish and town councils in the district.

Draft Recommendation

Parish and town council elections should continue to take place every four years, at the same time as elections for the district ward of which they are part.

Map 2: Draft Recommendations for Breckland

5 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

110 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Breckland contained in this report. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 20 May 2002. Any received *after* this date may not be taken into account. All responses may be inspected at our offices and those of the District Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

111 Express your views by writing directly to us:

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

Fax: 020 7404 6142

E-mail: reviews@lgce.gov.uk

www.lgce.gov.uk

112 In the light of responses received, we will review our draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to the Electoral Commission, which cannot make the Order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after it receives them.

APPENDIX A

Draft Recommendations for Breckland: Detailed Mapping

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

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

Map A2 illustrates the proposed boundary between Burgh & Haverscroft and Queen's wards in Attleborough.

The **large maps** inserted at the back of this report illustrate the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Attleborough, Dereham and Thetford.

Map A1: Draft Recommendations for Breckland: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed boundary between Burgh & Haverscroft and Queen's ward

APPENDIX B

Code of Practice on Written Consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm, requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Non-Departmental Public Bodies, such as the Local Government Commission for England, are encouraged to follow the Code.

The Code of Practice applies to consultation documents published after 1 January 2001, which should reproduce the criteria, give explanations of any departures, and confirm that the criteria have otherwise been followed.

Table A1: LGCE compliance with Code criteria

Criteria	Compliance/departure
Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process for a policy (including legislation) or service from the start, so that it has the best prospect of improving the proposals concerned, and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage.	We comply with this requirement.
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose.	We comply with this requirement.
A consultation document should be as simple and concise as possible. It should include a summary, in two pages at most, of the main questions it seeks views on. It should make it as easy as possible for readers to respond, make contact or complain.	We comply with this requirement.
Documents should be made widely available, with the fullest use of electronic means (though not to the exclusion of others), and effectively drawn to the attention of all interested groups and individuals.	We comply with this requirement.
Sufficient time should be allowed for considered responses from all groups with an interest. Twelve weeks should be the standard minimum period for a consultation.	We consult on draft recommendations for a minimum of eight weeks, but may extend the period if consultations take place over holiday periods.
Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed, and reasons for decisions finally taken..	We comply with this requirement.
Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated.	We comply with this requirement.