

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Babergh in Suffolk

January 2001

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 to the Government on whether there should be changes to local authorities' electoral arrangements.

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

We are statutorily required to review periodically the electoral arrangements – such as the number of councillors representing electors in each area and the number and boundaries of wards and electoral divisions – of every principal local authority in England. In broad terms our objective 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, and the number of councillors and ward names. We can also make recommendations for change to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils in the district.

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A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for Great Cornard and Sudbury is inserted inside the back cover of the report.

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Babergh on 27 June 2000.

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

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

- **in 20 of the 30 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district, and nine wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average.**
- **by 2005 this unequal representation is expected to deteriorate further, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 21 wards and by more than 20 per cent in 12 wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 99–100) are that:

- **Babergh District Council should have 43 councillors, one more than at present;**
- **there should be 26 wards, instead of 30 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 24 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of four, and six wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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

- **In 23 of the proposed 26 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average both initially and in 2005.**

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 Great Cornard, Hadleigh and Sudbury.**

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

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for eight weeks from 9 January 2001. Because we take this consultation very seriously, we may move away from our draft recommendations in the light of Stage Three responses. 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 and then make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.**
- **It will then be for the Secretary of State to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. He will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 5 March 2001:

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Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1 Alton	2	Alton ward (the parishes of Stutton and Tattingsstone); Brantham ward (Brantham parish)	Map 2
2 Berners	2	Berners ward (part – the parishes of Chelmondiston and Woolverstone); Shotley ward (the parishes of Arwarton and Shotley)	Map 2
3 Boxford	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Boxford, Edwardstone and Groton)	Map 2
4 Brett Vale	1	Bildeston ward (the parishes of Bildeston, Hitcham and Wattisham); North Cosford ward (part – Brettenham parish)	Map 2
5 Brook	2	Berners ward (part – Freston parish); Brookvale ward (the parishes of Burstall, Chattisham, Hintlesham and Sproughton); Copdock ward (part – the parishes of Belstead, Copdock & Washbrook and Wherstead)	Map 2
6 Bures St Mary	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Bures St Mary, Little Cornard and Newton)	Map 2
7 Chadacre	3	Chadacre ward (the parishes of Boxted, Hartest, Lawshall, Shimpling, Somerton and Stanstead); Glensford ward (Glensford parish); North Cosford ward (part – Cockfield parish)	Map 2
8 Dodnash	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Bentley and East Bergholt)	Map 2
9 Great Cornard North	2	Great Cornard North ward (part); Great Cornard South ward (part)	Large map
10 Great Cornard South	2	Great Cornard North ward (part); Great Cornard South ward (part)	Large map
11 Hadleigh North	2	Hadleigh ward (part)	Map A2
12 Hadleigh South	2	Hadleigh ward (part)	Map A2
13 Holbrook	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Harkstead and Holbrook)	Map 2
14 Lavenham	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Lavenham parish)	Map 2
15 Leavenheath	1	Leavenheath ward (part – the parishes of Assington and Leavenheath)	Map 2
16 Long Melford	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Alpheton and Long Melford)	Map 2

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
17 Lower Brett	1	Polstead & Layham ward (the parishes of Polstead and Layham); West Samford ward (part – the parishes of Raydon and Shelley)	Map 2
18 Mid Samford	2	Capel & Wenham ward (the parishes of Capel St Mary, Wenham Magna and Wenham Parva); West Samford ward (part – the parishes of Higham, Holton St Mary and Stratford St Mary)	Map 2
19 Nayland	1	Leavenheath ward (part – Stoke by Nayland parish); Nayland ward (Nayland with Wissington parish)	Map 2
20 North Cosford	1	Brett Vale ward (the parishes of Brent Eleigh, Chelsworth, Kersey, Kettlebaston, Lindsey, Milden and Monks Eleigh); North Cosford ward (part – the parishes of Thorpe Morieux and Preston St Mary)	Map 2
21 Pinewood	2	Copdock ward (part – Pinewood parish)	Map 2
22 South Cosford	1	Elmsett ward (the parishes of Aldham, Elmsett, Nedging with Naughton, Semer and Whatfield)	Map 2
23 Sudbury East	2	Sudbury East ward (part); Sudbury North ward (part)	Large map
24 Sudbury North	2	Sudbury North ward (part)	Large map
25 Sudbury South	2	Sudbury East ward (part); Sudbury North ward (part); Sudbury South ward	Large map
26 Waldingfield	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Acton, Chilton, Great Waldingfield and Little Waldingfield)	Map 2

Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.

2 Maps 2, A1, A2 and the large map in the back of the report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.

3 All proposed ward boundaries are based upon the revised parish boundaries which come into effect in April 2001.

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Babergh

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Alton	2	3,031	1,516	-1	3,137	1,569	-5
2 Berners	2	2,952	1,476	-4	3,250	1,625	-1
3 Boxford	1	1,498	1,498	-3	1,571	1,571	-5
4 Brett Vale	1	1,576	1,576	3	1,644	1,644	0
5 Brook	2	3,307	1,654	8	3,397	1,699	3
6 Bures St Mary	1	1,397	1,397	-9	1,437	1,437	-13
7 Chadacre	3	5,068	1,689	10	5,181	1,727	5
8 Dodnash	2	2,870	1,435	-7	2,942	1,471	-11
9 Great Cornard North	2	2,988	1,494	-3	3,231	1,616	-2
10 Great Cornard South	2	2,989	1,495	-3	3,251	1,626	-1
11 Hadleigh North	2	2,725	1,363	-11	3,237	1,619	-2
12 Hadleigh South	2	3,007	1,504	-2	3,166	1,583	-4
13 Holbrook	1	1,652	1,652	7	1,713	1,713	4
14 Lavenham	1	1,568	1,568	2	1,615	1,615	-2
15 Leavenheath	1	1,462	1,462	-5	1,510	1,510	-8
16 Long Melford	2	3,157	1,579	3	3,164	1,582	-4
17 Lower Brett	1	1,579	1,579	3	1,622	1,622	-1
18 Mid Samford	2	3,474	1,737	13	3,535	1,768	7
19 Nayland	1	1,537	1,537	0	1,556	1,556	-5
20 North Cosford	1	1,584	1,584	3	1,614	1,614	-2
21 Pinewood	2	2,622	1,311	-5	3,646	1,823	11
22 South Cosford	1	1,406	1,406	-9	1,486	1,486	-10
23 Sudbury East	2	3,135	1,568	2	3,376	1,688	3

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
24 Sudbury North	2	3,111	1,556	1	3,447	1,724	5
25 Sudbury South	2	3,314	1,657	8	3,450	1,725	5
26 Waldingfield	2	3,106	1,553	1	3,593	1,797	9
Totals	43	66,115	–	–	70,771	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,538	–	–	1,646	–

Source: *Electorate figures are based on Babergh District Council's submission.*

Notes: *1. 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.*

2. All proposed ward boundaries are based upon the revised parish boundaries which come into effect in April 2001.

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Babergh in Suffolk on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the seven districts in Suffolk as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Babergh. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in August 1976 (Report No. 161). The electoral arrangements of Suffolk County Council were last reviewed in 1982 (Report No. 429). We expect to review the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

- the statutory criteria 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 (see Appendix C).

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

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

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

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

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

9 The review is in four stages (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Stages of the Review

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

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

11 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/2000 PER programme, including the Suffolk districts, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the October 1999 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State’s intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas. The proposals have been taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, provides that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities’ electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any 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 present *Guidance*.

12 Stage One began on 27 June 2000, when we wrote to Babergh District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Police Authority, the local authority associations, Suffolk Association of Local Councils, parish

and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests 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 the District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 2 October 2000.

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

14 Stage Three began on 9 January 2001 and will end on 5 March 2001. This stage involves publishing the draft recommendations 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 our draft recommendations.**

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

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

16 The district of Babergh lies in the south of the county of Suffolk. Its southern boundary with Essex follows, for the most part, the River Stour, while the River Orwell forms part of its eastern boundary. It comprises the towns of Sudbury, Great Cornard and Hadleigh and a large rural hinterland.

17 The district is entirely parished and comprises 76 parishes. The towns of Sudbury, Great Cornard and Hadleigh account for 40 per cent of the total population and have been the site of much of the population growth over the past few years. Pinewood, on the southern fringe of Ipswich, has also experienced some growth, which is forecast to continue. The remainder of the district is more rural in character.

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

19 The electorate of the district is 66,115 (February 2000). The Council presently has 42 members who are elected from 30 wards, six of which cover the relatively urban areas of Sudbury, Great Cornard and Hadleigh, with the remainder being predominantly rural. One of the wards is represented by three councillors, 10 are each represented by two councillors and 19 are single-member wards. The whole Council is elected together every four years.

20 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Babergh district, with around 35 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increase has been in Copdock ward.

21 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,574 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,685 by the year 2005 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 20 of the 30 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, in nine wards by more than 20 per cent and in three wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Copdock ward, where the councillor represents 152 per cent more electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Babergh

Figure 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Alton	1	1,058	1,058	-33	1,130	1,130	-33
2 Berners	1	1,189	1,189	-24	1,196	1,196	-29
3 Bildeston	1	1,370	1,370	-13	1,435	1,435	-15
4 Boxford	1	1,498	1,498	-5	1,571	1,571	-7
5 Brantham	1	1,973	1,973	25	2,007	2,007	19
6 Brett Vale	1	1,206	1,206	-23	1,226	1,226	-27
7 Brookvale	1	1,865	1,865	18	1,914	1,914	14
8 Bures St Mary	1	1,397	1,397	-11	1,437	1,437	-15
9 Capel & Wenham	2	2,596	1,298	-18	2,622	1,311	-22
10 Chadacre	1	1,845	1,845	17	1,874	1,874	11
11 Copdock	1	3,963	3,963	152	5,026	5,026	198
12 Dodnash	2	2,870	1,435	-9	2,942	1,471	-13
13 Elmsett	1	1,406	1,406	-11	1,486	1,486	-12
14 Glemsford	2	2,521	1,261	-20	2,586	1,293	-23
15 Great Cornard North	2	2,868	1,434	-9	3,055	1,528	-9
16 Great Cornard South	2	3,109	1,555	-1	3,427	1,714	2
17 Hadleigh	3	5,732	1,911	21	6,403	2,134	27
18 Holbrook	1	1,652	1,652	5	1,713	1,713	2
19 Lavenham	1	1,568	1,568	0	1,615	1,615	-4
20 Leavenheath	1	2,025	2,025	29	2,083	2,083	24
21 Long Melford	2	3,157	1,579	0	3,164	1,582	-6
22 Nayland	1	974	974	-38	983	983	-42
23 North Cosford	1	1,284	1,284	-18	1,318	1,318	-22
24 Polstead & Layham	1	1,148	1,148	-27	1,172	1,172	-30
25 Shotley	1	1,864	1,864	18	2,157	2,157	28
26 Sudbury East	2	2,835	1,418	-10	3,111	1,556	-8
27 Sudbury North	2	3,479	1,740	11	3,815	1,908	13
28 Sudbury South	2	3,246	1,623	3	3,347	1,674	-1

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
29 Waldingfield	2	3,106	1,553	-1	3,593	1,797	7
30 West Samford	1	1,311	1,311	-17	1,363	1,363	-19
Totals	42	66,115	-	-	70,771	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,574	-	-	1,685	-

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

Notes: 1 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 2000, electors in Nayland ward were relatively over-represented by 38 per cent, while electors in Copdock ward were significantly under-represented by 152 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

2 All proposed ward boundaries are based upon the revised parish boundaries which come into effect in April 2001.

3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

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

23 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission met officers and members from the District Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 46 representations during Stage One, including a district-wide scheme from the District Council and one from the parish councils of Boxford, Edwardstone and Groton, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the District Council and the Commission by appointment.

Babergh District Council

24 The District Council proposed a council of 43 members, one more than at present, serving 27 wards, compared to the existing 30.

25 Following extensive consultation, the District Council proposed that the ward boundaries of Boxford, Brookvale, Bures St Mary, Dodnash, Hadleigh, Holbrook, Lavenham and Waldingfield remain unchanged. It also proposed that Hadleigh be represented by four councillors rather than the current three and that it should remain unwarded. It also proposed that, while Elmsett ward retain its current boundaries, it be renamed South Cosford. It proposed re-warding in the towns of Sudbury and Great Cornard.

26 The District Council's proposals would result in six wards having an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent by 2005, with its proposed Chadacre ward having an electoral variance of by 20 per cent by 2005. The Council's proposal is summarised at Appendix B.

Suffolk County Council

27 The County Council commented on the electorate projections, broadly accepting the figures put forward by the District Council. It also included comments from the county councillor for Sudbury, outlined below.

Conservative Group on Babergh District Council

28 The Conservative Group on the Council expressed concern at the District Council's proposal not to ward the town of Hadleigh. It stated that, as Sudbury and Great Cornard are warded, "there is no reason why Hadleigh should not also be warded, particularly if it is to be represented by four councillors". It therefore proposed that Hadleigh be divided into two two-member wards.

Parish and Town Councils

29 We received representations from 14 parish and town councils and from two parish meetings. The parish councils of Boxford, Edwardstone and Groton objected to the District Council's initial

consultation scheme which would have disbanded the current Boxford ward and placed the three parishes in two different wards. The parish councils also put forward an alternative district-wide proposal, also based on a council size of 43 members.

30 Hadleigh Town Council supported the District Council's proposal to increase the town's representation on the District Council from three to four councillors but objected to any proposal to ward the parish. However, it noted that, if a scheme which warded Hadleigh were to be adopted, then the proposed wards should be known as Hadleigh North and Hadleigh South respectively.

31 Stanstead Parish Council opposed the District Council's proposed modification to the existing Chadacre ward, which would include it in a modified Glemsford ward. Boxted Parish Meeting objected to the Council's initial proposal which would have included the parish in Glemsford ward and argued that there were "extensive differences in the make-up of the Glemsford and Chadacre wards". Cockfield Parish Council opposed the proposal which would include it in the proposed Chadacre ward. Lawshall Parish Council opposed the District Council's scheme which placed it and Shimpling parish in two different district wards. Preston St Mary Parish Council opposed the District Council's proposed North Cosford ward. Thorpe Morieux Parish Council stated that it had not had the opportunity to fully discuss the District Council's modified scheme, but generally concluded that it would be unlikely to support it.

32 Great Waldingfield Parish Council supported the retention of its existing electoral arrangements for both parish and district council purposes. Milden Parish Meeting proposed the retention of the existing Brett Vale ward. Bentley Parish Council opposed the proposal to create a new district ward which placed the parish in a ward with the parishes of Capel St Mary and the Wenhams. Little Wenham [Wenham Parva] Parish Meeting objected to the District Council's initial proposed ward name of Capel, the ward in which it would be placed, arguing that it should have a neutral ward name which did not favour one parish above another.

33 Stratford St Mary Parish Council opposed the District Council's initial proposal to place it in a new Constable ward, in particular that it would be in a ward with the parish of East Bergholt. Brantham Parish Council proposed the retention of its existing electoral arrangements. Pinewood Parish Council supported the proposal for a ward covering solely the parish, represented by two district councillors.

Other Representations

34 We received 19 representations from local interest groups, a county councillor and local residents with regard to the District Council's initial proposals for the parishes of Boxford, Edwardstone and Groton. County Councillor Wiles, member for Sudbury division, proposed that the existing Boxford ward should be retained and commented on the warding arrangements for Sudbury. The Boxford Community Council, Boxford over-60's Club and Boxford Playing Field Management Committee proposed the retention of the existing electoral arrangements for Boxford ward. Fourteen local residents also opposed the District Council's initial proposal to disband the existing Boxford ward. Two residents contended that there had not been sufficient time for full consultation on the District Council's proposals.

35 We received a further eight representations from local residents. Two residents from Boxted parish opposed the District Council's proposal for the area and proposed that the existing Chadacre ward be retained. One resident from the parish of Pinewood commented that, under the existing electoral arrangements, the parish was significantly under-represented. Two residents commented that, in the existing West Samford ward, no single parish dominates. One resident opposed the proposed ward name of Capel St Mary, arguing that it would be misleading. Another resident proposed that the parish of Milden should remain in a ward with the parishes of Brent Eleigh, Monks Eleigh, Chelsworth and Kettlebaston and a resident of Thorpe Morieux opposed the District Council's proposals for North Cosford ward.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

38 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which provides for exactly the same number of electors per councillor in every ward of an authority. There must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach, in the context of the statutory criteria, is that such flexibility must be kept to a minimum.

39 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, the objective of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of electoral equality, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity and interests. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates.

Electorate Forecasts

40 The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 7 per cent from 66,115 to 70,771 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expects most of the growth to be in Copdock ward, although a significant amount is also expected in the towns of Great Cornard, Hadleigh and Sudbury. The Council has 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.

41 We accept that forecasting electorate is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the District Council’s figures, are content that they represent the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council Size

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

43 Babergh District Council presently has 42 members. In its scheme, the District Council proposed a council of 43 members. It stated that it had originally explored options retaining the existing 42-member council; however, it ultimately concluded that the optimum balance between electoral equality and the recognition of local community identities and interests would best be achieved under a council size of 43. The scheme proposed by Boxford, Edwardstone and Groton parish councils was also based on a 43-member council.

44 Additionally, the District Council commented that, in formulating its proposed scheme, it considered its proposed increase to be proportional to an increasingly demanding role placed on members. It further considered that these demands would continue to increase with the much greater emphasis on the local representative role and the growing involvement of members in developing community strategies in consultation with local communities.

45 We have examined the district-wide schemes presented to us, as well as all other submissions, and have concluded that we should adopt the District Council's proposed council size as part of our draft recommendations, in order to better reflect local community identities and to further improve the levels of electoral equality within the district as a whole. In particular, under a 43-member scheme Hadleigh, Sudbury and Great Cornard each receive the correct number of councillors for their electorates, as does the rural area. Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we have concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a 43-member council size.

Electoral Arrangements

46 In view of the degree of consensus behind large elements of the District Council's proposals, and the extensive consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, we have concluded that we should base our recommendations on the District Council's scheme. We consider that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or other schemes submitted at Stage One. However, to improve electoral equality further and having regard to local community identities and interests, we have decided to move away from the District Council's proposals in a number of rural areas and in the town of Hadleigh. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Brett Vale, Chadacre, Glemsford, Lavenham, Long Melford and North Cosford wards;
- (b) Bildeston and Elmsett wards;
- (c) Boxford, Bures St Mary and Waldingfield wards;
- (d) Sudbury (three wards);
- (e) Great Cornard (two wards);

- (f) Capel & Wenham, Leavenheath, Nayland, Polstead & Layham and West Samford wards;
- (g) Hadleigh ward;
- (h) Brookvale, Copdock and Dodnash wards;
- (i) Alton, Berners, Brantham, Holbrook and Shotley wards.

47 Details of our draft recommendations, including changes to district ward boundaries as a consequence of amended parish boundaries which have been approved by the Secretary of State and set out in The Babergh (Parishes) Order 2000, are set out in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, at Appendix A and on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Brett Vale, Chadacre, Glemsford, Lavenham, Long Melford and North Cosford wards

48 These six wards are located in the northern part of the district. The single-member Brett Vale ward, which comprises the parishes of Brent Eleigh, Brettenham, Chelsworth, Kettlebaston, Milden, Monks Eleigh and Thorpe Morieux, has a councillor:elector ratio 23 per cent below the district average (27 per cent in 2005). The single-member Chadacre ward, which comprises the parishes of Boxted, Hartest, Lawshall, Shimpling, Somerton and Stanstead, has a councillor:elector ratio 17 per cent above the district average (11 per cent in 2005). The two-member Glemsford ward, comprising the parish of Glemsford, has a councillor:elector ratio 20 per cent below the district average (23 per cent in 2005). The single-member Lavenham ward, comprising the parish of Lavenham, and the two-member Long Melford ward, comprising the parishes of Alpheton and Long Melford, currently have the same councillor:elector ratio as the district average (4 per cent and 6 per cent below by 2005 respectively).

49 During Stage One the District Council proposed a modified single-member Chadacre ward, comprising the parishes of Boxted, Cockfield, Hartest, Lawshall and Somerton. This ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 20 per cent above the district average by 2005. It proposed a modified two-member Glemsford ward comprising Stanstead and Glemsford parishes, which would have a councillor:elector ratio 12 per cent below the district average by 2005 and a modified two-member Long Melford ward, comprising Alpheton, Long Melford and Shimpling parishes, which would have a councillor:elector ratio 6 per cent above the district average by 2005. The District Council's proposed single-member North Cosford ward would comprise the parishes of Brent Eleigh, Chelsworth, Kersey, Kettlebaston, Lindsey, Milden, Monks Eleigh, Preston St Mary and Thorpe Morieux and would have a councillor:elector ratio 2 per cent below the district average by 2005. It proposed no change to Lavenham ward.

50 Cockfield, Lawshall and Stanstead parish councils and Boxted Parish Meeting opposed the District Council's scheme for these wards, arguing that the proposed configuration did not sufficiently reflect local community identities, and proposed the retention of the existing Chadacre ward. Two local residents also opposed the District Council's proposal for Chadacre ward given that, under the existing electoral arrangements, electoral equality in the ward is better than under the proposals, which they argued would not reflect local community identities. Boxted Parish Meeting's submission also included a petition of some 59 signatures supporting the retention of the existing Chadacre ward. The Parish Meeting stated that it had particularly close

links with the parish of Hartest. Stanstead Parish Council similarly opposed the proposal to transfer the parish to a modified Glemsford ward.

51 Commenting on the District Council's amended proposals for the area, Cockfield Parish Council stated that it did not share any particular links with the parish of Lawshall, or with the proposed Chadacre ward in general, but looked more towards the parish of Thorpe Morieux. It contended that the proposed Chadacre ward, which would have an electoral variance of 20 per cent by 2005, was unacceptable, given that, in its view, it actually destroyed community identities. In the light of modifications which the District Council made to its scheme for the area following consultation, Thorpe Morieux Parish Council commented that it considered it would not be able to support the District Council's amended scheme.

52 Milden Parish Meeting proposed the retention of the existing Brett Vale ward, and contended that the historic links between Monks Eleigh, Brent Eleigh, Kettlebaston, Chelsworth and Milden parishes should not be overlooked. However, it also expressed concern at large rural wards, which would place greater demands on their councillor in terms of travel and costs.

53 The scheme submitted by the parish councils of Boxford, Edwardstone and Groton proposed the creation of a new two-member Glemsford ward, comprising the parishes of Boxted, Glemsford, Hartest, Somerton and Stanstead, and a new single-member Cockfield & Lawshall ward, comprising Lawshall, Cockfield and Shimpling parishes. It broadly supported the District Council's proposed North Cosford ward, but proposed that the parish of Brettenham should also form part of the ward.

54 We have closely examined all submissions received during Stage One with regard to these wards. The District Council noted in its submission that the geography of the area had a particular impact on its scheme in this area. However, it concluded that, although its proposed Chadacre ward would be significantly under-represented, there would be only limited growth in the constituent parishes over the next five years.

55 We state in our *Guidance* that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality in every ward in a district is unattainable. However, interested parties, when formulating a scheme, should start from the premise of attaining absolute electoral equality and only make adjustments to reflect relevant factors. We do not consider that the Council's scheme for this area provides an appropriate balance between the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria and we have therefore looked at alternative warding patterns.

56 In considering our recommendations for these areas we identified two options. First, we might address the levels of electoral equality for this area as a whole by proposing multi-member wards, using whole parishes as building blocks. Second, we might retain a pattern of single-member wards and propose that some parishes then be warded. We do not seek to ward parishes unnecessarily, and we are of the view that, given the particular circumstances of the area, reflecting community identities would not be achieved by parish warding. We did not consider that the retention of the existing arrangements in this area as a whole was acceptable, given the very high electoral inequalities, both now and in 2005, in Glemsford and Brett Vale wards.

57 From the representations which we have received, we have noted that there are particular ‘pairings’ of parishes with strong links to one another. Several submissions supported retaining the existing Chadacre ward, contending that it reflected local community identities and also had a higher level of electoral equality (11 per cent in 2005) than the District Council’s proposal. However, in examining the electoral arrangements of any district, we must have a view to the overall warding pattern in the district and cannot consider areas in isolation, and therefore we must take the variances in all the wards into consideration when formulating our proposals for this area as a whole.

58 We are aware that the parish of Cockfield does not consider itself to share particularly close links with its neighbouring parish of Lawshall; however, the District Council contended in its submission that both parishes are agricultural and not dissimilar in character. We have nonetheless looked at the possibility of retaining Cockfield within a North Cosford ward, but have found that this would give rise to high levels of electoral inequality.

59 We have identified two alternatives to the District Council’s proposals for this area. First, extending the existing Chadacre ward to incorporate the parishes of Glemsford and Cockfield. This modified ward would be represented by three councillors and would have a variance of 10 per cent initially, 5 per cent in 2005. Second, creating a two-member Chadacre ward, comprising the parishes of Glemsford, Stanstead, Boxted, Somerton and Hartest, which would have a variance of 8 per cent initially, 3 per cent by 2005, and a single-member Lawshall & Cockfield ward (comprising the parishes of Cockfield, Lawshall and Shimpling) which would have a variance of 14 per cent initially, 9 per cent by 2005. This reflects the proposal put forward by the parish councils of Boxford, Edwardstone and Groton. Long Melford ward would be unmodified under both alternatives.

60 On balance, we propose that the existing Chadacre ward should be expanded and the parishes of Cockfield and Glemsford should form part of a three-member Chadacre ward. We are at this stage minded to propose a three-member ward for the area, given the slightly better levels of electoral equality this would achieve. We are aware that there is no precedent for rural three-member wards within the district, but we consider that there is strong justification for expanding Chadacre ward rather than placing its constituent parishes into three other wards. We are of the view that the proposed ward would be the most suitable alternative to the District Council’s proposed scheme and a better reflection of local community identities.

61 Given the circumstances of the area, we propose adopting the District Council’s proposed Lavenham and North Cosford wards as part of our draft recommendations, and we also propose that Long Melford ward should remain unchanged. We consider these wards to be a reasonable reflection of local community identities and that they also achieve reasonable levels of electoral equality.

62 The proposed Chadacre, Lavenham, Long Melford and North Cosford wards would have electoral variances of 10 per cent, 2 per cent, 3 per cent and 3 per cent respectively (5 per cent, 2 per cent, 4 per cent and 2 per cent by 2005). Given that the argumentation between these two options is finely balanced we would like to hear the views of local people before deciding on our final recommendations. It should be noted, however, that neither of the two proposals we have considered would involve including Cockfield parish in North Cosford ward, although we are

seeking all further views and argumentation at Stage Three. Details of our recommendations for these wards can be found on Map 2.

Bildeston and Elmsett wards

63 The single-member wards of Bildeston and Elmsett lie in the east of the district. Bildeston ward comprises the parishes of Bildeston, Hitcham and Wattisham and has a councillor:elector ratio 13 per cent below the district average initially (15 per cent in 2005). Elmsett ward, comprising the parishes of Aldham, Elmsett, Nedging with Naughton, Semer and Whatfield, has a councillor:elector ratio 11 per cent below the district average initially (12 per cent in 2005).

64 The District Council proposed that the parish of Brettenham, currently in North Cosford ward, should be transferred to a modified Bildeston ward, which would be renamed Brett Vale. The number of electors per councillor in the modified ward would be 3 per cent above the district average initially and equal to the district average by 2005. Given the level of electoral equality within the existing Elmsett ward the District Council proposed that it should remain unmodified, though it did propose that the ward be renamed South Cosford, stating that it considered the name to be a better reflection of local community identity in the area.

65 Boxford, Edwardstone and Groton parish councils proposed that Hitcham, Bildeston, Nedging with Naughton and Wattisham parishes form a new single-member ward, which would have a councillor:elector ratio 6 per cent above the district average by 2005, and that Aldham, Elmsett, Kersey, Semer and Whatfield parishes form a new single-member ward, which would have a councillor:elector ratio 12 per cent below the district average by 2005.

66 We note that the parish councils' scheme would move away from the current arrangements in South Cosford without improving electoral equality. We therefore do not consider that such a scheme would represent the best balance between electoral inequality and the statutory criteria. We were also concerned about the levels of electoral equality which would remain under these proposals, and therefore attempted to further improve the electoral equality within the proposed South Cosford ward. However, we were unable to find a viable alternative, and therefore we propose adopting the District Council's Brett Vale and South Cosford wards as part of our draft recommendations. Under a council size of 43, the proposed wards would have councillor:elector ratios 3 per cent above and 9 per cent below the district average initially (equal to and 10 per cent below by 2005 respectively). Details of our proposals for these wards can be found on Map 2.

Boxford, Bures St Mary and Waldingfield wards

67 The existing single-member Boxford ward comprises the parishes of Boxford, Edwardstone and Groton and has a councillor:elector ratio 5 per cent below the district average currently (7 per cent in 2005). Bures St Mary ward, which is also represented by one councillor, comprises the parishes of Bures St Mary, Little Cornard and Newton and has a councillor:elector ratio 11 per cent below the district average at present (15 per cent in 2005). The two-member Waldingfield ward, which comprises the parishes of Acton, Chilton, Great Waldingfield and Little Waldingfield has a councillor:elector ratio 1 per cent below the district average currently (7 per cent above by 2005).

68 The District Council's initial consultation scheme proposed creating a ward comprising the parishes of Boxford and Assington, while Edwardston and Groton parishes would form part of a proposed Kersey Vale ward. We received 25 submissions during Stage One opposing this scheme, including an alternative warding proposal for the entire district from Boxford, Edwardstone and Groton parish councils.

69 In the light of the opposition to its proposal, the District Council modified its scheme, and recommended that the existing Boxford ward remain unchanged. It also proposed no change to Bures St Mary and Waldingfield wards. It added that there had also been opposition to an earlier proposal which proposed dividing Bures St Mary ward, with the three constituent parishes moving into three different wards. Great Waldingfield Parish Council supported the retention of the existing electoral arrangements for Waldingfield ward.

70 The scheme from Boxford, Edwardstone and Groton parishes proposed that Waldingfield and Boxford wards remain unmodified, resulting in both wards having a councillor:elector ratio 5 per cent below and 9 per cent above the district average by 2005. The parish councils also proposed that Assington parish should form part of an expanded Bures St Mary ward which would have a councillor:elector ratio 6 per cent above the district average by 2005.

71 Given the overall pattern of warding throughout the district, and in the light of the submissions received, we propose adopting the District Council's proposals for these unmodified wards as part of our draft recommendations, given the relatively low electoral variances achieved in these wards under a council of 43 members. The proposed Boxford, Bures St Mary and Waldingfield wards would have councillor:elector ratios 3 per cent below, 9 per cent below and 1 per cent above the district average initially (5 per cent, 13 per cent and 9 per cent by 2005). Details of these proposed wards can be found on Map 2.

Sudbury (three wards)

72 Sudbury is the largest town in the district and lies on its western border. It is currently divided into three two-member wards, Sudbury East, Sudbury North and Sudbury South. The current councillor:elector ratios in the three wards are 10 per cent below, 11 per cent above and 3 per cent above the district average initially (8 per cent, 13 per cent and 1 per cent below by 2005).

73 The District Council proposed minor modifications to the existing wards to take account of the proposed increase in the electorate by 2005, as well as the recent modifications resulting from a parish boundary review. The resulting number of electors per councillor in the modified Sudbury East, Sudbury North and Sudbury South wards would initially be 2 per cent above, 1 per cent above and 8 per cent above the district average respectively (3 per cent, 5 per cent and 5 per cent by 2005). County Councillor Wiles, representing Sudbury division, commented that she hoped the proposed boundaries would not be subject to further change for the next 10 years, other than due to a total restructuring of local government.

74 We received no further comments during Stage One. Given the apparent consensus expressed on these proposals and the resulting levels of electoral equality, we propose adopting the District Council's proposals for Sudbury as part of our draft recommendations. Details of the proposals for these wards can be found on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Great Cornard (two wards)

75 The parish of Great Cornard lies to the south of Sudbury and is currently represented by four district councillors returned from two wards: Great Cornard North and Great Cornard South. The number of electors per councillor in the two wards currently varies by 9 per cent and 1 per cent from the average for the district respectively (9 per cent and 2 per cent by 2005).

76 The District Council proposed that the parish should continue to be represented by four district councillors, but that the boundary between the two wards should be modified to provide higher levels of electoral equality, in accordance with a scheme proposed by Great Cornard Parish Council. The modified wards of Great Cornard North and Great Cornard South would both have councillor:elector ratios 3 per cent below the district average (2 per cent and 1 per cent by 2005).

77 We propose adopting the District Council's proposals for Great Cornard as part of our draft recommendations, particularly as it is a locally generated scheme which results in high levels of electoral equality for the proposed wards. Details of our recommendations for these wards can be found on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Capel & Wenham, Leavenheath, Nayland, Polstead & Layham and West Samford wards

78 The existing wards of Capel & Wenham, Leavenheath, Nayland, Polstead & Layham and West Samford lie in the south-east of the district. Capel & Wenham ward currently returns two councillors, while the other four wards each return a single councillor. Capel & Wenham ward, comprising the parishes of Capel St Mary, Wenham Magna and Wenham Parva, has an electoral variance of 18 per cent at present (22 per cent by 2005). Leavenheath ward, comprising the parishes of Assington, Leavenheath and Stoke by Nayland has an electoral variance of 29 per cent (24 per cent by 2005). Nayland ward, comprising the parish of Nayland with Wissington, has an electoral variance of 38 per cent (42 per cent by 2005). Polstead & Layham ward, comprising the parishes of the same names, has an electoral variance of 27 per cent currently (30 per cent by 2005). West Samford ward, comprising the parishes of Higham, Holton St Mary, Stratford St Mary and Shelley, has an electoral variance of 17 per cent at present (19 per cent by 2005).

79 The District Council proposed that Leavenheath ward should be modified to comprise only the parishes of Assington and Leavenheath. It contended that the two parishes were quite closely linked, although Leavenheath had seen more development than Assington recently and was therefore considerably larger. The proposed Leavenheath ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 5 per cent below the district average initially (8 per cent by 2005). The District Council proposed that the parish of Stoke by Nayland, currently in Leavenheath ward, should form part of an enlarged Nayland ward with the parishes of Higham and Nayland with Wissington. It contended that Nayland with Wissington and Stoke by Nayland parishes have a good and close geographical relationship. The proposed Nayland ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 7 per cent above the district average initially (1 per cent by 2005). Again, these proposals were developed in the light of comments which the District Council received during its initial consultation.

80 The District Council also proposed that the parishes of Raydon and Shelley, currently in West Samford ward, be added to the existing Polstead & Layham ward to form a new Lower Brett ward. It argued that this ward, which had also formed part of its initial consultation scheme, was supported by the constituent parishes. It also proposed that the existing Capel & Wenham ward should be expanded to include the parishes of Holton St Mary and Stratford St Mary. It had initially proposed that this ward be named Capel St Mary, but, in the light of comments which it had received it proposed that the new ward should be named Mid Samford.

81 Stratford St Mary Parish Council opposed the District Council's initial consultation scheme for a Constable ward, particularly a proposal which placed it with East Bergholt parish. Two local residents opposed the District Council's initial consultation scheme which had included Higham parish with East Bergholt in a single ward. One local resident asserted that the current West Samford ward which comprises five parishes with similar interests and identities should not be modified, and opposed the proposal to ward Higham with East Bergholt. Another local resident, also opposing the District Council's initially proposed Constable ward, noted that in the existing West Samford ward no single parish held an overall electoral majority. One resident from Great Wenham [Wenham Magna] parish objected to the District Council's initial proposal to use Capel St Mary as the name for the proposed ward and put forward alternative ward names. Similarly, Little Wenham [Wenham Parva] Parish Meeting supported the proposal for a neutral ward name for the proposed Capel ward.

82 We are broadly supportive of the District Council's proposals for these wards. In particular, we are aware that it consulted widely and sought to reflect the comments received in response to its proposed scheme. However, we propose one modification to the proposed boundary between Mid Samford and Nayland wards, namely that Higham parish should form part of the proposed Mid Samford ward. We consider that Higham Parish Council shares closer community identity with the constituent parishes in the proposed Mid Samford ward than with Nayland with Wissington and Stoke by Nayland parishes. This proposal would result in marginally worse levels of electoral equality than those achieved under the District Council's scheme; the modified wards of Mid Samford and Nayland would have councillor:elector ratios 13 per cent below and equal to the district average respectively (7 per cent and 5 per cent by 2005).

83 The councillor:elector ratios in the proposed wards of Leavenheath, Lower Brett and Mid Samford would vary from the district average by 5 per cent, 3 per cent, 13 per cent respectively (8 per cent, 1 per cent and 7 per cent by 2005). The proposed Nayland ward would have a councillor:elector ratio equal to the district average initially (an electoral variance of 5 per cent by 2005). Details of our proposals for these wards can be found on Map 2. Leavenheath, Lower Brett and Nayland wards would each return one councillor, while Mid Samford ward would return two councillors.

Hadleigh ward

84 Hadleigh is a historic town and the administrative centre of the district. It is currently represented by three district councillors. Presently, the ward is substantially under-represented, with each councillor representing 21 per cent more electors than the district average. This level of electoral inequality is projected to deteriorate over the next five years, with each councillor forecast to represent 27 per cent more electors than the district average by 2005.

85 The District Council proposed that the boundaries of Hadleigh ward should remain unchanged but, to improve electoral equality, proposed that the number of councillors for the ward be increased from three to four. We also received representations from the Conservative Group on Babergh District Council and Hadleigh Town Council. The Conservative Group contended that the District Council's proposals would dilute the accountability of councillors to the electorate and proposed that Hadleigh should be divided into two wards, each returning two district councillors. Hadleigh Town Council supported the proposal that the whole town should be represented by four district councillors. However, it argued that if the town were to be warded as part of this review, the proposed wards should be named Hadleigh North and Hadleigh South.

86 We concur with the District Council that, under the proposed council size of 43, the town of Hadleigh is entitled to four district councillors. As outlined in our *Guidance*, we consider that the number of councillors to be returned from each ward should not exceed three, other than in exceptional circumstances. We consider that four-member wards are not beneficial for the promotion of accountability and effective local democracy, and have not been persuaded that there are exceptional circumstances to warrant a four-member ward in this instance.

87 We are aware that the District Council initially proposed that Hadleigh be divided into two two-member wards, broadly on a north/south axis. We therefore propose adopting the District Council's initial proposals for two two-member wards as part of our draft recommendations. We propose that the two new wards should be named Hadleigh North and Hadleigh South, as suggested by Hadleigh Town Council. The number of electors per councillor in the proposed wards would vary from the district average by 11 per cent and 2 per cent initially (2 per cent and 4 per cent by 2004). Details of our recommendations for these wards can be found on Map A2 in Appendix A.

Brookvale, Copdock and Dodnash wards

88 The existing Brookvale, Copdock and Dodnash wards lie in the east of the district, south of Ipswich. The single-member Brookvale ward, comprising the parishes of Burstall, Chattisham, Hintlesham and Sroughton, has a councillor:elector ratio 18 per cent above the district average presently (14 per cent by 2005). The single-member Copdock ward, comprising the parishes of Copdock & Washbrook, Belstead, Pinewood and Wherstead, has a councillor:elector ratio 152 per cent above the district average at present (198 per cent by 2005). The two-member Dodnash ward, which comprises the parishes of Bentley and East Bergholt, has a councillor:elector ratio 7 per cent below the district average currently (13 per cent by 2005).

89 The parish of Pinewood was established in 1993 and borders Ipswich. It is relatively urban in nature and currently forms part of Copdock ward. Given the particular nature of the parish, the District Council proposed that it should form its own two-member Pinewood ward, a suggestion that was supported by the Parish Council. The District Council proposed a new single-member Belstead Brook ward which would comprise the parishes of Copdock & Washbrook, Belstead and Wherstead from the existing Copdock ward and Freston parish from the existing Berners ward. The proposed ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 6 per cent below the district average initially (10 per cent by 2005). Boxford, Edwardstone and Groton parish councils supported the District Council's wards in this area.

90 The District Council proposed that the existing Dodnash ward be retained. It stated that during its initial consultation exercise its proposal to split the two parishes of East Bergholt and Bentley, which comprise the current ward, between two new wards was not supported locally. The District Council subsequently modified its recommendations for the area. It concluded that the retention of the existing Dodnash ward would assist in determining more logical warding arrangements in the area as a whole. The District Council proposed that the existing Brookvale ward should also remain unchanged.

91 We have closely examined the scheme submitted by the District Council and support its recommendation for a new two-member Pinewood ward comprising the parish of the same name. However, we have reservations about its proposed Belstead Brook and Brookvale wards. The councillor:elector ratios in the proposed neighbouring single-member wards would vary by 6 per cent below the district average (10 per cent by 2005) and 21 per cent above (16 per cent by 2005) respectively. We consider that there are insufficient grounds to support an electoral variance of 16 per cent in this instance, particularly when an alternative is available. We therefore propose that the two single-member Belstead Brook and Brookvale wards proposed by the District Council be combined to form a new two-member Brook ward. This ward broadly corresponds with the ward proposed in the District Council's initial consultation document, but additionally includes the parish of Freston. The proposed ward would have an electoral variance of 8 per cent initially (3 per cent by 2005).

92 We have decided to adopt the District Council's proposal to retain the existing Dodnash ward as part of our draft recommendations. We consider that this would best reflect local community identities and interests and retain the overall integrity of the scheme, while giving reasonable levels of electoral equality.

93 The proposed Brook, Dodnash and Pinewood wards would have electoral variances of 8 per cent, 7 per cent and 5 per cent respectively (3 per cent, 11 per cent and 11 per cent by 2005). Details of our proposals for these wards can be found on Map 2.

Alton, Berners, Brantham, Holbrook and Shotley wards

94 These five wards are each represented by a single councillor and are located in the south-east of the district. The existing Alton ward, comprising the parishes of Stutton and Tattingstone, has a councillor:elector ratio 33 per cent below the district average, both currently and in 2005. Berners ward, comprising the parishes of Chelmondiston, Freston and Woolverston, has a councillor:elector ratio 24 per cent below the district average currently (29 per cent by 2005). Brantham ward, which comprises the parish of Brantham, has a councillor:elector ratio 25 per cent above the district average at present (19 per cent by 2005). Holbrook ward, comprising the parishes of Harkstead and Holbrook, has a councillor:elector ratio 5 per cent above the district average currently (2 per cent in 2005). Shotley ward, comprising the parishes of Arwarton and Shotley, has a councillor:elector ratio 18 per cent above the district average at present (28 per cent by 2005).

95 During Stage One the District Council proposed modifying the boundaries of these wards in order to improve electoral equality in the area. It proposed that Brantham and Alton wards should be combined in a two-member Alton ward and that the parishes of Woolverstone and

Chelmondiston, currently in Berners ward, should form part of a two-member Berners ward with the parishes of Arwarton and Shotley, currently in Shotley ward. As discussed earlier, Freston parish, currently in Berners ward, would form part of the proposed two-member Brook ward. The District Council also proposed no change to Holbrook ward. Brantham Parish Council opposed the District Council's proposal and contended that the existing Brantham ward should be retained. The district-wide scheme from Boxford, Edwardstone and Groton parishes supported the District Council's proposed configuration of wards in this area.

96 We have closely examined the proposals from the District Council and Brantham Parish Council. Under the proposed council size of 43, retaining the current Brantham ward would result in a councillor:elector ratio 28 per cent below the district average initially (22 per cent by 2005). We are therefore adopting the District Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations, given the improved levels of electoral equality which they achieve in this area.

97 The proposed Alton, Berners and Holbrook wards would have electoral variances of 1 per cent, 4 per cent and 7 per cent initially (5 per cent, 1 per cent and 4 per cent by 2005). Details of our proposals for these wards can be found on Map 2.

Electoral Cycle

98 At Stage One we received no proposals in relation to the electoral cycle of the district. Accordingly, we make no recommendation for change to the present system of whole-council elections every four years.

Conclusions

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

- there should be an increase in council size from 42 to 43;
- there should be 26 wards;
- the boundaries of 24 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of four wards;
- elections should continue to be held for the whole council.

100 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 Hadleigh should be divided into two two-member wards.
- we propose combining the District Council's proposed Belstead Brook and Brook Vale wards in a new two-member Brook ward.

- we propose expanding the existing Chadacre ward to include Cockfield and Glemsford parishes.
- there should be no change to Long Melford ward.

101 Figure 5 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2000 electorate figures and with forecast electorates for the year 2005.

Figure 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	42	43	42	43
Number of wards	30	26	30	26
Average number of electors per councillor	1,574	1,538	1,685	1,646
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	20	2	21	3
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	9	0	12	0

102 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Babergh District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the district average from 20 to two. By 2005 only three wards are forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district, and none would vary by more than 13 per cent.

Draft Recommendation

Babergh District Council should comprise 43 councillors serving 26 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover. The District Council should continue to hold elections for the whole council every four years.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

103 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements we are required to comply as far as possible with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Local Government Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district.

Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Great Cornard, Sudbury and Hadleigh to reflect the proposed district wards.

104 The parish of Great Cornard is currently served by 14 councillors representing two wards, Great Cornard North and Great Cornard South, each returning seven councillors. The District Council proposed modifying the boundary between the two district wards and making consequential modifications to parish ward boundaries. We have adopted the District Council’s proposals for district warding in Great Cornard and consequently propose that the parish wards should be modified to reflect the proposed district wards. We propose that Great Cornard ward should continue to be represented by 14 parish councillors returned from two parish wards: Great Cornard North, represented by seven councillors, and Great Cornard South, represented by seven councillors.

Draft Recommendation
Great Cornard Parish Council should comprise 14 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Great Cornard North (returning seven councillors) and Great Cornard South (returning seven councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

105 The parish of Sudbury is currently served by 16 councillors representing three wards: Sudbury East (returning five councillors), Sudbury North (returning six councillors) and Sudbury South (returning five councillors). The District Council proposed amendments to the current district wards, which we have adopted as part of our draft recommendations. Consequently, we propose modifying the existing parish ward boundaries to reflect these modifications. We propose that Sudbury should continue to be represented by 16 town councillors, serving three wards: Sudbury East (returning five councillors), Sudbury North (returning six councillors) and Sudbury South (returning five councillors). We would welcome further views on these proposals during Stage Three of the review.

Draft Recommendation
Sudbury Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Sudbury East (returning five councillors), Sudbury North (returning six councillors) and Sudbury South (returning five 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 Hadleigh is currently served by 15 councillors and is unwarded. The District Council did not propose warding the town; however, as part of our draft recommendations we propose warding Hadleigh for the first time, to form two two-member district wards. Although Hadleigh Town Council opposed the warding of the town at district and parish level, it stated that, in the event of the town being warded, these wards should be named Hadleigh North and Hadleigh

South. As a consequence of our recommendations at district level, we propose modifying the town council’s electoral arrangements to reflect the proposed district ward boundaries. We therefore recommend that Hadleigh should be represented by two parish wards: Hadleigh North, returning eight councillors, and Hadleigh South, returning seven councillors.

Draft Recommendation
Hadleigh Town Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Hadleigh North (returning eight councillors) and Hadleigh South (returning seven councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

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

Draft Recommendation
For parish and town councils, whole-council elections should continue to take place every four years, on the same cycle as that of the District Council.

108 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Babergh and welcome comments from the District Council and others 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.

Map 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Babergh

5 NEXT STEPS

109 We are putting forward draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for consultation. We will take fully into account all representations received by 5 March 2001. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment at the offices of the Commission and the District Council, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission after the end of the consultation period.

110 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

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

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111 In the light of representations 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 Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. After the publication of our final recommendations all further correspondence should be sent to the Secretary of State, who cannot make an order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after he receives them.

APPENDIX A

Draft Recommendations for Babergh: Detailed Mapping

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

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

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Hadleigh parish.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Great Cornard and Sudbury.

Map A1: Draft Recommendations for Babergh: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Warding of Hadleigh parish

APPENDIX B

Babergh District Council's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Our draft recommendations detailed in Figures 1 and 2 differ from those put forward by the District Council in eight wards, where the Council's proposals were as follows:

Figure B1: Babergh District Council's Proposals: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Belstead Brook	Copdock ward (part – the parishes of Belstead, Copdock & Washbrook and Wherstead)
Brook Vale	Brookvale ward (the parishes of Burstall, Chattisham, Hintlesham and Sproughton)
Chadacre	Chadacre ward (part – the parishes of Boxted, Hartest, Lawshall and Somerton); North Cosford ward (part – Cockfield parish)
Glemsford	Chadacre ward (part – Stanstead parish); Glemsford ward
Hadleigh	<i>Unchanged</i> (Hadleigh parish)
Long Melford	Chadacre ward (part – Shimpling parish); Long Melford ward (the parishes of Alpheton and Long Melford)
Mid Samford	Capel & Whenham ward (the parishes of Capel St Mary, Wenham Magna and Wenham Parva); West Samford ward (part – the parishes of Holton St Mary and Stratford St Mary)
Nayland	Leavenheath ward (part – Stoke by Nayland parish); Nayland ward (Nayland with Wissington parish); West Samford ward (part – Higham parish)

Figure B2: Babergh District Council's Proposals: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Belstead Brook	1	1,442	1,442	-6	1,483	1,483	-10
Brook Vale	1	1,865	1,865	21	1,914	1,914	16
Chadacre	1	1,946	1,946	27	1,973	1,973	20
Glemsford	2	2,806	1,403	-9	2,881	1,441	-1
Hadleigh	4	5,732	1,433	-7	6,403	1,601	-3
Long Melford	2	3,473	1,737	13	3,491	1,746	6
Mid Samford	2	3,366	1,683	9	3,423	1,712	4
Nayland	1	1,647	1,647	7	1,668	1,668	1

Source: Electorate figures are based on Babergh District Council's submission.

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

Boxford, Edwardston and Groton Parish Councils' Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Our draft recommendations detailed in Figures 1 and 2 differ from those put forward by Boxford, Edwardston and Groton Parish Councils in 10 wards, where the Council's proposals were as follows:

Figure B3: Boxford, Edwardston and Groton Parish Councils' Proposals: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Belstead Brook	Copdock ward (part – the parishes of Belstead, Copdock & Washbrook and Wherstead)
Bildeston	Bildstone ward (the parishes of Bildeston, Hitcham and Wattisham); Elmsett ward (part – Nedging with Naughton parish)
Brookvale	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Burstall, Chattisham, Hintlesham and Sproughton)
Bures St Mary	Bures St Mary ward (the parishes of Bures St Mary, Little Cornard and Newton); Leavenheath ward (part – Assington parish)
Capel & Wenham	Capel & Whenham ward (the parishes of Capel St Mary, Wenham Magna and Wenham Parva); West Samford ward (part – Raydon parish)
Elmsett	Brett Vale ward (part – Kersey parish); Elmsett ward (part – the parishes of Aldham, Elmsett and Whatfield)
Hadleigh	<i>Unchanged</i> (Hadleigh parish)
Nayland	Leavenheath ward (part – the parishes of Leavenheath and Stoke by Nayland); Nayland ward (Nayland with Wissington parish); Polstead ward (part – Polstead parish)
North Cosford	Brett Vale ward (the parishes of Brent Eleigh, Lindsey, Milden and Monks Eleigh); North Cosford ward (the parishes of Brettenham, Thorpe Morieux and Preston St Mary); Polstead & Layham ward (part – Polstead parish)
West Samford	Polstead & Layham ward (part – Layham parish); West Samford ward (part – the parishes of Higham, Holton St Mary, Stratford St Mary and Shelley)

Figure B4: Boxford, Edwardstone and Groton Parish Councils' Proposals: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Belstead Brook	1	1,483	1,483	-10
Bildeston	1	1,750	1,750	6
Brookvale	1	1,914	1,914	16
Bures St Mary	1	1,747	1,747	6
Capel & Wenham	2	3,023	1,512	-8
Elmsett	1	1,453	1,453	-12
Hadleigh	4	6,403	1,601	-3
Nayland	2	3,449	1,725	5
North Cosford	1	1,541	1,541	-6
West Samford	2	3,023	1,512	-8

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Babergh District Council. No 2000 figures were provided for this scheme.

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

APPENDIX C

The Statutory Provisions

Local Government Act 1992: the Commission's Role

1 Section 13(2) of the Local Government Act 1992 places a duty on the Commission to undertake periodic electoral reviews of each principal local authority area in England, and to make recommendations to the Secretary of State. Section 13(3) provides that, so far as reasonably practicable, the first such review of any area should be undertaken not less than 10 years, and not more than 15 years, after this Commission's predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), submitted an initial electoral review report on the county within which that area, or the larger part of the area, was located. This timetable applies to districts within shire and metropolitan counties, although not to South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear¹. Nor does the timetable apply to London boroughs; the 1992 Act is silent on the timing of periodic electoral reviews in Greater London. Nevertheless, these areas will be included in the Commission's review programme. The Commission has no power to review the electoral arrangements of the City of London.

2 Under section 13(5) of the 1992 Act, the Commission is required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State for any changes to the electoral arrangements within the areas of English principal authorities as appear desirable to it, having regard to the need to:

- (a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
- (b) secure effective and convenient local government.

3 In reporting to the Secretary of State, the Commission may make recommendations for such changes to electoral arrangements as are specified in section 14(4) of the 1992 Act. In relation to principal authorities, these are:

- the total number of councillors to be elected to the council;
- the number and boundaries of electoral areas (wards or divisions);
- the number of councillors to be elected for each electoral area, and the years in which they are to be elected; and
- the name of any electoral area.

¹ The Local Government Boundary Commission did not submit reports on the counties of South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear.

4 Unlike the LGBC, the Commission may also make recommendations for changes in respect of electoral arrangements within parish and town council areas. Accordingly, in relation to parish or town councils within a principal authority's area, the Commission may make recommendations relating to:

- the number of councillors;
- the need for parish wards;
- the number and boundaries of any such wards;
- the number of councillors to be elected for any such ward or, in the case of a common parish, for each parish; and
- the name of any such ward.

5 In conducting the review, section 27 of the 1992 Act requires the Commission to comply, so far as is practicable, with the rules given in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 for the conduct of electoral reviews.

Local Government Act 1972: Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements

6 By virtue of section 27 of the Local Government Act 1992, in undertaking a review of electoral arrangements the Commission is required to comply so far as is reasonably practicable with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. For ease of reference, those provisions of Schedule 11 which are relevant to this review are set out below.

7 In relation to shire districts:

Having regard to any changes in the number or distribution of the local government electors of the district likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration (by the Secretary of State or the Commission):

- (a) the ratio of the number of local government electors to the number of councillors to be elected shall be, as nearly as may be, the same in every ward in the district;
- (b) in a district every ward of a parish council shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district;
- (c) in a district every parish which is not divided into parish wards shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district.

8 The Schedule also provides that, subject to (a)–(c) above, regard should be had to:

- (d) the desirability of fixing ward boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (e) any local ties which would be broken by the fixing of any particular ward boundary.

9 The Schedule provides that, in considering whether a parish should be divided into wards, regard shall be had to whether:

- (f) the number or distribution of electors in the parish is such as to make a single election of parish councillors impracticable or inconvenient; and
- (g) it is desirable that any area or areas of the parish should be separately represented on the parish council.

10 Where it is decided to divide any such parish into parish wards, in considering the size and boundaries of the wards and fixing the number of parish councillors to be elected for each ward, regard shall be had to:

- (h) any change in the number or distribution of electors of the parish which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration;
- (i) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (j) any local ties which will be broken by the fixing of any particular boundaries.

11 Where it is decided not to divide the parish into parish wards, in fixing the number of councillors to be elected for each parish regard shall be had to the number and distribution of electors of the parish and any change which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the fixing of the number of parish councillors.

