

Draft recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements for  
Great Yarmouth in Norfolk

*February 2002*

© Crown Copyright 2002

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

The mapping in this report is reproduced from OS mapping by the Local Government Commission for England with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright.

Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 03114G.

This report is printed on recycled paper.

# CONTENTS

	page
WHAT IS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND?	<i>v</i>
SUMMARY	<i>vii</i>
1 INTRODUCTION	<i>1</i>
2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS	<i>5</i>
3 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED	<i>9</i>
4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>11</i>
5 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?	<i>31</i>
APPENDICES	
A Draft Recommendations for Great Yarmouth	<i>33</i>
B Code of Practice on Written Consultation	<i>35</i>

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



# WHAT IS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND?

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

Members of the Commission:

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 has assumed the functions of the Local Government Commission for England and taken 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 will 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 Great Yarmouth'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 Great Yarmouth:

- **in 18 of the 21 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and ten 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 19 wards and by more than 20 per cent in ten wards.**

Our main proposals for Great Yarmouth's future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 101 - 102) are that:

- **Great Yarmouth Borough Council should have 39 councillors, nine fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 17 wards, instead of 21 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 18 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of four, and three wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In 15 of the proposed 17 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This level of electoral equality is expected to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in 16 wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2006.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Bradwell, Caister-on-Sea and Hopton-on-Sea;**
- **an increase in the number of councillors serving Ormesby St Margaret with Scratby 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 February 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 22 April 2002:

**Review Manager  
Great Yarmouth Review  
LGCE  
Dolphyn Court  
10/11 Great Turnstile  
London WC1V 7JU**

**Fax: 020 7404 6142  
E-mail: [reviews@lgce.gov.uk](mailto:reviews@lgce.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.lgce.gov.uk](http://www.lgce.gov.uk)**

Table 1: Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Bradwell North	3	part of Bradwell parish (the proposed Bradwell North parish ward)	Large map
2	Bradwell South & Hopton	3	part of Bradwell parish (the proposed Bradwell South parish ward); part of Hopton-on-Sea parish (the proposed South parish ward)	Large map and Map 2
3	Caister North	2	part of Caister-on-Sea parish (the proposed North parish ward)	Large map
4	Caister South	2	the parish of West Caister; part of Caister-on-Sea parish (the proposed South parish ward)	Large map
5	Claydon (in Great Yarmouth)	3	part of Claydon ward; part of Magdalen East ward; part of Magdalen West ward; part of St Andrews ward	Large map
6	East Flegg	2	the parishes of Hemsby, Somerton and Winterton-on-Sea	Map 2
7	Fleggburgh	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Filby, Fleggburgh, Mautby and Stokesby with Herringby	Map 2
8	Gorleston (in Great Yarmouth)	2	part of Hopton-on-Sea parish (the proposed North parish ward); part of Gorleston ward; part of Magdalen West ward; part of St Andrews ward	Large map
9	Lothingland	2	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Belton with Browston, Burgh Castle and Fritton & St Olaves	Map 2
10	Magdalen (in Great Yarmouth)	3	part of Gorleston ward; part of Magdalen East ward; part of Magdalen West ward	Large map
11	Nelson (in Great Yarmouth)	3	part of Regent ward; Nelson ward	Large map
12	Ormesby	2	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Ormesby St Margaret with Scratby and Ormesby St Michael	Map 2
13	St Andrews (in Great Yarmouth)	2	part of Claydon ward; part of Gorleston ward; part of St Andrews ward	Large map
14	Southtown & Cobholm (in Great Yarmouth)	2	part of Claydon ward; Lichfield & Cobholm ward	Large map
15	West Flegg	2	the parishes of Ashby with Oby, Martham, Repps with Bastwick, Rollesby and Thurne	Map 2
16	Yarmouth Central (in Great Yarmouth)	3	part of Northgate ward; part of Regent ward	Large map
17	Yarmouth North (in Great Yarmouth)	2	part of Northgate ward; Yarmouth North ward	Large map

Notes: 1 The town of Great Yarmouth is the only unparished part of the borough and comprises the eight wards indicated above.

2 The wards on the above table are illustrated on Map 2 in Appendix A.

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 Great Yarmouth

	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	Bradwell North	3	5,026	1,675	-6	5,266	1,755	-4
2	Bradwell South & Hopton	3	4,770	1,590	-11	5,272	1,757	-4
3	Caister North	2	3,713	1,857	4	3,731	1,866	2
4	Caister South	2	3,571	1,786	0	3,795	1,898	4
5	Claydon (in Great Yarmouth)	3	5,521	1,840	3	5,476	1,825	0
6	East Flegg	2	3,572	1,786	0	3,769	1,885	3
7	Fleggburgh	1	1,814	1,814	1	1,816	1,816	0
8	Gorleston (in Great Yarmouth)	2	3,598	1,799	0	3,792	1,896	4
9	Lothingland	2	4,257	2,129	19	4,209	2,105	15
10	Magdalen (in Great Yarmouth)	3	5,560	1,853	3	5,504	1,835	1
11	Nelson (in Great Yarmouth)	3	5,265	1,755	-2	5,180	1,727	-5
12	Ormesby	2	3,454	1,727	-4	3,453	1,727	-5
13	St Andrews (in Great Yarmouth)	2	3,529	1,765	-1	3,618	1,809	-1
14	Southtown & Cobholm (in Great Yarmouth)	2	3,335	1,668	-7	3,278	1,639	-10
15	West Flegg	2	3,723	1,862	4	3,911	1,956	7
16	Yarmouth Central (in Great Yarmouth)	3	5,524	1,841	3	5,484	1,828	0
17	Yarmouth North (in Great Yarmouth)	2	3,607	1,804	1	3,556	1,778	-2
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>69,839</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>71,110</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
	<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,791</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,823</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Great Yarmouth Borough Council.

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

# 1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our proposals for the electoral arrangements for the borough of Great Yarmouth 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 Great Yarmouth Borough Council. Great Yarmouth's last review was carried out by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in January 1979 (Report no. 314). The electoral arrangements of Norfolk County Council were last reviewed in June 1984 (Report no. 472). We expect to review 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 councils in the borough.

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 borough 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*

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Description</b>
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 borough and county councils would hold elections every two years, i.e. in year one, half of the borough 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 Great Yarmouth Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Norfolk County Council, Norfolk Police Authority, the local authority associations, Norfolk County Association of Parish and Town Councils, parish councils in the borough, the Members of Parliament with constituencies in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the Eastern Region, the headquarters of the main political parties and residents associations and main community groups in the borough. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Great Yarmouth Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of submissions 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 February 2002 and will end on 22 April 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 The borough of Great Yarmouth is located on the east coast of Norfolk, bordered by the North Sea, the districts of Broadland, North Norfolk and South Norfolk, and the district of Waveney in the county of Suffolk. The borough covers an area of around 17,300 hectares and has a population of 89,300. Although the town and resort of Great Yarmouth constitutes the main urban settlement in the borough, it also includes the towns of Belton, Bradwell, Caister-on-Sea, Hemsby, Hopton-on-Sea, Martham and Ormesby St Margaret. There are also substantial rural areas to the north-west and south-west, which incorporate part of the renowned Norfolk Broads network of rivers and waterways.

16 The borough contains 21 civil parishes, but Great Yarmouth town itself is unparished. Great Yarmouth town comprises 50 per cent of the borough's total electorate.

17 The electorate of the borough is 69,839 (February 2001). The Council presently has 48 members who are elected from 21 wards, 14 of which (the 10 wards of Great Yarmouth plus Bradwell North, Bradwell South & Hopton, Caister North and Caister South) are predominantly urban, with the remainder being mainly or partly rural. Eleven of the wards are each represented by three councillors, five are represented by two councillors and five are single-member wards. The Council is elected by thirds.

18 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 borough average. In the text which follows, this figure may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

19 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,455 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,481 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 18 of the 21 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, 10 wards by more than 20 per cent and 5 wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Bradwell North ward where the councillor represents 78 per cent more electors than the borough average.

*Map 1: Existing Wards in Great Yarmouth*

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	Bradwell North	2	5,182	2,591	78	5,418	2,709	83
2	Bradwell South & Hopton	2	4,914	2,457	69	5,413	2,707	83
3	Caister North	2	4,364	2,182	50	4,368	2,184	47
4	Caister South	2	2,920	1,460	0	3,158	1,579	7
5	Claydon (in Great Yarmouth)	3	3,561	1,187	-18	3,719	1,240	-16
6	Fleggburgh	1	1,814	1,814	25	1,816	1,816	23
7	Gorleston (in Great Yarmouth)	3	3,870	1,290	-11	3,801	1,267	-14
8	Hemsby	1	2,281	2,281	57	2,467	2,467	67
9	Lichfield & Cobholm (in Great Yarmouth)	3	3,185	1,062	-27	3,129	1,043	-30
10	Lothingland	3	4,257	1,419	-2	4,209	1,403	-5
11	Magdalen East (in Great Yarmouth)	3	3,324	1,108	-24	3,253	1,084	-27
12	Magdalen West (in Great Yarmouth)	3	3,435	1,145	-21	3,678	1,226	-17
13	Martham	1	2,446	2,446	68	2,644	2,644	78
14	Nelson (in Great Yarmouth)	3	3,192	1,064	-27	3,162	1,054	-29
15	Northgate (in Great Yarmouth)	3	3,925	1,308	-10	3,833	1,278	-14
16	Ormesby	2	3,454	1,727	19	3,453	1,727	17
17	Regent (in Great Yarmouth)	3	3,774	1,258	-14	3,769	1,256	-15
18	Rollesby	1	1,277	1,277	-12	1,267	1,267	-14
19	St Andrews (in Great Yarmouth)	3	3,868	1,289	-11	3,795	1,265	-15

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 %
20 Winterton & Somerton	1	1,291	1,291	-11	1,302	1,302	-12
21 Yarmouth North (in Great Yarmouth)	3	3,505	1,168	-20	3,456	1,152	-22
<b>Totals</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>69,839</b>	–	–	<b>71,110</b>	–	–
<b>Averages</b>	–	–	<b>1,455</b>	–	–	<b>1,481</b>	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Great Yarmouth Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Nelson ward were relatively over-represented by 27 per cent, while electors in Bradwell North ward were relatively under-represented by 78 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

### 3 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

20 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 Great Yarmouth Borough Council and its constituent parish councils.

21 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the LGCE visited the area and met officers and members from the Borough Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received eight submissions during Stage One, including borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council and County Councillor Michael Castle, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the Borough Council.

#### **Great Yarmouth Borough Council**

22 Great Yarmouth Borough Council proposed a council of 39 members, nine less than at present, serving 17 wards, compared to the existing 21. It put forward a mixed pattern of one-, two- and three-member wards across the borough, and proposed amendments to 18 of the existing wards. The Borough Council considered that this reduction in council size reflected the changing role of borough councillors following the introduction of a leader and cabinet committee system of internal political management in December 1999, under which committee attendance had been reduced. It stated that its proposals provided “a fair and workable solution of electoral representation” for the borough, adding, “the redistribution of members in favour of previously under-represented rural communities will bring about balanced representation”. The Borough Council undertook an extensive consultation exercise on its proposals, involving parish councils in the borough, community groups and residents associations, as well as the general public. It also put forward proposals regarding Ormesby St Margaret with Scratby Parish Council, and supported changes to the electoral arrangements of Bradwell parish proposed by the parish council. Under the Borough Council’s proposals, two of the proposed wards would vary by more than 10 per cent from the borough average both now and in 2006.

#### **County Councillor Michael Castle**

23 County Councillor Michael Castle (Southtown and Cobholm division) proposed a council size of 30 members, 18 less than at present, serving 10 three-member wards. He considered that these wards would “broadly meet public perceptions of their communities and local geography” while also securing improvements in electoral equality. Councillor Castle argued that “given the new cabinet system of local government, it would seem appropriate to reduce the present number of councillors ... to a lesser figure”, stating that it was desirable to achieve coterminosity between borough wards and county divisions. Under Councillor Castle’s proposals, four of the proposed wards would vary by more than 10 per cent from the borough average. By 2006 this level of electoral equality is projected to improve, with only three wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the average by 2006.

## **Great Yarmouth Constituency Labour Party**

24 Great Yarmouth Constituency Labour Party argued that the Borough Council's proposed Yarmouth Central ward should retain the name of the existing Northgate ward. It considered that this name would be more geographically and historically appropriate for that part of Great Yarmouth town.

## **Parish Councils**

25 We received responses from three parish councils. Bradwell Parish Council put forward an alternative scheme for the parishes in the south of the borough, affecting the wards of Bradwell North, Bradwell South & Hopton and Lothingland. This would entail the inclusion of the parish of Burgh Castle in the proposed ward of Bradwell North. The Parish Council also put forward changes to its own warding arrangements and commented on the representation of Bradwell at county level. Hopton-on-Sea Parish Council opposed the Borough Council's proposed Bradwell South & Hopton ward and the proposed inclusion of an area in the north of the parish in the urban Gorleston ward. It considered that the parish should form a separate single-member ward. Somerton Parish Council opposed the Borough Council's proposal to combine the existing wards of Winterton & Somerton and Hemsby in a two-member East Flegg ward. It supported the retention of the existing arrangements, or alternatively a combination with the parish of Martham.

## **Other Submissions**

26 We received a further two submissions from local residents and organisations. Church Lane Community Association supported Councillor Castle's proposed council size of 30 members. A resident of Bradwell argued that the under-representation of Bradwell should be addressed. He also commented on the representation of Bradwell at county level and the provision of local services at parish, borough and county levels, issues that lie outside the remit of this review.

## 4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

28 As described earlier, our primary aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Great Yarmouth 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”.

29 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.

30 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.

31 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**

32 Since 1975 there has been a 20 per cent increase in the electorate of Great Yarmouth borough. The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of nearly two per cent from 69,839 to 71,110 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in the wards of Bradwell North, Bradwell South & Hopton, Caister South, Claydon, Hemsby, Magdalen West and Martham, while a slight percentage decline in electorate is forecast for nine wards, seven of which lie within the urban area of Great Yarmouth. 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.

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

## **Council Size**

34 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.

35 Great Yarmouth Borough Council presently has 48 members. The Borough Council proposed a council of 39 members representing a mixed pattern of 17 one-, two- and three-member wards. It stated that it had examined a number of options, including the retention of the existing council size. However, the Borough Council considered that "the available demographic data and consideration of the issues of community and geography, particularly within the constraints of parish boundaries showed that certain solutions were much more effective in terms of equality than others." It also considered that, following the adoption of a leader and cabinet committee system of internal political management in December 1999, a reduction in council size would "meet the needs of the Council in the future bearing in mind the overall reduction in committee attendance now required and the more precise definition of responsibility arising from Cabinet governance".

36 The Borough Council therefore put forward a scheme based on a 39-member council as "a fair and workable solution of electoral representation for the Borough for the foreseeable future", which would rectify the existing imbalance in representation between the parished and unparished areas. It stated that it had undertaken an extensive consultation exercise on its proposals, involving parish councils in the borough, community groups and residents associations, as well as the general public.

37 County Councillor Michael Castle (Southtown & Cobholm) proposed a council of 30 members representing 10 three-member wards. He considered that these wards would "broadly meet public perceptions of their communities and local geography" while also securing improvements in electoral equality. Councillor Castle argued that a reduction of 19 members was appropriate following the introduction of a leader and cabinet committee system by the Borough Council, as stated above. He also added, "Although the present review is of Borough boundaries only, the ten wards identified could readily become County divisions also. This would enhance public understanding of the election process as people are often very confused when Borough and County boundaries do not match."

38 Church Lane Community Association supported a 30-member council based on an "adjusted County boundaries approach", although it did not comment directly upon Councillor Castle's scheme.

39 We will not generally seek a substantial increase or decrease in council size but we are prepared to consider the case for change where there is persuasive evidence. Having carefully considered the representations received, we note that there appears to be a consensus in favour of a significant reduction in council size, but disagreement on whether a council size of 39 or of 30 would be most appropriate. We note that both proposals refer to the effect on the role of councillors of changes in the internal management structure of the Borough Council,

which have been in place for approximately two years. Both the Borough Council and Councillor Castle considered that a consequent reduction in council size would provide more effective and convenient local government. We also note that both proposals would also secure substantial improvements in electoral equality across the borough and an improved allocation of members between the parished and unparished areas.

40 However, we consider that, unlike the Borough Council, Councillor Castle's proposal for a council size of 30 did not include any evidence that it had been subject to broad-based consultation or that it was widely supported, despite the support of a local community group. We note that three of his proposed wards are forecast to have variances over 10 per cent by 2006, as opposed to two proposed wards under the Borough Council's proposals. In addition, we note that by combining existing wards to form three-member wards, Councillor Castle's scheme overlooks opportunities to improve boundaries in the unparished area, while also creating several rural wards that we consider do not meet our statutory criteria. In particular, we consider that the transfer of part of Hopton-on-Sea parish to a revised Lothingland ward, and a proposed three-member Southern Fleggs ward, comprising the existing coastal ward of Ormesby and the rural wards of Rollesby and Fleggburgh, would not reflect community identities and interests in those areas.

41 Moreover, we also note that Councillor Castle's proposed council size and uniform pattern of three-member wards was intended to ensure coterminosity between borough wards and county divisions, a goal which does not form part of the statutory criteria that govern our work. We expect to begin reviewing Norfolk County Council's electoral arrangements towards the end of 2002, as a result of which it is likely that the boundaries of county divisions will change. It is therefore not feasible for us to anticipate its outcome in our proposals for Great Yarmouth borough.

42 In comparison, we note that the Borough Council's proposed 39-member scheme was supported unanimously by both political groups on the council and had been subject to local consultation. While responses to the Borough Council's consultation tended to focus on issues specific to a single part of the borough, there was evidence of some support for its scheme. However, there was no evidence of widespread support for either the retention of the existing 48-member council or for other council sizes, such as the 30-member council proposed by Councillor Castle. We consider that the Borough Council's 39-member scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than either the existing arrangements or other proposals. We are therefore content that the Borough Council's proposals would substantially meet the objectives of the review, and that its proposed reduction in council size enjoys local support and is based on persuasive evidence.

43 Having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we therefore conclude that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 39 members.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

44 We have given careful consideration to the views received at Stage One, including borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council and Councillor Castle. However, as a consequence of our decision to adopt the Borough Council's proposed council size of 39

members, we were not able to give further consideration to the proposals from Councillor Castle as these were based on a different council size. We consider that the Borough Council's proposals would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or other proposals put forward, while providing an improved allocation of councillors for both the urban and rural parts of the borough. We further note that the Borough Council undertook an extensive consultation exercise on its proposals, which also received the unanimous support of both political groups on the council.

45 Accordingly, we have based our recommendations on the Borough Council's proposals. However, to improve electoral equality further and bear in mind local community identities and interests, we propose some amendments to its proposed wards in the Great Yarmouth urban area. In addition, in order to follow ground features, we propose minor modifications to the Council's proposed boundaries in several parts of the urban area. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Fleggburgh, Martham and Rollesby wards
- (b) Hemsby, Ormesby and Winterton & Somerton wards
- (c) Caister North and Caister South wards
- (d) Northgate and Yarmouth North wards
- (e) Nelson and Regent wards
- (f) Claydon, Lichfield & Cobholm and St Andrews wards
- (g) Gorleston, Magdalen East and Magdalen West wards
- (h) Bradwell North, Bradwell South & Hopton and Lothingland wards

46 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 map inserted at the back of this report.

### **Fleggburgh, Martham and Rollesby wards**

47 These three wards are situated in the north of the borough, and each is represented by a single councillor. Fleggburgh ward comprises the parishes of Filby, Fleggburgh, Mautby and Stokesby with Herringby, while Martham ward is coterminous with the parish of the same name. Rollesby ward comprises the parishes of Ashby with Oby, Repps with Bastwick, Rollesby and Thurne. At present, Martham ward is significantly under-represented, with 68 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (78 per cent more than the average by 2006). Fleggburgh ward is also relatively under-represented, with 25 per cent more electors per councillor than the average (23 per cent more than the average by 2006). Rollesby ward is relatively over-represented, with 12 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average (14 per cent more than the average by 2006).

48 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed retaining the existing single-member Fleggburgh ward, while combining the existing Martham and Rollesby wards to form a new two-member West Flegg ward. Under the Borough Council's proposals for a council of 39 members, Fleggburgh and West Flegg wards would have 1 and 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (equal to the average and 7 per cent more than the average by 2006).

49 We have given careful consideration to the views which we received at Stage One, noting that the Borough Council's proposals would provide the correct allocation of seven councillors for the north of the borough. We note that the under-representation of the current Fleggburgh ward would be resolved by the reduction in council size proposed by the Borough Council. In the light of these considerations, and as its constituent rural parishes are well connected via the A1064, we have decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposal to retain Fleggburgh ward as part of our draft recommendations.

50 We also note that the Borough Council's proposed West Flegg ward would resolve the problem of high electoral variance in the existing Martham and Rollesby wards, particularly the former, which is significantly under-represented. We consider that the constituent parishes of the proposed ward are well linked via the A149 and B1152, and also note that the Borough Council's own consultation process indicated some support for this proposal, although we welcome further views from local residents and other interested parties at Stage Three. We have therefore decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposed West Flegg ward as part of our draft recommendations.

51 Under our draft recommendations, the proposed Fleggburgh and West Flegg wards would have 1 and 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (equal to the average and 7 per cent more than the average by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

### **Hemsby, Ormesby and Winterton & Somerton wards**

52 The wards of Hemsby, Ormesby and Winterton & Somerton are situated on the coast in the north of the borough. Hemsby and Winterton & Somerton wards are each represented by one councillor, while Ormesby is represented by two councillors. Hemsby ward is coterminous with the parish of the same name, while Ormesby ward comprises the parishes of Ormesby St Margaret with Scratby and Ormesby St Michael. Winterton & Somerton ward comprises the parishes of Somerton and Winterton-on-Sea. Hemsby ward is currently significantly under-represented, with 57 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average. Electoral equality in Hemsby ward is forecast to deteriorate further over the next five years, with the ward forecast to have 67 per cent more electors per councillor than the average by 2006. At present, Ormesby ward is also relatively under-represented, with 19 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (17 per cent more than the average by 2006). Conversely, Winterton & Somerton ward is currently relatively over-represented and has 11 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (12 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

53 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed retaining the existing two-member Ormesby ward, while combining the current Hemsby and Winterton & Somerton wards to form a new two-member East Flegg ward. Under the Borough Council's proposals for a council of 39 members, East Flegg ward would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor (3 per cent more than the average by 2006), while Ormesby ward would have 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average (five per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

54 Somerton Parish Council opposed the proposed East Flegg ward. It stated that its first preference would be the retention of the existing Winterton & Somerton ward, but it would also support the linkage of Somerton with Martham parish.

55 We have given careful consideration to the views which we received at Stage One, noting that the Borough Council's proposals would provide the correct allocation of members for the north of the borough, which is seven councillors. We consider that its proposal to retain the existing Ormesby ward in a 39-member council would reduce the current level of under-representation while also continuing to reflect community identities and interests. Further, we note that the Borough Council's own consultation process indicated some support for this proposal, although we welcome further views from local residents and other interested parties at Stage Three. We are therefore content to put this ward forward for consultation as part of our draft recommendations.

56 Examining the Borough Council's proposed East Flegg ward, we considered that it would enable a significant improvement in electoral equality, particularly in comparison to the existing Hemsby ward. Further, we also note that Hemsby, Somerton and Winterton-on-Sea are in close proximity to one another, as well as connected via the B1159, and the proposed ward would therefore seem to reflect community identities in the area relatively well. While we note Somerton Parish Council's proposal to retain the existing Winterton & Somerton ward, we also note that the current over-representation of this ward would worsen under a 39-member council. We gave consideration to the parish council's alternative proposal to include Somerton in a ward with Martham parish, but noted that neither a ward comprising the two parishes nor the addition of Somerton parish to the Borough Council's proposed West Flegg ward would provide good electoral equality. We are therefore content to put the Borough Council's proposed East Flegg ward forward as part of our draft recommendations.

57 Under our draft recommendations, the proposed East Flegg ward would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor (3 per cent more than the average by 2006). The proposed Ormesby ward would have 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average (five per cent fewer than the average by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

### **Caister North and Caister South wards**

58 The two-member wards of Caister North and Caister South cover the town of Caister-on-Sea and the village of West Caister to the north of Great Yarmouth town. Caister North ward comprises the parish of West Caister and part of Caister-on-Sea parish. Caister South ward comprises the remainder of Caister-on-Sea parish. Caister North ward is currently significantly under-represented, with 50 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (47 per cent more than the average by 2006). Caister South ward currently has equal to the average number of electors per councillor (7 per cent more than the average by 2006).

59 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed amending the boundary between the wards of Caister North and Caister South within the town of Caister-on-Sea. Under its proposals, an area bounded by St Hilda Road, Seafield Road North, Ormesby Road, Braddock Road and the sea would be transferred from Caister North ward to Caister South ward. The Borough Council also proposed that West Caister parish be transferred from Caister North ward to Caister South ward. Under the Borough Council's proposals for a council of 39 members, Caister North ward would have 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (2 per cent more than the average by 2006). Caister South ward would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor (4 per cent more than the average by 2006).

60 We have given careful consideration to the views which we received at Stage One. We note that the Borough Council's scheme would significantly reduce electoral variance in Caister North ward, providing the correct allocation of councillors for Caister-on-Sea and West Caister, which is four councillors. The wards would, we consider, make continued use of strong road boundaries within the town while also avoiding the division of residential areas (as is currently the case on Braddock Road). We further note that West Caister's road links enable it to be placed with either the north or the south of the town for electoral purposes. Considering that the Borough Council's proposed warding pattern provides the best available balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, we have decided to adopt the proposed wards of Caister North and Caister South as part of our draft recommendations.

61 Under our draft recommendations, the proposed Caister North ward would have 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (2 per cent more than the average by 2006). The proposed Caister South ward would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor (4 per cent more than the average by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

### **Northgate and Yarmouth North wards**

62 The existing wards of Northgate and Yarmouth North are both represented by three councillors and are situated in the north of Great Yarmouth town between the River Bure and the sea. Under the existing arrangements, Northgate ward has 10 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (14 per cent fewer than the average by 2006). Yarmouth North ward is relatively over-represented both now and in 2006, with 20 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average (22 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

63 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed to retain the existing Yarmouth North ward subject to a minor boundary amendment and a reduction in representation to two councillors. It proposed that the revised southern boundary should follow the existing boundary east from the River Bure until the junction of Salisbury Road and North Denes Road. It would then proceed south along North Denes Road and east along Beaconsfield Road to the sea, resulting in the transfer of a small part of the existing Northgate ward to the revised Yarmouth North ward. The remainder of the existing Northgate ward would be combined with part of the existing Regent ward (including the Runham area of the town across the River Bure) to form a new three-member Yarmouth Central ward. The southern boundary of Yarmouth Central ward would run from the western borough boundary along the main channel of Breydon Water, proceeding along the River Yare before heading east along Regent Street, King Street and Regent Road to the sea.

64 Under its proposals for a council of 39 members, Yarmouth Central ward would have 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (1 per cent more than the average by 2006). Yarmouth North ward would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor (3 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

65 Great Yarmouth Constituency Labour Party proposed that the Borough Council's proposed Yarmouth North ward retain the existing ward name of Northgate. It considered Northgate to be "an apt name from both geographic and historical considerations and the

concept of Central Yarmouth would in the minds of most local people embrace a much larger area”.

66 We have given careful consideration to the views which we received at Stage One, and are basing our draft recommendations for this area on the Borough Council’s proposals, which we consider would provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We also note that this scheme would provide the correct allocation of members for the town, which is 20 councillors. We note that the proposed reduction in council size would enable good electoral equality to be achieved in the revised two-member Yarmouth North ward. However, we propose one minor amendment on the seafront, where the proposed boundary divides Marine Crescent between Yarmouth Central and Yarmouth North wards. Having visited the area, we consider that including all properties on the road in Yarmouth North ward would better reflect community identities and interests, while also providing a slight improvement in electoral equality. We also note that Marine Crescent is primarily residential, whereas North Drive, to its south, contains a number of hotels and is therefore more service-oriented. We therefore propose moving the boundary south to the junction of Marine Crescent and North Drive.

67 Examining the proposed Yarmouth Central ward, we note that it would resolve the over-representation of the existing Northgate and Regent wards. We consider that the predominantly commercial Regent Road and Regent Street, which form the proposed southern boundary of Yarmouth Central ward, would appear to demarcate communities to the north and south reasonably well. While the River Bure separates the Runham area of the town from the rest of the ward, we note that there is easy road access between the two areas, and that they are also already linked in the existing Regent ward.

68 It has been put to us by Great Yarmouth Constituency Labour Party that ‘Northgate’ would be a more appropriate name for the proposed Yarmouth Central ward. We note this ward would encompass the majority of the existing Northgate ward, and the whole of Northgate Street. However, a significant part of the existing Regent ward has also been included, and we consider that no substantive evidence has been advanced at this time in favour of either ‘Northgate’ or ‘Yarmouth Central’. For the purposes of our draft recommendations, we have therefore decided to adopt the Borough Council’s proposed ward name of ‘Yarmouth Central’. However, we would welcome further views on this issue from both respondents, as well as local residents and other interested parties, at Stage Three.

69 Under our draft recommendations, the proposed Yarmouth Central and Yarmouth North wards would have 3 per cent and 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (equal to the average and 2 per cent fewer than the average by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

### **Nelson and Regent wards**

70 The wards of Nelson and Regent cover part of Great Yarmouth town to the south of the existing Northgate ward, between the rivers Bure and Yare to the west and the sea to the east. However, Regent ward also includes the Runham area of the town, to the west of the Bure and north of the Yare, and a largely uninhabited rural area north of Breydon Water. Both wards are represented by three councillors, and are relatively over-represented both now and in 2006. Nelson ward currently has 27 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough

average (29 per cent fewer than the average by 2006), while Regent ward has 14 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average (15 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

71 As discussed in the previous section, at Stage One the Borough Council proposed combining part of the existing Northgate and Regent wards (including Runham) to form a new three-member Yarmouth Central ward. It also proposed that the remainder of Regent ward should be combined with the existing Nelson ward to form a revised three-member Nelson ward. The northern boundary of the proposed Nelson ward would then run from the River Yare east along Regent Street, King Street and Regent Road to the sea. Under its proposals for a council of 39 members, Nelson ward would have 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (5 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

72 We have given careful consideration to the views which we received at Stage One. We are basing our draft recommendations for this area on the Borough Council's proposals, which we consider would provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, and the correct allocation of members for the town, which is 20 councillors. As previously stated, we consider that the use of Regent Road and Regent Street, which are mostly commercial in character, as the northern boundary of the proposed Nelson ward, would appear to demarcate communities east of the river reasonably well.

73 Under our draft recommendations, the proposed Nelson ward would have 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (5 per cent fewer than the average by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

### **Claydon, Lichfield & Cobholm and St Andrews wards**

74 The wards of Claydon, Lichfield & Cobholm and St Andrews occupy the north and centre of that part of Great Yarmouth town lying west of the River Yare and east of the parish of Bradwell. Each of the wards is represented by three councillors and is relatively over-represented both now and in 2006. Claydon and Lichfield & Cobholm wards currently have 18 and 27 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (16 and 30 per cent fewer than the average by 2006). At present, St Andrews ward has 11 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average (15 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

75 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed adding part of Claydon ward to the existing Lichfield & Cobholm ward to form a two-member Southtown & Cobholm ward. The modified southern ward boundary would run from the Bradwell parish boundary east along Morton Peto Road and north along Harfreys Road, before proceeding east over the A12 roundabout to the Beccles Road/Southtown Road junction. It would then run south briefly on Beccles Road before heading north-east to the River Yare at the junction with Malthouse Lane.

76 The Borough Council also proposed a revised three-member Claydon ward and a revised two-member St Andrews ward. The proposed Claydon ward would gain the following areas: that part of St Andrews ward to the north of Trafalgar Road West and Trafalgar Road East; that part of Magdalen West ward to the north of Trinity Avenue; that part of Magdalen East ward to the north of Magdalen Square, and to the north of and including St Catherine's Way. The northern part of the existing Claydon ward would be transferred to the proposed Southtown & Cobholm ward as described in the preceding paragraph. The Borough Council's

revised St Andrews ward would be subject to the transfer to Claydon ward described above, but would also gain the following areas: that part of the existing Claydon ward to the south of Colomb Road and east of the A12 Inner Relief Road; Pier Gardens, and parts of Beach Road and Pier Road, currently in Gorleston ward.

77 Under its proposals for a council of 39 members, Claydon and St Andrews wards would have 3 per cent and 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (equal to the average and 2 per cent more by 2006). Southtown & Cobholm ward would have 10 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average (13 per cent fewer by 2006).

78 We have given careful consideration to the views which we received at Stage One. We are basing our draft recommendations for this area on the Borough Council's proposals, which we consider would provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, and the correct allocation of members for the town, which is 20 councillors. However, we note that in their scheme the proposed Southtown & Cobholm ward is forecast to have a higher variance by 2006 than we would normally seek to recommend. Having asked officers at the Borough Council for further information, and having visited the area, we note that the proposed ward contains two residential areas, Cobholm and Southtown, which are relatively similar in character and bounded on all sides by major roads and the two rivers. It has also been put to us by the Borough Council that there is the possibility of further residential development within the next five years. This would then reduce electoral variance in Southtown & Cobholm ward to acceptable levels.

79 Nonetheless, we seek to put forward recommendations that, in our judgement, provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Given that the additional electorate growth in this ward is unconfirmed and is not incorporated into the five-year projections provided by the Borough Council, we consider that these objectives would best be met by a small transfer of electors from the proposed Claydon ward to that of Southtown & Cobholm. We consider that this change would ensure good electoral equality while allowing for further improvement should additional development go ahead. The revised boundary would not significantly encroach upon estates to the south of the A12 access road, and we consider that it would still reflect community identities reasonably well. Our proposed boundary would run from the boundary with Bradwell parish to the south of Harfrey's Industrial Estate, to include all of this commercial area in Southtown & Cobholm ward. It would proceed across the Town Lands open space and follow Common Road north and east, rejoining the Borough Council's proposed boundary on Beccles Road before heading north-east to the River Yare at the junction with Malthouse Lane. This would result in the inclusion of Alpha Road and parts of Beccles Road, Common Road and Suffolk Road in the proposed Southtown & Cobholm ward.

80 We also propose a boundary amendment between the Borough Council's proposed Claydon and St Andrews wards. Having visited the area, we consider that Trafalgar Road East and Trafalgar Road West are residential streets with similar properties on each side, and that placing both streets entirely in one ward would better reflect community identities in this area. We therefore propose that properties on the south side of these streets be transferred to the proposed Claydon ward. From Trafalgar Road East, we propose that the ward boundary run north on Back Chapel Lane to the junction of Garnham Road, High Road, and High Street, and then east to the River Yare. This would result in the inclusion of parts of Back Chapel Lane and High Street in St Andrews ward. We note that these amendments would provide the

same variance in Claydon ward as the Borough Council's proposals, and slightly improve electoral equality in St Andrews ward by 2006. Additionally, we propose two minor boundary amendments between the proposed wards of Gorleston and St Andrews in order to reflect access to properties, as described in the following section, which would not affect electoral equality in the relevant wards.

81 Under our draft recommendations, the proposed Claydon and St Andrews wards would have 3 per cent more and 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (equal to the average and 1 per cent fewer by 2006). The proposed Southtown & Cobholm ward would have 7 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average (10 per cent fewer than the average by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

### **Gorleston, Magdalen East and Magdalen West wards**

82 The wards of Gorleston, Magdalen East and Magdalen West occupy the south of the part of Great Yarmouth town lying west of the River Yare and east of the parish of Bradwell. Each of the wards is represented by three councillors and is relatively over-represented both now and in 2006. Gorleston ward currently has 11 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (14 per cent fewer than the average by 2006). Magdalen East and Magdalen West wards have 24 and 21 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average respectively (27 and 17 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

83 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed a revised two-member Gorleston ward. To the south, this proposed ward would include the Links Road/Warren Road area of Hopton-on-Sea parish, currently in Bradwell South & Hopton ward. It would also include part of Magdalen West ward situated to the south of the hospital and Woodfarm Lane, in which extensive residential development is anticipated by 2006. As previously stated, the Borough Council also proposed that Pier Gardens and parts of Beach Road and Pier Road would be transferred from the existing Gorleston ward to a revised St Andrews ward. Finally, amendments to the western boundary of Gorleston ward would result in the transfer of the area bounded by the A12, Bridge Road and properties on the west side of Victoria Road and Waunci Crescent to a new Magdalen ward.

84 The new three-member Magdalen ward proposed by the Borough Council would comprise the majority of the existing Magdalen East and Magdalen West wards. In addition to transfers to and from the revised Gorleston ward as described above, part of Magdalen East ward north of Magdalen Square and St Catherine's Way, and part of Magdalen West ward north of Trinity Avenue, would both be transferred to a revised Claydon ward (see the section on Claydon ward for details). Under its proposals for a council of 39 members, Gorleston ward would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor (4 per cent more than the average by 2006). Magdalen ward would have 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (1 per cent more than the average by 2006).

85 Hopton-on-Sea Parish Council opposed the proposal by the Borough Council to include part of the parish in Gorleston ward, stating that there was no need for such a change. As discussed in the following section, the Parish Council supported the creation of a single-member ward for the whole of Hopton-on-Sea parish.

86 We have given careful consideration to the views which we received at Stage One. We are basing our draft recommendations for this area on the Borough Council's proposals, which we consider would provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, and the correct allocation of members for the town. We are content to put forward the Borough Council's proposed Magdalen ward for consultation, and note that a combination of the existing Magdalen East and Magdalen West wards was also put forward in Councillor Castle's 30-member scheme.

87 While we note the opposition of Hopton-on-Sea Parish Council to the inclusion of the northern part of the parish in Gorleston ward, we consider that maintaining the current boundary in this area of the borough would not reflect community identities and interests. The affected properties have limited direct access to Hopton-on-Sea town, but are contiguous with the southern part of Gorleston. We also note that the Borough Council's own consultation exercise indicated a measure of support for this proposal, and that Councillor Castle's 30-member scheme also entailed the inclusion of this area in his proposed Gorleston St Andrew ward. However, we welcome further views from local residents and other interested parties at Stage Three.

88 We have therefore decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposed Gorleston ward, subject to three minor amendments in order to better reflect access to properties, which would not adversely affect electoral equality. First, we are proposing that several properties in Hopton-on-Sea parish on Sidegate Road, with good access to Gorleston via the A12 roundabout, should also be included in the proposed Gorleston ward. Second, on Cliff Hill we propose moving the ward boundary from the centre of the road, south of the junction with Lower Cliff Road, in order to include properties on the east side in the proposed Gorleston ward. These properties are separated from the rest of the proposed St Andrews by a steep slope to the east and a break in residential properties to the north. Third, we also propose including a number of commercial properties at the northern end of Lower Esplanade in St Andrews ward, to reflect access via Beach Road and Pier Gardens.

89 Under our draft recommendations, the proposed Gorleston ward would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor (4 per cent more than the average by 2006). The proposed Magdalen ward would have 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (1 per cent more than the average by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

### **Bradwell North, Bradwell South & Hopton and Lothingland wards**

90 The wards of Bradwell North, Bradwell South & Hopton and Lothingland are situated to the west and south of the town of Great Yarmouth. Bradwell North ward comprises part of Bradwell parish, while Bradwell South & Hopton ward comprises the parish of Hopton-on-Sea and the remainder of Bradwell parish. Both wards are represented by two councillors. The three-member Lothingland ward comprises the parishes of Belton with Browston, Burgh Castle and Fritton & St Olaves. Both Bradwell North and Bradwell South & Hopton wards are significantly under-represented, with 78 and 69 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively. Electoral equality is expected to deteriorate further over the next five years, and both wards are forecast to have 83 per cent more electors per councillor than the average by 2006. Lothingland ward currently has 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average (5 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

91 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed to retain the existing warding pattern in this area, subject to changes in representation and several minor boundary amendments. It proposed that Bradwell North and Bradwell South & Hopton wards each gain an additional councillor and become three-member wards, and that Lothingland become a two-member ward. The Borough Council also proposed that Bradwell Avenue, Lilac Close and parts of Beccles Road and Mill Lane be transferred from Bradwell North ward to Bradwell South & Hopton ward. As previously discussed, its proposed Gorleston ward would also include the northern part of Hopton-on-Sea parish.

92 Although the Borough Council recognised that its proposed Lothingland ward would be relatively under-represented, it opposed the alternative proposal by Bradwell Parish Council to transfer Burgh Castle parish to Bradwell North ward. The Borough Council argued that the existing link between Belton and Burgh Castle parishes should be retained on the grounds of community identity, stating that “geographically Burgh Castle, spread out as it is, is located closer to the heart of Belton, being reliant on it for schools and local shopping. There is little obvious boundary between the southern part of Burgh Castle and the northern part of Belton. Both villages are home to major holiday sites”. Under the Borough Council’s proposals for a council of 39 members, Bradwell North and Bradwell South & Hopton wards would have 6 per cent and 11 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (both 4 per cent fewer than the average by 2006). Lothingland ward would have 19 per cent more electors per councillor than the average (15 per cent more by 2006).

93 We received three further submissions in relation to this area. Bradwell Parish Council put forward alternative proposals for this part of the borough, commenting, “the parishes are grossly under-represented on the Borough Council”. It proposed a three-member Bradwell North ward consisting of Burgh Castle parish and part of Bradwell parish, with the remaining part of Bradwell parish forming a two-member Bradwell South ward without Hopton-on-Sea parish. The boundary between the proposed Bradwell North and Bradwell South wards would run to the north of Lords Lane, Holly Avenue, Briar Avenue, Hickory Gardens, Mill Lane and Larch Drive, before rejoining the existing boundary on Beccles Road. The Parish Council also commented on possible County Council electoral arrangements, an issue which lies outside the remit of this review. Under its proposals, based on a council size of 39, Bradwell North and Bradwell South wards would have 3 per cent and 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1 per cent fewer and three per cent more than the average by 2006).

94 As previously described, Hopton-on-Sea Parish Council supported a single-member ward coterminous with Hopton-on-Sea parish. It opposed the proposed inclusion of the northern part of the parish in Gorleston ward. A Bradwell resident argued that changes to existing arrangements should be made to resolve the under-representation of Bradwell. He also commented on the representation of Bradwell at county level and the provision of services at parish, borough and county levels, issues lying outside the remit of this review.

95 We have given careful consideration to the views which we received at Stage One. Examining the proposals of Bradwell Parish Council and the Borough Council, we note that the former’s scheme would provide better electoral equality. On one hand, the Borough Council’s warding pattern would result in Lothingland ward being relatively under-represented. On the other hand, the Parish Council’s proposals would make it possible for the

remaining southern parishes of Belton with Browston, Fritton & St Olaves and Hopton-on-Sea to be combined in a three-member ward, which would provide good electoral equality. We note that the configuration of parishes and electorates in this part of the borough limits the number of available options.

96 However, after consideration of the evidence so far available, we have decided to retain the existing Lothingland ward without modification, albeit represented by two members, as proposed by the Borough Council. We consider that community identities in the existing Lothingland ward outweigh the electoral imbalance caused by the Borough Council's proposals, and that Bradwell, despite being parished, effectively forms part of the Great Yarmouth urban area. Burgh Castle, conversely, is a comparatively small rural village, and we concur with the view expressed by the Borough Council that it is strongly linked socially, geographically and historically to the town of Belton to its south. We note that, while the Borough Council's own consultation exercise indicated a lack of consensus, with support for Bradwell Parish Council's proposal coming from Bradwell, the proposed retention of the Lothingland ward would appear to reflect the preference of its constituent parishes.

97 Consequently, we have also decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposed wards of Bradwell North and Bradwell South & Hopton. We note that these proposals would provide an improved allocation of councillors for this part of the borough. As Bradwell Parish Council's boundary amendments between its proposed Bradwell North and Bradwell South wards assumed the inclusion of Burgh Castle parish in Bradwell North, we were unable to give it further consideration. A combination of Bradwell and the small town of Hopton-on-Sea would link parishes situated on the urban or semi-urban periphery of Great Yarmouth, which we would consider to have more in common with each other than with the more rural parishes to the east. While we note the preference of Hopton-on-Sea Parish Council for a single-member ward coterminous with the parish, in a 39-member council this would lead to its under-representation. As discussed in the preceding section, we are also proposing to include the northern part of the parish in the Borough Council's proposed Gorleston ward in order to better reflect community identities and interests in this area, subject to a minor amendment.

98 We have noted a number of boundary anomalies between Bradwell parish and Great Yarmouth. These include the division of properties on Burgh Road, Headington Close and Oriel Avenue between the parish and the unparished area. We also noted the lack of direct access from Bunnewell Avenue, Ecclestone Close and Leach Close, situated within the parish, to Bradwell town, except via Great Yarmouth. As we have no power to recommend changes to parish boundaries, we would suggest that these anomalies might be corrected at some future point. Such a review lies within the Borough Council's remit.

99 Under our draft recommendations, the proposed Bradwell North and Bradwell South & Hopton wards would have 6 per cent and 11 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (both 4 per cent fewer than the average by 2006). The proposed Lothingland ward would have 19 per cent more electors per councillor than the average (15 per cent more by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of this report.

## **Electoral Cycle**

100 At Stage One both the Borough Council and Councillor Castle based their proposals on the present system of elections by thirds. We did not receive any comments specifically relating to the electoral cycle of the borough. We therefore make no recommendation for change to the present system of elections by thirds for Great Yarmouth Borough Council.

## **Conclusions**

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

- there should be a reduction in council size from 48 to 39;
- there should be 17 wards;
- the boundaries of 18 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of four, and three wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- elections should continue to be held by thirds.

102 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the Borough Council's proposals, but propose to depart from them in the following areas:

- In the Great Yarmouth urban area, we propose modifying the boundary between the proposed Claydon and Southtown & Cobholm wards in order to improve electoral equality, resulting in the transfer of Alpha Road and parts of Beccles Road, Common Road and Suffolk Road to the proposed Southtown & Cobholm ward;
- In the Great Yarmouth urban area, we propose modifying the boundary between the proposed Claydon and St Andrews wards in order to provide a boundary which better reflects community identities and interests, resulting in the inclusion of all of Trafalgar Road East and Trafalgar Road West in Claydon ward, and the transfer of parts of Back Chapel Lane and High Street to St Andrews ward;
- In the Great Yarmouth urban area, we propose minor boundary amendments between the proposed wards of Bradwell South & Hopton and Gorleston, Gorleston and St Andrews, and Yarmouth Central and Yarmouth North, in order to provide boundaries that better reflect community identities and interests.

103 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	48	39	48	39
Number of wards	21	17	21	17
Average number of electors per councillor	1,455	1,791	1,481	1,823
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	18	2	19	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	10	0	10	0

104 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for Great Yarmouth Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 18 to two. By 2006 only one ward is forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent.

#### **Draft Recommendation**

Great Yarmouth Borough Council should comprise 39 councillors serving 17 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

### **Parish Council Electoral Arrangements**

105 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 borough wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Bradwell, Caister-on-Sea and Hopton-on-Sea. At the request of the Borough Council, we also propose increasing the number of councillors representing the parish of Ormesby St Margaret with Scratby.

106 The parish of Bradwell is currently served by 15 councillors representing two wards: North ward, represented by 10 councillors, and South ward, represented by five councillors. At Stage One Bradwell Parish Council proposed increasing the number of parish councillors by one, to 16. It proposed that North parish ward be renamed Bradwell North and served by nine councillors, and South parish ward be renamed Bradwell South and served by seven councillors. The Parish Council proposed that the boundary between the parish wards be modified to reflect the boundary between its proposed borough wards of Bradwell North and

Bradwell South. The Borough Council supported the Parish Council's proposals for its own warding arrangements.

107 We have decided to adopt the increase in representation and revised parish ward names proposed by the Parish Council. However, as part of our draft recommendations, we have put forward the Borough Council's proposed borough wards of Bradwell North and Bradwell South & Hopton, rather than the Parish Council's scheme. We are therefore proposing to modify the boundaries between the parish wards to reflect the new borough warding arrangements. As the distribution of parish councillors proposed by the Parish Council would no longer be equitable under these circumstances, we also propose that Bradwell North parish ward continue to be represented by 10 councillors, and that the representation of Bradwell South parish ward be increased from five to six councillors. We welcome views on our proposals for Bradwell parish at Stage Three.

**Draft Recommendation**

Bradwell Parish Council should comprise 16 councillors, one more than at present, representing two wards: Bradwell North (returning 10 councillors) and Bradwell South (returning six councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map inside the back cover.

108 The parish of Caister-on-Sea is currently served by 15 councillors representing two wards: North ward, represented by seven councillors, and South ward, represented by eight councillors. In the light of our draft recommendations, we are proposing to modify the boundaries between the parish wards to reflect the new borough warding. Further, we are also proposing to modify the level of representation of North ward to more accurately reflect the distribution of the parish electorate. We propose that both North and South wards be served by eight councillors, increasing the number of parish councillors from 15 to 16. We welcome views on our proposals for Caister-on-Sea parish at Stage Three.

**Draft Recommendation**

Caister-on-Sea Parish Council should comprise 16 councillors, one more than at present, representing two wards: North and South, each returning eight councillors. The parish ward boundaries between the two wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundary, as illustrated and named on the large map inside the back cover.

109 The parish of Hopton-on-Sea is currently served by 11 councillors and is not warded. In the light of our draft recommendations, we are proposing to create two new parish wards, North ward and South ward, to facilitate the division of the parish between the proposed Bradwell South & Hopton and Gorleston borough wards. The boundary between the proposed North and South wards should reflect the borough ward boundary. We propose that the new North ward should return one councillor and the new South ward should return ten councillors. We welcome views on our proposals for Hopton-on-Sea parish at Stage Three.

**Draft Recommendation**

Hopton-on-Sea Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: North (returning one councillor) and South (returning 10 councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map inside the back cover.

110 The parish of Ormesby St Margaret with Scratby is currently divided into two parish wards, Ormesby ward, represented by eight councillors, and Scratby ward, represented by five councillors. Having conducted its own consultation exercise with parish councils, the Borough Council proposed that Ormesby parish ward should be served by 10 councillors, instead of the current eight, thereby increasing the total number of councillors on the Parish Council from 13 to 15. Our proposed borough warding arrangements would result in no change to this area, and we are content to put forward this proposal as part of our draft recommendations. We welcome views on our proposals for Ormesby St Margaret with Scratby parish at Stage Three.

**Draft Recommendation**

Ormesby St Margaret with Scratby Parish Council should comprise 15 parish councillors, instead of the current 13, representing two wards: Ormesby (returning 10 councillors) and Scratby (returning five councillors).

111 We are not proposing any change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the borough.

**Draft Recommendation**

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

*Map 2: Draft Recommendations for Great Yarmouth*



## 5 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

112 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Great Yarmouth contained in this report. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 22 April 2002. Any received *after* this date may not be taken into account. All responses may be inspected at our offices and those of the Borough Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

113 Express your views by writing directly to us:

Review Manager  
Great Yarmouth 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](mailto:reviews@lgce.gov.uk)

[www.lgce.gov.uk](http://www.lgce.gov.uk)

114 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 Great Yarmouth: Detailed Mapping**

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

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

The **large map** inserted at the back of this report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Great Yarmouth.

*Map A1: Draft Recommendations for Great Yarmouth: Key Map*

## 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](http://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 B1: LGCE compliance with Code criteria*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Compliance/departure</b>
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.