

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Waveney in Suffolk

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

June 2001

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Waveney in Suffolk.

Members of the Commission are:

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Professor Michael Clarke CBE (Deputy Chairman)
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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for the Lowestoft area is inserted inside the back cover of the report.



Local Government Commission for England

26 June 2001

Dear Secretary of State

On 27 June 2000 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Waveney under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in January 2001 and undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although some modifications have been made (see paragraphs 149–150) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Waveney.

We recommend that Waveney District Council should be served by 48 councillors representing 23 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

The Local Government Act 2000 contains provisions relating to changes to local authority electoral arrangements. However, until such time as Orders are made implementing those arrangements we are obliged to conduct our work in accordance with current legislation, and to continue our current approach to periodic electoral reviews.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Malcolm Grant'.

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Waveney on 27 June 2000. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 9 January 2001, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

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

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

- **in 11 of the 21 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and seven wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2005 electoral equality is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 12 wards and by more than 20 per cent in eight wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 149-150) are that:

- **Waveney District Council should have 48 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 23 wards, instead of 21 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 17 of the existing wards should be modified and four wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In 22 of the proposed 23 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in all 23 wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2005.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements for Beccles Town Council;**
- **new warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for Oulton parish.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an Order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 6 August 2001:

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

Figure 1: The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map Reference
1	Beccles North	2	Beccles Town ward (part – School ward (part), Centre ward (part) and Common ward of Beccles Town; Beccles Worlingham ward (part – Rigbourne ward of Beccles Town (part))	Maps 2, A2 and A3
2	Beccles South	2	Beccles Town ward (part – School ward (part) and Centre ward (part) of Beccles Town; Beccles Worlingham ward (part – Rigbourne ward (part) of Beccles Town (part))	Maps 2, A2 and A3
3	Blything	1	Blything ward (part – Blyford, Holton, Sotherton Spexhall and Westhall parishes); Southwold ward (part – Wangford with Henham parish)	Map 2
4	Bungay	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Bungay Town)	Map 2
5	Carlton (in Lowestoft)	2	Carlton ward (part)	Large Map
6	Carlton Colville	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Carlton Colville parish)	Large Map and Map 2
7	Gunton & Corton (in Lowestoft)	2	Lothingland ward (part – Corton parish); Gunton ward (part)	Large Map and Map 2
8	Halesworth	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Halesworth Town)	Map 2
9	Harbour (in Lowestoft)	3	Gunton ward (part); Harbour ward (part); Normanston ward (part)	Large Map
10	Kessingland	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Gisleham and Kessingland parishes)	Map 2
11	Kirkley (in Lowestoft)	3	Kirkley ward (part); Pakefield ward (part); Whitton ward (part)	Large Map
12	Lothingland	1	Lothingland ward (part – Blundeston, Flixton, Lound and Somerleyton, Ashby & Herringfleet parishes, and Camps Heath ward of Oulton parish (as proposed))	Large Map and Map 2
13	Normanston (in Lowestoft)	3	Harbour ward (part); Normanston ward (part); Oulton Broad ward (part); St Margaret's ward (part)	Large Map
14	Oulton	2	Lothingland ward (part – Oulton ward of Oulton parish (as proposed)); Oulton Broad ward (part)	Large Map
15	Oulton Broad (in Lowestoft)	2	Oulton Broad ward (part)	Large Map
16	Pakefield (in Lowestoft)	3	Kirkley ward (part); Pakefield ward (part)	Large Map
17	Southwold & Reydon	2	Southwold ward (part – Reydon parish and Southwold Town)	Map 2

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map Reference
18	St Margaret's (in Lowestoft)	3	Lothingland ward (part – Parkhill ward of Oulton parish (as proposed)); Oulton Broad ward (part); St Margaret's ward (part)	Large Map
19	The Saints	1	Blything ward (part – Wissett parish); South Elmham ward (part – Flixton, St Mary South Elmham otherwise Homersfield, Rumburgh, St Lawrence Ilketshall, St John Ilketshall, St Margaret Ilketshall, All Saints & St Nicholas South Elmham, St Cross South Elmham, St Margaret South Elmham, St Michael South Elmham and St Peter South Elmham parishes); Wainford ward (part – St Andrew Ilketshall parish)	Map 2
20	Wainford	1	South Elmham ward (part – Mettingham parish); Wainford ward (part – Barsham, Ellough, Redisham, Ringsfield, Weston, Willingham St Mary, Shadingfield, Shipmeadow and Sotterley parishes); Mutford ward (part – Mutford parish)	Map 2
21	Whitton (in Lowestoft)	3	Carlton ward (part); Whitton ward (part)	Large Map
22	Worlingham	2	Beccles Worlingham ward (part – Worlingham parish); Mutford ward (part – Barnby and North Cove parishes)	Maps 2, A2 and A3
23	Wrentham	1	Blything ward (part – Brampton with Stoven parish); Mutford ward (part – Henstead with Hulver Street and Rushmere parishes); Southwold ward (part – Benacre, Covehithe, Frostenden, South Cove, Uggeshall and Wrentham parishes)	Large Map and Map 2

Notes: 1 Lowestoft is the only unparished part of the district and comprises the wards indicated above.

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

3 We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes would affect no electors.

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Waveney

	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	Beccles North	2	3,898	1,949	7	3,979	1,990	3
2	Beccles South	2	3,916	1,958	7	4,026	2,013	4
3	Blything	1	1,774	1,774	-3	1,846	1,846	-4
4	Bungay	2	3,837	1,919	5	3,989	1,995	3
5	Carlton (in Lowestoft)	2	3,729	1,865	2	3,737	1,869	-3
6	Carlton Colville	3	4,687	1,562	-14	6,098	2,033	5
7	Gunton & Corton (in Lowestoft)	2	3,874	1,937	6	3,906	1,953	1
8	Halesworth	2	3,756	1,878	3	3,998	1,999	4
9	Harbour (In Lowestoft)	3	5,760	1,920	5	5,849	1,950	1
10	Kessingland	2	3,673	1,837	1	3,967	1,984	3
11	Kirkley (in Lowestoft)	3	5,554	1,851	1	5,632	1,877	-3
12	Lothingland	1	1,716	1,716	-6	1,748	1,748	-9
13	Normanston (in Lowestoft)	3	5,354	1,785	-2	5,383	1,794	-7
14	Oulton	2	3,277	1,639	-10	3,899	1,950	1
15	Oulton Broad (in Lowestoft)	2	3,967	1,984	9	3,990	1,995	3
16	Pakefield (in Lowestoft)	3	5,545	1,848	1	5,579	1,860	-4
17	Southwold & Reydon	2	3,479	1,740	-5	3,573	1,787	-7
18	St Margaret's (in Lowestoft)	3	5,341	1,780	-3	6,234	2,078	8
19	The Saints	1	1,783	1,783	-2	1,848	1,848	-4
20	Wainford	1	1,749	1,749	-4	1,800	1,800	-7
21	Whitton (in Lowestoft)	3	5,946	1,982	9	5,993	1,998	4

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 (%)
22 Worlingham	2	3,309	1,655	-9	3,687	1,844	-4
23 Wrentham	1	1,743	1,743	-5	1,800	1,800	-7
Totals	48	87,667	-	-	92,561	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,826	-	-	1,928	-

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

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Waveney in Suffolk. We have now reviewed 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 was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Waveney. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in December 1979 (Report No.367). The electoral arrangements of Suffolk County Council were last reviewed in June 1982 (Report No. 429). We intend reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992, ie 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 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 have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (fourth edition published in December 2000), which 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, so far as practicable, 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 that 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 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, ie 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. 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 Orders under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in the two-tier district areas, and our current *Guidance*.

10 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 27 June 2000, when we wrote to Waveney District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Constabulary, 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 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. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

11 Stage Three began on 9 January 2001 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Waveney in Suffolk*, and ended on 5 March 2001. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four, we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

12 The district of Waveney covers an area of approximately 37,000 hectares and lies in the north-east corner of Suffolk, bordering the districts of Suffolk Coastal and Mid Suffolk to the south and the County of Norfolk to the north. The northern and southern boundaries are formed by the rivers Waveney and Blyth and the district is bordered in the east by the North Sea coastline. The main town is Lowestoft; the district also includes the smaller market towns of Beccles and Bungay in the north and Halesworth and Southwold in the south. The district contains 44 parishes, but Lowestoft town itself is unparished and comprises approximately 50 per cent of the district's total electorate.

13 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'.

14 The electorate of the district is 87,667 (February 2000). The Council presently has 48 members who are elected from 21 wards, nine of which cover the town of Lowestoft. Eleven of the wards are each represented by three councillors, five are each represented by two councillors and five are single-member wards. The Council is elected by thirds.

15 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Waveney district, with around 22 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Carlton Colville and Lothingland wards.

16 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,826 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,928 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 11 of the 21 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average and seven wards vary by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Carlton Colville ward where the councillor represents 157 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Waveney

Figure 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
1	Beccles Town	3	5,927	1,976	8	6,110	2,037	6
2	Beccles Worlingham	2	4,414	2,207	21	4,771	2,386	24
3	Blything	1	1,826	1,826	0	1,908	1,908	-1
4	Bungay	2	3,837	1,919	5	3,998	1,999	4
5	Carlton (in Lowestoft)	3	6,595	2,198	20	6,608	2,203	14
6	Carlton Colville	1	4,687	4,687	157	6,098	6,098	216
7	Gunton (in Lowestoft)	3	5,060	1,687	-8	5,100	1,700	-12
8	Halesworth	2	3,756	1,878	3	3,989	1,995	3
9	Harbour (in Lowestoft)	3	4,006	1,335	-27	4,094	1,365	-29
10	Kessingland	2	3,673	1,837	1	3,967	1,984	3
11	Kirkley (in Lowestoft)	3	4,397	1,466	-20	4,459	1,486	-23
12	Lothingland	2	4,923	2,462	35	6,090	3,045	58
13	Mutford	1	1,509	1,509	-17	1,566	1,566	-19
14	Normanston (in Lowestoft)	3	4,336	1,445	-21	4,345	1,448	-25
15	Oulton Broad (in Lowestoft)	3	5,296	1,765	-3	5,328	1,776	-8
16	Pakefield (in Lowestoft)	3	5,453	1,818	0	5,485	1,828	-5
17	St. Margaret's (in Lowestoft)	3	5,668	1,889	3	6,053	2,018	5
18	South Elmham	1	1,523	1,523	-17	1,579	1,579	-18

	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 (%)
19	Southwold	3	5,061	1,687	-8	5,198	1,733	-10
20	Wainford	1	1,391	1,391	-24	1,426	1,426	-26
21	Whitton (in Lowestoft)	3	4,329	1,443	-21	4,389	1,463	-24
	Totals	48	87,667	-	-	92,561	-	-
	Averages	-	-	1,826	-	-	1,928	-

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2000, electors in Harbour ward were relatively over-represented by 27 per cent, while electors in Carlton Colville ward were significantly under-represented by 157 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

17 During Stage One we received 10 representations, including two district-wide schemes from Waveney District Council, each with alternative proposals for the rural area, one from Waveney Constituency Labour Party, and one from Waveney District Council Conservative Group, and representations from Waveney Liberal Democrats, three parish and town councils, a group of three parishes and two local residents. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Waveney in Suffolk*.

18 Our draft recommendations were based on a combination of the District Council's, the Labour Party's and the Conservatives' proposals, together with some of our own proposals, which achieved an improvement in electoral equality, and provided a mixed pattern of one-, two- and three-member wards throughout the district. We proposed that:

- Waveney District Council should be served by 48 councillors, as at present, representing 23 wards, two more than at present;
- the boundaries of 18 of the existing wards should be modified, while three wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- there should be revised warding arrangements for Beccles Town Council and new warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for Oulton parish.

Draft Recommendation

Waveney District Council should comprise 48 councillors, serving 23 wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

19 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 22 of the 23 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average by 2005.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

20 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 106 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Waveney District Council and the Commission.

Waveney District Council

21 Waveney District Council broadly supported our draft recommendations, subject to four amendments in the rural area and one in the Lowestoft area. It proposed that Gisleham parish be removed from the proposed Wrentham ward and combined with Kessingland parish, thus retaining the existing two-member Kessingland ward. It argued that the nature of Gisleham parish is such that it has few community links with a ward which “stretches a long way south to the parishes of Uggheshall and Frostenden”. Waveney District Council also proposed transferring the parishes St Andrew Ilketshall and St John Ilketshall from the proposed Wainford ward to the proposed The Saints ward, stating that it believed that The Saints ward should contain all The ‘Saints’ parishes. In addition, it proposed that Brampton with Stoven parish should be transferred from the proposed Blything ward to the proposed Wrentham ward and that Spexhall parish should be transferred from the proposed The Saints ward to the proposed Blything ward. The District Council also forwarded a copy of an email received from a County Councillor expressing support for our proposed The Saints ward.

Waveney Constituency Labour Party

22 Waveney Constituency Labour Party (‘the Labour Party’) expressed support for our draft recommendations in the Lowestoft area, together with the parishes north of Lowestoft. In the rural part of the district, it stated that it accepted the Commission’s preference for single-member wards in the more sparsely populated rural areas, and broadly supported our proposals, subject to the amendments outlined by the District Council, as detailed above.

Waveney Conservative Association

23 Waveney Conservative Association (‘the Conservatives’) broadly supported our draft recommendations. However, they proposed modifications in the rural area, as put forward by the District Council and reiterated their support for the Council’s proposed Option 1 for the South Lowestoft area, arguing that Carlton ward should retain three councillors. In addition, they put forward a variation on Option 1. The Conservatives also expressed support for a proposal submitted by Councillor Partridge for the Oulton Broad area, as detailed below.

Waveney Liberal Democrats

24 Waveney Liberal Democrats (‘the Liberal Democrats’) broadly supported our draft recommendations, stating that they considered the most positive aspects to be the “recognition of community cohesion and ties within Lowestoft, together with the maintenance of the historic ecclesiastical areas”. They also supported the utilisation of Lake Lothing as a boundary within

Lowestoft. They did, however, reiterate the views expressed by the District Council, that all of the ‘Saints’ parishes should be within the same district ward.

Suffolk County Council

25 Suffolk County Council opposed parts of our draft recommendations with regards to the impact they would have on the future review of the County Council and the fact that “wards are often used for comparative work”.

Members of Parliament

26 Bob Blizzard MP, reiterated the views expressed by the District Council in relation to the parishes of Gisleham, St Andrew Ilketshall, St John Ilketshall, Brampton with Stoven and Spexhall. He expressed support for the remainder of the draft recommendations, stating that the proposals in Lowestoft “show coherence and consistency and follow some well-defined road boundaries”, and in the rural part of the district, “the proposals for two-member wards for the market towns and large villages and single-member wards for the very rural areas make sense.”

Parish and Town Councils

27 We received seven representations from parish and town councils, together with the grouped Parish Council of Flixton, St Cross & St Margaret South Elmham and a parish councillor. Corton Parish Council unanimously opposed our draft recommendations in relation to the inclusion of the parish in the Lowestoft town area. It argued that Corton is not an “urban parish” and as such should not be placed in an urban ward. It stated that it wanted to remain part of the existing Lothingland ward. These views were reiterated by a Corton Parish Councillor. Kessingland Parish Council strongly recommended that the historical links between Kessingland and Gisleham remain. Bungay Town Council and Southwold Town Council both expressed support for our draft recommendations in relation to their council areas, while Gisleham Parish Council stated that it wished to remain part of Kessingland ward, arguing that the parishes of Gisleham and Kessingland have common interests. Brampton with Stoven Parish Council expressed support for our proposed Blything ward, stating that it considers its parish to have similar identity to the other rural parishes with whom it is grouped. The grouped parish council of Flixton, St Cross & St Margaret South Elmham expressed support for our proposed The Saints ward but proposed that the ward name of South Elmham be retained to “maintain the historical identity of the area”. Finally, Worlingham Parish Council proposed amending the boundary between Worlingham parish and Beccles Town Council.

Other Representations

28 Councillor Partridge submitted alternative proposals for the Oulton Broad area, which were supported by the Conservatives and seven local residents who submitted pro forma letters. He asserted that the area to the south of Sands Lane and west of Christmas Lane consider themselves to be part of Oulton Broad, not the neighbouring Oulton Village. In addition, he argued that the area in the north-eastern corner of the proposed Oulton Broad ward have more in common with the adjacent Oulton Village area. He therefore proposed the retention of Sands Lane as a

boundary between the two wards and the transfer of the area containing Higher Drive and north of Gresham Avenue to the proposed Oulton ward.

29 We received 79 submissions from local residents, Corton Beach Holiday Village and a petition containing 25 signatures in relation to the incorporation of Corton Parish Council within the Lowestoft town area. Strong opposition was conveyed, with the view expressed that Corton is not an urban village and has more in common with the more rural Lothingland ward than with the urbanised area of Lowestoft. The Kirkley Health Group fully supported our proposed Kirkley ward. Suffolk Constabulary opposed our proposed Wainford and The Saints wards, arguing that their size would present them with operational difficulties with regard to policing the area.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

30 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Waveney 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”.

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

32 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.

33 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, such an objective 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 absolute electoral equality and only 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 and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

Electorate Forecasts

34 At Stage One, the District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 5 per cent from 87,667 to 92,561 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expected most of the growth to be in Carlton Colville, although a significant amount was also expected in Oulton parish, which forms part of Lothingland ward. 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.

35 In our draft recommendations report, we accepted that forecasting electorates is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the District Council’s figures, were generally content that they represented the best overall estimates that can reasonably be made at this time. However, following further analysis of the projected electorate figures and additional information on specific locations of future developments, we made a number of modifications to the forecast electorates for some specific parishes and polling districts. As a result, modifications were made

to the forecast electorates for a number of wards proposed by the District Council, Waveney Constituency Labour Party and Waveney District Council Conservative Group. These changes did not affect the total forecast electorate for 2005 and have been endorsed by the District Council.

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

Council Size

37 As already explained, the Commission's starting point is to assure 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.

38 Waveney District Council presently has 48 members. Under the District Council's proposed four options, council sizes of 47, 48 and 49 were proposed. The Labour Party and the Conservatives both proposed a council size of 48.

39 While Council size is the starting point of any review, in the case of Waveney we noted that the difference between the proposed council sizes of 47, 48 and 49 was marginal. However, we noted that a council size of 48 was preferred by the Labour Party, the Conservatives, and the District Council under two of its options. We also noted that, overall, a council size of 48 would provide marginally better electoral equality than either a council size of 47 or 49, in particular by providing the correct allocation of councillors for the rural area where we proposed creating single-member wards, reflecting the views of a number of respondents.

40 In our draft recommendations report we considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 48 members.

41 During Stage Three, we received no further representations regarding council size. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendation for a council size of 48 as final.

Parish Administrative Boundaries

42 During the course of this review, a number of parish boundary anomalies have been identified. We have no power to recommend changes to parish administrative boundaries as part of this PER. Under the provisions of the Local Government and Rating Act 1997, district councils may undertake reviews of the parish arrangements in their areas and make recommendations to the Secretary of State. When we have completed our PER of Waveney District Council, we believe that there would be considerable benefit in Waveney District Council conducting such a review.

Electoral Arrangements

43 As set out in our draft recommendations report, having considered the alternative district-wide options submitted at Stage One by the District Council, the Labour Party and the Conservatives, a number of considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations.

44 We noted that there was a broad agreement on council size and that respondents put forward proposals that secured a considerable improvement in electoral equality. However, differing assumptions were made as to how best to reflect community identities and interests in Lowestoft. We considered that Lake Lothing and Oulton Broad should be retained as a ward boundary in Lowestoft as there are relatively few river crossings in the town, and while there are some similarities between areas on either side, essentially it does define communities in the Lowestoft area. In addition, we considered that the parishes of Oulton and Corton should be combined with part of Lowestoft rather than with the more rural areas that form the current Lothingland ward. As a result, and following detailed consideration of proposed ward boundaries, we based our draft recommendations on the Labour Party's proposals in this area, although we proposed a number of modifications in North Lowestoft.

45 Differing assumptions were also made as to how best to reflect community identities and interests in the rural part of the district. We based our draft recommendations in this area on the Conservatives' proposals, subject to a number of modifications in order to improve electoral equality. We considered that the rural areas outside the market towns are sparsely populated and that creating multi-member wards would lead to the creation of wards that are large in area and, as a result, would fail to reflect community ties and may not provide the most convenient and effective local government for these areas. We also considered that there was merit in the proposal by the Conservatives (and the District Council in Options 1a and 2a), to create a separate two-member ward for Southwold and Reydon.

46 In response to our draft recommendations report, a number of respondents expressed concern in relation to our proposal to incorporate Corton Parish Council within a proposed Corton & Gunton ward. Waveney District Council commented specifically on our proposals in the rural part of the district and proposed modifications which were supported by both the Labour Party and the Conservatives, with the Liberal Democrats supporting its modifications for The Saints ward.

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

- (a) Beccles Town and Beccles Worlingham wards;
- (b) Carlton Colville ward;
- (c) Kessingland, Mutford and Southwold wards;
- (d) Blything, South Elmham and Wainford wards;
- (e) Bungay and Halesworth wards;
- (f) Gunton, Lothingland and Oulton Broad wards;

- (g) Harbour, Normanston and St Margaret's wards;
- (h) Carlton, Kirkley, Pakefield and Whitton wards.

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

Beccles Town and Beccles Worlingham wards

49 The existing wards of Beccles Town and Beccles Worlingham cover the town of Beccles and the neighbouring village of Worlingham and are situated in the north of the district bordering South Norfolk. Beccles Town ward comprises Centre, Common and School wards of Beccles Town and is currently represented by three councillors. Beccles Worlingham ward comprises Rigbourne ward of Beccles Town together with Worlingham parish and is currently represented by two councillors. Beccles Town and Beccles Worlingham wards contain 8 per cent and 21 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (6 per cent and 24 per cent more by 2005).

50 At Stage One, the District Council submitted the same proposal for the Beccles area under all four of its options. It proposed the creation of two new two-member wards, Beccles North and Beccles South, covering the whole of Beccles Town Council area. The Council proposed that the boundary between the two new wards should follow in a westerly direction down the centre of Ellough Road, to the rear of Beccles Middle School, the centre of St George's Road, then in a southerly direction through the cemetery to the parish boundary. The remaining boundaries of the two wards would be formed by the existing Town Council boundaries. Under three of the four options, the remaining part of the existing Beccles Worlingham ward, Worlingham parish, would be combined with the parishes of Barnby, Mutford and North Cove in a new two-member Worlingham ward. However, under Option 2, the parishes of Barnby, Mutford and Worlingham would be combined with Henstead with Hulver Street parish in a revised two-member Mutford ward, detailed below. Under our proposed council size of 48, the District Council's new Beccles North and Beccles South wards would contain 6 per cent and 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (2 per cent and 5 per cent more by 2005). The Conservatives supported the District Council's proposals for this area. Worlingham Parish Council supported the Council's Option 1, which would combine Worlingham with Barnby, Mutford and North Cove parishes.

51 The Labour Party also proposed the creation of two new two-member Beccles North and Beccles South wards based on the four wards of Beccles Town Council. The Labour Party's proposals were broadly similar to the District Council's in this area. However, their proposed Beccles South ward would include all the properties on Ellough Road together with the St Anne's Close area, with their proposed boundary following the Ipswich to Lowestoft railway line between St George's Road and Ingate. To compensate for this change, they proposed that all the properties on London Road and Wembley Avenue should form part of Beccles North ward. The remaining part of Beccles Worlingham ward, Worlingham parish, would be combined with the parishes of Barnby and North Cove in a new two-member Worlingham, Barnby & North Cove ward, detailed below. Under the Labour Party's proposals, the new Beccles North and Beccles South wards would contain 5 per cent and 9 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (2 per cent and 9 per cent more by 2005).

52 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we concurred with the view that the Beccles area should be divided into two two-member wards, Beccles North and Beccles South. We noted that the alternative proposals submitted by the District Council and the Labour Party would both achieve improved levels of electoral equality and considered that they both had merit. However, we decided to base our draft recommendations for this area on the District Council's proposals, subject to minor modifications in order to provide for more clearly identifiable boundaries. First, we proposed that all properties on Ellough Road should form part of Beccles South ward, as proposed by the Labour Party. Second, we proposed that the western part of the boundary should follow the centre of the A145 London Road for part of its length, continuing along field edges until it meets Wash Lane. We considered that including properties on London Road and Wembley Avenue in Beccles North ward, as proposed by the Labour Party, would not provide as clear boundaries and would isolate the new development in the Richard Crampton Road area from the rest of the ward. In addition, we considered the inclusion of the St Anne's Close area in Beccles South ward would worsen electoral equality, as much of the future development in the town in the next five years is forecast to take place in Beccles South ward.

53 At Stage Three, the District Council, the Liberal Democrats, the Labour Party and the Conservatives all expressed support for our proposed Beccles North and Beccles South wards.

54 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendation for Beccles North and Beccles South wards as final. The proposed wards would achieve good levels of electoral equality by 2005 and have received cross-party support.

55 Under our final recommendations, the proposed Beccles North and Beccles South wards would each contain 7 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (3 per cent and 4 per cent more respectively by 2005). Our proposed boundaries in the Beccles area are illustrated on Maps A2 and A3 in Appendix A. Proposals for revised Town Council arrangements are detailed later.

Carlton Colville ward

56 Carlton Colville ward is located on the fringe of Lowestoft. Although the traditional centre of the village neighbours the Pakefield area of Lowestoft, the past 20 years have witnessed significant housing development, particularly in the north of the parish neighbouring Beccles Road (A146). The current Carlton Colville ward is represented by a single councillor and is coterminous with Carlton Colville parish. Currently, the area is significantly under-represented due to housing development since the last review, and Carlton Colville ward currently contains 157 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average, expected to deteriorate further to 216 per cent by 2005.

57 At Stage One, the District Council put forward two differing proposals for this area. Its Options 1, 1a and 2a would all retain the existing ward but would increase the level of representation from one to three councillors in order to reflect the area's growth since the last review. Option 2 would also increase the level of representation for the area to three councillors, but would combine Carlton Colville with the neighbouring parishes of Gisleham (from Kessingland ward) and Rushmere (from Mutford ward) to form a new Carlton Colville &

Gisleham ward. Under our proposed council size of 48, the District Council's proposed Carlton Colville ward, under options 1, 1a and 2a, would contain 14 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (5 per cent more by 2005). Its alternative proposal for a new Carlton Colville & Gisleham ward would contain 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (12 per cent more by 2005). The Conservatives supported the Council's Option 1a, which would retain the existing ward in this area but increase its representation to three councillors. As part of the District Council's own consultation exercise, Gisleham Parish Council expressed a preference for Option 1, which would retain its current link with Kessingland in a ward.

58 The Labour Party also proposed the creation of a three-member Carlton Colville ward. However, they proposed that the new ward include the parishes of Carlton Colville and Gisleham (from Kessingland ward). They argued that part of the parish of Gisleham, near Gisleham Middle School, is in effect part of the village of Carlton Colville and that the parish relates more strongly to Carlton Colville than Kessingland. Under the Labour Party's proposals, the proposed Carlton Colville ward would contain 7 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (12 per cent more by 2005 due to continued growth in the area).

59 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we concurred with the view that the existing ward boundaries for Carlton Colville should be retained but that the representation for the ward should be increased from one to three councillors. While we recognised that there are some links between Carlton Colville and Gisleham, we noted that Gisleham parish is quite diverse and also includes the settlement of Black Street which neighbours Rushmere and Kessingland parishes. Carlton Colville is an expanding settlement, and we wished to ensure that any new ward for the area had a degree of longevity and that our proposals would not lead to significant under-representation for the area by 2005. On this basis, we considered that the new ward should contain only Carlton Colville parish and should not be combined with neighbouring areas.

60 At Stage Three, the District Council and the Conservatives expressed support for our proposed Carlton Colville ward. No other specific views were expressed.

61 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three, and in the light of local support, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendation for Carlton Colville ward as final.

62 Under our final recommendations, the proposed Carlton Colville ward would initially contain 14 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (5 per cent more by 2005, due to extensive growth in the area). Our proposed boundaries for this area are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of this report.

Kessingland, Mutford and Southwold wards

63 The existing wards of Kessingland, Mutford and Southwold are situated in the east of the district. Kessingland ward comprises the parishes of Gisleham and Kessingland and is currently represented by two councillors. Mutford ward comprises the parishes of Barnby, Henstead with Hulver Street, Mutford, North Cove and Rushmere and is currently represented by a single councillor. Southwold ward comprises the parishes of Benacre, Covehithe, Frostenden, Reydon,

South Cove, Southwold, Uggeshall, Wangford with Henham and Wrentham and is currently represented by three councillors. Under existing arrangements, Kessingland ward contains 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (3 per cent more by 2005). Mutford and Southwold wards contain 17 per cent and 8 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (19 per cent and 10 per cent fewer by 2005).

64 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that the existing Kessingland ward should be retained under three of its four alternative options. Under Option 2, however, it proposed that Kessingland parish be combined with the neighbouring parish of Benacre in a revised two-member Kessingland ward. The remainder of the existing Kessingland ward, Gisleham parish, would be combined with Rushmere and Carlton Colville parishes in a new Carlton Colville & Gisleham ward, as detailed above. Three of the District Council's options proposed that part of the existing Mutford ward, the parishes of Barnby, Mutford and North Cove, should be combined with part of the existing Beccles Worlingham ward, Worlingham parish, to form a new two-member Worlingham ward. Under Option 1, the remaining part of Mutford ward, the parishes of Henstead with Hulver Street and Rushmere would form part of a new three-member South East Waveney ward together with the whole of the existing Southwold ward, the parishes of Blyford and Sotherton from the existing Blything ward and the parishes of Ellough, Shadingfield, Sotterley and Willingham St Mary from the existing Wainford ward. Under Options 1a and 2a, the remainder of the existing Mutford ward, the parishes of Henstead with Hulver Street and Rushmere, would form part of a new two-member South East Waveney ward, together with the parishes of Benacre, Covehithe, Frostenden, South Cove, Uggeshall, Wangford with Henham and Wrentham from the existing Southwold ward, and the parishes of Blyford, Brampton with Stoven, Holton, Sotherton and Westhall from the existing Blything ward.

65 The Council's Option 2 would result in the whole of the existing Mutford ward, less Rushmere parish, being combined with Worlingham parish in a revised two-member Mutford ward. The remainder of the existing Mutford ward, Rushmere parish, would be combined with the parishes of Carlton Colville and Gisleham in a revised Carlton Colville ward, as detailed above.

66 In relation to the existing Southwold ward, Options 1a and 2a both proposed the creation of a new two-member Southwold & Reydon ward comprising Reydon parish and Southwold Town. Under these two options, the remainder of the existing Southwold ward would be combined with part of the existing Mutford ward and part of the existing Blything ward, to form a new two-member South East Waveney ward, as detailed above. Under the Council's Option 1, the whole of the existing Southwold ward would be combined with parts of the existing Blything, Mutford and Wainford wards in a new three-member South East Waveney ward, as detailed above. Under the Council's Option 2, part of the existing Southwold ward, the parishes of Covehithe, Frostenden, Reydon, South Cove, Southwold, Uggeshall, Wangford with Henham and Wrentham would combine with part of the existing Blything ward, the parishes of Blyford, Holton and Sotherton, in a new three-member South Waveney ward. The remaining part of the existing Southwold ward, Benacre parish, would form part of a revised two-member Kessingland ward, as detailed above.

67 Under our proposed council size of 48, and the Council's Options 1, 1a and 2a, Kessingland and Worlingham wards would contain 1 per cent and 2 per cent more electors per councillor than

the district average respectively (3 per cent and 6 per cent more by 2005). Under Option 2, Kessingland and Mutford wards would contain 9 per cent fewer and 9 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (equal to the average and 8 per cent more by 2005). The proposed Southwold & Reydon ward and alternative options of South East Waveney and South Waveney wards would contain 5 per cent fewer, 8 per cent fewer and 7 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (7 per cent fewer, 10 per cent fewer and 4 per cent more by 2005).

68 The Labour Party proposed the creation of a revised two-member Kessingland ward, coterminous with the boundaries of Kessingland parish. The remainder of the existing Kessingland ward, Gisleham parish, would be combined with Carlton Colville parish in a revised, three-member Carlton Colville ward, as detailed above. In relation to the Mutford area, it proposed that part of the existing Mutford ward, the parishes of Barnby and North Cove, be combined with part of the existing Beccles Worlingham ward, Worlingham parish, in a new two-member, Worlingham, Barnby & North Cove ward. The remainder of the existing Mutford ward would be divided between a revised Wainford ward and a new South East Waveney ward. The parishes of Mutford and Rushmere would be combined with the parishes of Barsham, Ellough, Ringsfield, Shadingfield, Shipmeadow, Sotterley, Weston and Willingham St Mary from the existing Wainford ward, and the parishes of Mettingham and St John Ilketshall from the existing South Elmham ward, in a revised single-member Wainford ward. Henstead with Hulver parish would be combined with the whole of the existing Southwold ward to form a new, three-member South East Waveney ward. Under the Labour Party's proposals, the proposed Kessingland, South East Waveney, Wainford and Worlingham, Barnby & North Cove wards would contain 10 per cent, 3 per cent, 5 per cent and 9 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (7 per cent, 6 per cent, 7 per cent and 8 per cent fewer by 2005).

69 We received a further seven submissions in relation to this area. The Conservatives supported the District Council's Option 1a for Kessingland, Southwold & Reydon and Worlingham wards. However, they argued that the proposed two-member South East Waveney ward would cover too large an area and should be divided into two single-member wards. They proposed that the parishes of Benacre, Covehithe, Frostenden, Henstead with Hulver Street, Rushmere, South Cove, Wangford with Henham and Wrentham should be combined to form a new single-member Wrentham ward. The parishes of Brampton with Stoven, Blyford, Holton, Sotherton, Uggeshall and Westhall should be combined to form a revised single-member Blything ward. Under the Conservatives' proposals, the revised Blything and new Wrentham wards would contain 13 per cent and 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (14 per cent and 5 per cent fewer by 2005).

70 The Liberal Democrats supported the amalgamation of Southwold and Reydon into a separate district ward, as did Southwold Town Council and two local residents. Southwold Town Council argued that Southwold and Reydon "form a natural unit being relatively densely-populated 'urban' parishes surrounded by much larger and more thinly-populated rural parishes". The Group Parish Council of Frostenden, Uggeshall & South Cove expressed support for the District Council's Option 2 for their group of parishes, while Worlingham Parish Council considered that the District Council's Option 1 would be its preferred option for Worlingham.

71 As part of the District Council's own consultation exercise, Benacre Parish Council expressed support for the District Council's Option 1, arguing that it would be united with similar rural areas as opposed to larger urban areas. Blyford & Sotherton Parish Council supported the Conservatives' proposed Blything ward. Brampton with Stoven Parish Council opposed the District Council's Options 1 and 2, with specific reference to the proposed size of rural wards. It argued that the concept of one councillor per ward should be maintained in relation to wards comprising rural parishes.

72 In addition, it supported the amalgamation of Reydon and Southwold. Gisleham Parish Council expressed support for the District Council's Option 1 as did Henstead with Hulver Street Parish Council, which argued that the proposal would place them with similarly sized parishes. Holton Parish Council expressed support for the District Council's Options 1a and 2a; however, it stated that the proposed two-member wards should be divided into two single-member wards (as proposed by the Conservatives). Mutford Parish Council expressed support for the District Council's Option 1. Reydon Parish Council strongly supported the amalgamation of Southwold and Reydon in a separate two-member ward. It argued that Southwold and Reydon are very closely linked, sharing common geographical and social issues. Parish Councillor Child, Chairman of Reydon Parish Council, also expressed this view.

73 Westhall Parish Council expressed concern in relation to the District Council's Options 1 and 2. It argued that the rural part of the district should comprise single-member wards in order to maintain the link between individual councillors and their parishes. In addition, it supported a separate ward for Southwold and Reydon. One local resident expressed support for the District Council's Option 1 while another local resident expressed support for the District Council's Option 2a, with specific reference to the amalgamation of Southwold and Reydon.

74 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we decided to base our draft recommendations for this area on a combination of proposals received at Stage One. We considered that Kessingland, being a large, self-contained village to the east of the A12, should be separately represented. We considered that this proposal would reflect the identities and interests of the local community while providing a reasonable level of electoral equality, and we therefore proposed endorsing the Labour Party's proposal for Kessingland ward. We also proposed adopting the Labour Party's proposals in the Mutford area but proposed changing the name of Worlingham, Barnby & North Cove ward to Worlingham ward. We noted that while this ward would have a relatively small electorate for a two-member ward, extensive new development in Worlingham parish means that the proposed ward would have a reasonable level of electoral equality by 2005.

75 In relation to the more rural remainder of this area, we noted that there was considerable support for separate representation for Reydon and Southwold and for a single-member ward pattern elsewhere. We considered that Reydon and Southwold are distinct settlements which share considerable community ties and are significantly more urban in nature than the areas that neighbour them. The rural areas outside Kessingland, Southwold and Reydon are sparsely populated and we considered that in this area a single-member ward structure would best reflect community ties and the achievement of convenient and effective local government. We therefore based our draft recommendations on the Conservatives' proposals. However, in order to improve electoral equality in its proposed Blything and Wainford wards, we proposed a number of

changes. In particular, we proposed that Mutford parish should form part of a revised Wainford ward, as detailed below, and that Wangford with Henham parish should form part of a revised Blything ward, also detailed below. We proposed a new Wrentham ward containing Gisleham parish from Kessingland ward, Rushmere and Henstead with Hulver Street parishes from the existing Mutford ward, and Benacre, Covehithe, Frostenden, South Cove, Uggeshall and Wrentham parishes from the existing Southwold ward. We considered that this ward would group a number of similar communities linked by the A12 trunk road and would also enable the Group Parish Council of Frostenden, Uggeshall & South Cove to be contained wholly within one ward.

76 Under our draft recommendations, Kessingland, Southwold & Reydon, Worlingham and Wrentham wards would contain 10 per cent, 5 per cent, 9 per cent and 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (7 per cent, 7 per cent, 4 per cent and 5 per cent fewer by 2005).

77 At Stage Three, the District Council, the Liberal Democrats, the Labour Party and the Conservatives all expressed support for our proposed Southwold & Reydon and Worlingham wards. Southwold Town Council expressed support for our proposed Southwold & Reydon ward, while Worlingham Parish Council proposed an amendment to the boundary between the parishes of Worlingham and Beccles, however, this is not possible within the remit of this review, as detailed earlier. The District Council, the Labour Party, the Conservatives, Bob Blizzard MP and Gisleham and Kessingland parish councils all proposed the transfer of Gisleham parish from our proposed Wrentham ward to Kessingland ward, resulting in the retention of the existing two-member Kessingland ward. It was argued that, “many of the properties in this parish are themselves part of the built up area of Lowestoft. Therefore, Gisleham parish does not relate well to a ward based on Wrentham which stretches a long way south”.

78 As a consequence of this proposal and other proposals relating to the rural part of the district, discussed below, the District Council, the Labour Party, the Conservatives and Bob Blizzard MP all proposed that Brampton with Stoven parish be transferred from the proposed Blything ward to the proposed Wrentham ward. However, Brampton with Stoven Parish Council expressed support for our proposed Blything ward, stating that it considered itself to have “similar identity to the rural parishes with whom you have grouped us in the revised Blything ward. This would not be the case if Brampton with Stoven were placed in the proposed Wrentham ward”. Under these proposals, the revised Kessingland and Wrentham wards would contain 1 per cent more and 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent more and 7 per cent fewer by 2005).

79 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three, we note that our proposed Southwold & Reydon and Worlingham wards have received a degree of local support and propose confirming our draft recommendations for these wards as final. In addition, we have been persuaded by the proposals put forward by the District Council, the Conservatives, the Labour Party and Bob Blizzard MP that Gisleham parish should be combined with Kessingland parish, resulting in the retention of the existing two-member Kessingland ward. In the light of local views, we concur with the view that Gisleham parish has more community links with the neighbouring Kessingland parish than with the other parishes which form our proposed Wrentham ward. We also note that both Gisleham and Kessingland parishes expressed support for this modification.

80 We note the views expressed by Brampton with Stoven Parish Council, stating its support for forming part of the proposed Blything ward and opposition to being part of a proposed Wrentham ward. However, we consider that Brampton with Stoven parish has good communication links with the area to its east, and given the weight of evidence received in support of our proposed modifications in the rural area, we propose that Brampton with Stoven parish should form part of Wrentham ward. We have considered the possibility of retaining Brampton with Stoven in Blything ward. However, as a consequence of our proposals in relation to Gisleham parish and other parts of the rural area, as detailed below, this would result in Wrentham ward having 25 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2005, which would be unacceptable.

81 Under our final recommendations, Kessingland, Southwold & Reydon, Worlingham and Wrentham wards would contain 1 per cent more, 5 per cent, 9 per cent and 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent more, 7 per cent more, 4 per cent fewer and 7 per cent fewer by 2005). Our proposals for this area are illustrated on Map 2.

Blything, South Elmham and Wainford wards

82 The existing wards of Blything, South Elmham and Wainford are situated in the central and western part of the district. Blything ward comprises the parishes of Blyford, Brampton with Stoven, Holton, Sotherton, Spexhall, Westhall and Wissett. South Elmham ward comprises the parishes of Flixton (near Bungay), St John Ilketshall, St Lawrence Ilketshall, St Margaret Ilketshall, Mettingham, Rumburgh, All Saints & St Nicholas South Elmham, St Cross South Elmham, St James South Elmham, St Margaret South Elmham, St Mary South Elmham, otherwise Homersfield, St Michael South Elmham and St Peter South Elmham. Wainford ward comprises the parishes of Barsham, Ellough, St Andrew Ilketshall, Redisham, Ringsfield, Shadingfield, Shipmeadow, Sotterley, Weston and Willingham St Mary. All three wards are currently each represented by a single councillor. Under existing arrangements, South Elmham and Wainford wards contain 17 per cent and 24 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (18 per cent and 26 per cent fewer by 2005), while Blything ward contains equal to the average number of electors per councillor initially (1 per cent fewer than average by 2005).

83 At Stage One, the District Council proposed the same revised warding arrangements in this area under two of its four options. Options 1a and 2a provided for a new two-member South East Waveney ward comprising the parishes of Benacre, Covehithe, Frostenden, South Cove, Uggeshall, Wangford with Henham and Wrentham from the existing Southwold ward, the parishes of Henstead with Hulver Street and Rushmere from the existing Mutford ward and the parishes of Blyford, Brampton with Stoven, Holton, Sotherton and Westhall from the existing Blything ward. Under these two options, the remaining part of the existing Blything ward, the parishes of Spexhall and Wissett, would combine with the whole of the existing South Elmham and the whole of the existing Wainford wards to form a new two-member Central & West ward.

84 The Council's Option 1 would result in the parishes of Blyford and Sotherton from the existing Blything ward being combined with the parishes of Henstead with Hulver Street and Rushmere from the existing Mutford ward, the parishes of Ellough, Shadingfield, Sotterley and

Willingham St Mary from the existing Wainford ward, together with the whole of the existing Southwold ward, in a new three-member South East Waveney ward. The remaining part of the existing Blything ward, the parishes of Brampton with Stoven, Holton, Spexhall, Westhall and Wissett would be combined with the whole of the existing South Elmham ward and the remaining part of the existing Wainford ward, the parishes of Barsham, St Andrew Ilketshall, Redisham, Ringsfield, Shipmeadow and Weston, in a new two-member Central & West ward.

85 The Council's Option 2 would result in the parishes of Blyford, Holton and Sotherton from the existing Blything ward being combined with the parishes of Covehithe, Frostenden, Reydon, Southwold, South Cove, Uggeshall Wangford with Henham and Wrentham from the existing Southwold ward in a new three-member South Waveney ward. Part of the remaining part of Blything ward, the parishes of Spexhall, Westhall and Wissett, would combine with the existing South Elmham ward, less the parishes of Mettingham and St John Ilketshall, in a new single-member West Waveney ward. The remaining part of Blything ward, Brampton with Stoven parish, would combine with the remaining part of South Elmham ward, the parishes of St John Ilketshall and Mettingham and the whole of the existing Wainford ward in a revised single-member Wainford ward.

86 Under our proposed council size of 48, the Council's Options 1a and 2a would provide two two-member wards of South East Waveney and Central & West with 8 per cent and 10 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (10 per cent and 12 per cent fewer by 2005). Option 1 would, under a council size of 48, provide a three-member South East Waveney ward and a two-member Central & West ward with 7 per cent and 16 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (4 per cent and 14 per cent more by 2005). Option 2 would provide a three-member South Waveney ward and single-member Wainford and West Waveney wards with 7 per cent, 6 per cent, and 9 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (4 per cent, 3 per cent and 8 per cent more by 2005).

87 The Labour Party proposed that the whole of the existing Blything ward should be combined with the existing South Elmham ward, less the parishes of Mettingham and St John Ilketshall, and the parishes of Redisham and St Andrew Ilketshall from the existing Wainford ward to form a new two-member South West Waveney ward. The remaining part of the existing South Elmham and Wainford wards would be combined with Mutford and Rushmere parishes from the existing Mutford ward to form a revised single-member Wainford ward. Under the Labour Party's proposals, the new South West Waveney and Wainford wards would each contain 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (6 per cent and 7 per cent fewer by 2005).

88 The Conservatives broadly supported the District Council's Option 1a with the exception of the proposed South East Waveney and Central & West wards. They proposed the creation of four single-member wards, instead of two two-member wards: Blything, Wrentham, South Elmham and Wainford. They proposed single-member Wainford ward would comprise the parishes of Barsham, Ellough, St Andrew Ilketshall, St John Ilketshall, Mettingham, Redisham, Ringsfield, Shadingfield, Shipmeadow, Sotterley, Weston and Willingham St Mary, while the proposed single-member South Elmham ward would comprise the parishes of Flixton (near Bungay), St Mary South Elmham, otherwise Homersfield, St Lawrence Ilketshall, St Margaret Ilketshall,

Rumburgh, All Saints & St Nicholas South Elmham, St Cross South Elmham, St James South Elmham, St Margaret South Elmham, St Michael South Elmham, St Peter South Elmham, Spexhall and Wissett. Its proposed Blything ward would contain Blyford, Brampton with Stoven, Holton, Sotherton, Uggeshall and Westhall parishes. Its proposed Wrentham ward is detailed above. It argued that the proposals would reflect the historic links between Blyford, Sotherton, and Holton and those between the villages that make up South Elmham ward. Under the Conservatives' proposals, the revised Blything, Wainford and South Elmham wards would contain 13 per cent, 13 per cent and 8 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (14 per cent, 15 per cent and 9 per cent fewer by 2005).

89 The Liberal Democrats expressed support for the District Council's proposed West Waveney ward with its eastern boundary of Wissett, Spexhall, Westhall, St Lawrence Ilketshall, St Margaret Ilketshall and Flixton parishes. Rumburgh Parish Council strongly opposed the District Council's Option 1, arguing that under this proposal, the parish is in a ward that covers a third of the land area of the district, which it considered would be inappropriate for such a rural area. It proposed an alternative based largely on the District Council's proposed West Waveney ward, but with the exclusion of Westhall parish (effectively the same as the Conservatives' proposed South Elmham ward). In addition, it also expressed opposition for the proposed name of West Waveney, arguing that the South Elmhams are one of the most historical groupings of parishes in East Anglia.

90 As part of the Council's own consultation exercise, we received representations from Brampton with Stoven, Holton and Westhall parish councils, which all supported separate representation for Southwold and Reydon and the creation of single-member wards in the rural area of the district.

91 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we decided to base our draft recommendations for this area on the Conservatives' proposals, subject to minor modifications. As mentioned above, we concurred with the view expressed by a number of respondents that the proposed wards under the Council's options would cover too large an area of the district and, as a result, we considered that they would not satisfactorily represent the identities and interests of local communities. However, under the Conservatives' proposals, the proposed Blything and Wainford wards would have 14 per cent and 15 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively by 2005. We considered that this level of electoral inequality should be addressed, and we therefore proposed a number of modifications. In particular, we proposed that Wainford ward be expanded to include Mutford parish, as proposed by the Labour Party, that Wangford with Henham parish form part of a revised Blything ward and that Gisleham and Uggeshall parishes form part of a new Wrentham ward. We considered that the Conservatives' proposed South Elmham ward would reflect communities well, combining the rural communities between Bungay and Halesworth and broadly to the west of the A144 trunk road. We noted a number of suggested ward names for this ward. For the purpose of consultation, we proposed that the ward should be named The Saints to reflect the names of a number of parishes in the area.

92 Under our draft recommendations, The Saints ward would contain 8 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (9 per cent fewer by 2005). Blything and Wainford wards

would contain 7 per cent and 9 per cent more electors per councillor than the average respectively (6 per cent and 7 per cent more by 2005).

93 At Stage Three, the District Council, the Labour Party, the Conservatives and Bob Blizzard MP all proposed that St Andrew Ilketshall and St John Ilketshall parishes should form part of the proposed The Saints ward in order to unite all the ‘Saints’ parishes in the same district ward. This view was also expressed by the Liberal Democrats. In order for this proposal to be feasible in electoral equality terms, the Council proposed that Brampton with Stoven parish form part of the proposed Wrentham ward, as detailed above, and Spexhall parish form part of the proposed Blything ward, modifications which were supported by the Labour Party, the Conservatives and Bob Blizzard MP.

94 Brampton with Stoven Parish Council expressed support for forming part of the proposed Blything ward, as detailed above, while the grouped parish council of Flixton, St Cross & St Margaret South Elmham expressed support for our proposed The Saints ward but proposed that the ward name of South Elmham be retained to “maintain the historical identity of the area”. In addition, the District Council forwarded a copy of an email received from a County Councillor expressing support for our proposed The Saints ward.

95 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three, we support the proposal that St Andrew Ilketshall and St John Ilketshall parishes be included in our proposed The Saints ward so that all the ‘Saints’ parishes fall within the same district ward. In order for this amendment and our proposed amendment in the Gisleham area to be justified in electoral equality terms, we note that further modifications are necessary within the rural part of the district, as proposed by the District Council. We therefore propose endorsing its proposal, which is supported by a number of other respondents, that Spexhall parish form part of a revised Blything ward and Brampton with Stoven parish form part of a revised Wrentham ward. We consider that Spexhall parish has good communication links with the area to its east, specifically Westhall parish. As detailed above, we note the views expressed by Brampton with Stoven Parish Council, expressing support for forming part of the proposed Blything ward and opposition to being part of the proposed Wrentham ward. However, given that we cannot view any area in isolation, we have been unable to respect its preference, if the aim of securing good electoral equality is to be achieved. We have also not been persuaded that The Saints ward should be renamed South Elmham ward, as proposed by the grouped parish council of Flixton, St Cross & St Margaret South Elmham. We note that our proposed ward name has achieved a degree of local support and propose confirming the name of The Saints as part of our final recommendations.

96 Under our final recommendations, Blything, The Saints and Wainford wards would contain 3 per cent, 2 per cent and 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (4 per cent, 4 per cent and 7 per cent fewer by 2005). Our proposals for this area are illustrated on Map 2.

Bungay and Halesworth wards

97 The existing ward of Bungay is situated in the north-west of the district and is coterminous with Bungay Town. Halesworth ward is situated in the south of the district bordering Suffolk Coastal district and is coterminous with Halesworth town council area. Both wards are currently

represented by two councillors. Under existing arrangements, Bungay and Halesworth wards contain 5 per cent and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (4 per cent and 3 per cent more by 2005).

98 At Stage One, the District Council proposed retaining the existing warding arrangements for Bungay and Halesworth wards. The Labour Party, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats also supported the retention of the existing Bungay and Halesworth wards.

99 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we concurred with the view that the existing Bungay and Halesworth wards should be retained. We noted that these are distinctive, self-contained market towns with established communities, and that both wards provide a reasonable level of electoral equality under existing arrangements.

100 At Stage Three, the District Council, the Labour Party and the Conservatives all expressed supported for our proposal to retain the existing Bungay and Halesworth wards. We also received a submission from Bungay Town Council supporting our proposed Bungay ward.

101 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three, we note that our proposals in these areas have achieved local support and therefore propose confirming our draft recommendations for Bungay and Halesworth wards as final.

102 Under our final recommendations, Bungay and Halesworth wards would contain 5 per cent and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent and 4 per cent more by 2005).

Gunton, Lothingland and Oulton Broad wards

103 The existing wards of Gunton, Lothingland and Oulton Broad are situated in the north-eastern corner of the district. Lothingland ward comprises the parishes of Blundeston, Corton, Flixton (near Lowestoft), Lound, Oulton and Somerleyton, Ashby & Herringfleet and is currently represented by two councillors. Gunton and Oulton Broad wards form part of the unparished town area of Lowestoft and are currently each represented by three councillors. Under existing arrangements, Gunton and Oulton Broad wards contain 8 per cent and 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (12 per cent and 8 per cent fewer by 2005). Lothingland ward contains 35 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (58 per cent more by 2005).

104 At Stage One, the District Council proposed two alternative options for Gunton, Lothingland and Oulton Broad wards. Its Option 1 was based on minimal change, and retained the existing Lothingland ward, while increasing its representation from two to three councillors in order to deal with the high level of electoral inequality which currently exists. In addition, it proposed broadly retaining the existing Oulton Broad ward with the addition of the area bounded by Gloucester Avenue, Somerleyton Road and Oulton Road (polling District FB), from St Margaret's ward. Under this option, the existing Gunton ward would also be broadly retained with the exception of its southern boundary, where the Council proposed that the boundary should follow the rear of properties on St Margaret's Road to the junction with the High Street, continuing in an easterly direction to the district boundary. The representation of the revised

Gunton ward would be reduced from three to two. The Council proposed that the area south of these roads should be transferred to the neighbouring Harbour ward.

105 Under our proposed council size of 48, Lothingland ward would have 10 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (5 per cent more by 2005). Gunton and Oulton Broad wards would have 5 per cent and 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the average respectively (1 per cent more and 1 per cent fewer by 2005).

106 The Council's Option 2 proposed a far more radical change to the wards of Lothingland, Gunton and Oulton Broad. It proposed that Lothingland ward be retained as a predominantly rural ward and that the more urban areas of Oulton and Corton be combined with parts of Lowestoft. The revised single-member Lothingland ward would comprise the parishes of Blundeston, Flixton (near Lowestoft), Lound and Somerleyton, Ashby & Herringfleet. The existing Oulton parish would be combined with the Parkhill and Spashett Road areas of St Margaret's ward to form a new three-member Oulton ward. The existing Gunton ward, less the area to the south of St Margaret's Road and The Ravine, would be combined with Corton parish and the part of the existing St Margaret's ward to the east of Hollingsworth Road in a new three-member Gunton with Corton ward. As under Option 1, the area to the south of St Margaret's Road and The Ravine would be transferred to the neighbouring Harbour ward.

107 The most radical modification under this option was in relation to the existing Oulton Broad ward. The northern part of the existing ward would be combined with the area bounded by Crestview Drive and Somerleyton Road from St Margaret's ward, along with the area to the north-west of Fir Lane and the properties on the south-east side of Monkton Drive from Normanston ward to form a new three-member Oulton Broad North ward. The southern boundary for this new ward would follow in an westerly direction along the Lowestoft to Norwich railway line, along Hall Road to the junction with Gilpin Road, heading in a northerly direction to the junction with Clarkson Road, continuing in a westerly direction to the rear of properties on Clarkson Road, and Prospect Road to the district boundary. The part of the existing Oulton Broad ward to the south of this boundary would be combined with parts of Carlton and Whitton wards in a new Oulton Broad South ward, which is discussed in more detail below. As a result, therefore, this option would combine areas on either side of Lake Lothing and Oulton Broad in a new ward.

108 Under our proposed council size of 48, Lothingland, Gunton with Corton and Oulton wards would contain 10 per cent, 2 per cent and 20 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (13 per cent fewer, 7 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more by 2005). Oulton Broad North ward would contain 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (3 per cent fewer by 2005).

109 The Labour Party also proposed that the predominantly semi-urban areas of Corton and Oulton be combined with parts of Lowestoft, resulting in a rural, single-member Lothingland ward comprising the parishes of Blundeston, Flixton (near Lowestoft), Lound and Somerleyton, Ashby & Herringfleet. It also proposed a new two-member Oulton ward, combining the existing Oulton parish with the northern part of Oulton Broad ward so that the southern boundary would follow to the rear of properties on Sands Lane, including the whole of Chestnut Avenue, the rear of properties on Clarkson Road and Prospect Road in a westerly direction to the district

boundary. The area to the south of this new boundary would form a revised two-member Oulton Broad ward which would retain its existing southern and eastern boundaries, with a minor modification to its northern boundary to transfer Gloucester Avenue and adjoining roads to the neighbouring St Margaret's ward. In relation to the existing Gunton ward, the Labour Party proposed that the northern part of the ward be combined with Corton parish to form a new two-member Gunton North & Corton ward. The southern boundary would continue down Yarmouth Road to the junction with The Ravine then continue in a easterly direction to the district boundary. It proposed that the southern part of the current Gunton ward, broadly to the south of Yarmouth Road and the Sparrow's Nest Theatre, should be combined with Harbour ward, as discussed below.

110 Under the Labour Party's proposals, Gunton North & Corton and Oulton Broad wards would contain 6 per cent and 10 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (1 per cent and 4 per cent more by 2005). Lothingland and Oulton wards would contain 10 per cent and 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (13 per cent fewer and 18 per cent more by 2005).

111 We received a further two representations in relation to this area. The Conservatives expressed support for the District Council's Option 1, while the Liberal Democrats strongly opposed Option 1 and offered alternative proposals for the South Lowestoft wards, discussed in more detail below. As part of the Council's own consultation exercise, two residents of Parkside Drive expressed the view that the area would be better represented in Oulton Broad ward.

112 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we concurred with the view that Oulton and Corton would be better represented if they were combined with parts of the existing Oulton Broad and Gunton wards respectively. This would result in the creation of a predominantly rural single-member Lothingland ward, as proposed by the Labour Party and under the District Council's Option 2. However, after closer inspection of the electorate forecasts for this area, we found that it had been assumed that electorate growth would be distributed equally across the current Lothingland ward. However, much of the forecast development is expected to take place in Oulton parish in the Parkhill development and on land north of Sands Lane (known locally as Wood's Meadow). As a result, there would be insufficient electorate in the proposed Lothingland ward by 2005 to achieve an acceptable level of electoral equality. In order to improve electoral equality, we proposed transferring 73 electors from the Camps Heath area of Oulton parish into a revised single-member Lothingland ward. We proposed that Oulton parish, less Camps Heath, be combined with the area to the north of Clarkson Road and Prospect Road from the existing Oulton Broad ward, as proposed by the Labour Party, to form a new, two-member Oulton ward. However, we proposed that 87 electors from Chestnut Avenue should be transferred to Oulton Broad ward and that the new development area of Parkhill, which is currently divided between Oulton parish and St Margaret's ward, should form part of a revised St Margaret's ward, as detailed below.

113 We based our draft recommendations for the revised Oulton Broad ward on the Labour Party's proposals, which we considered provided for the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We noted that its proposal would retain the majority of Oulton Broad within one ward and would retain Lake Lothing as a ward boundary. However, we proposed two minor modifications to the eastern boundary. We proposed that the area surrounding Monkton

Avenue be transferred to the neighbouring Normanston ward in order to provide for improved levels of electoral equality. In addition, we proposed that the boundary which currently lies to the east of Peto Way be modified to follow Peto Way, which would tie the boundary to ground detail while affecting no electors. Finally, we endorsed the Labour Party's proposals for Gunton ward but proposed changing the proposed name of Gunton North & Corton to Gunton & Corton. We considered that there was an element of similarity between Gunton and Corton, and that the Ravine and Yarmouth Road provided a good, clear boundary for a new ward.

114 At Stage Three, the District Council expressed support for our proposed Lothingland, Oulton, Gunton & Corton and Oulton Broad wards subject to a minor amendment to the proposed boundary between Oulton ward and St Margaret's ward in the Lowestoft town area, in order to transfer one property from St Margaret's ward to Oulton ward, from which its main access is served. Support was also expressed for this area by Bob Blizzard MP and from the Labour Party who stated that our proposals utilise good boundaries.

115 The Conservatives expressed support for our proposed Lothingland, Gunton & Corton and St Margaret's ward, however, they supported an alternative proposal submitted for the Oulton and Oulton Broad areas by Councillor Partridge. Councillor Partridge's alternative proposals for the Oulton Broad area, were also supported by seven local residents who submitted pro forma letters. He asserted that the area to the south of Sands Lane and west of Christmas Lane consider themselves to be part of Oulton Broad, not the neighbouring Oulton Village. In addition, he argued that the area in the north-eastern corner of the proposed Oulton Broad ward has more in common with the Oulton Village area. He therefore proposed the retention of Sands Lane as a boundary between the two wards and the transfer of the area containing Higher Drive and the area north of Gresham Avenue to the proposed Oulton ward. Under Councillor Partridge's proposals, Oulton Broad and Oulton wards would contain 11 per cent more and 12 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (5 per cent more and 1 per cent fewer by 2005).

116 We received 79 submissions from local residents, Corton Beach Holiday Village and a petition containing 25 signatures in relation to the incorporation of Corton parish within a ward in the Lowestoft town area. Strong opposition was conveyed, with the view expressed that Corton is not an urban village and has more in common with the more rural Lothingland ward than with the urbanised area of Lowestoft.

117 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three, we are proposing to confirm our draft recommendations for this area as final, subject to the one minor amendment to the boundary between Oulton and St Margaret's wards, as proposed by the District Council. We note that the main area of contention has been in relation to our proposal to unite Corton parish with Gunton, part of the urban area of Lowestoft, in a new two-member Gunton & Corton ward. We note the concerns of a number of local respondents. However, we have been unable to suggest an alternative option which would provide for an acceptable level of electoral equality, while not having an adverse effect on the surrounding wards, particularly given the constraints of the District boundary in this area. Incorporating Corton parish within a revised Lothingland ward, as proposed by a large number of respondents, would result in Gunton & Corton and Lothingland wards containing 24 per cent fewer and 41 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively by 2005. We requested additional evidence from the District

Council with regards to this issue at Stage Three. Its response broadly stated that its intention was to create three-member wards in Lowestoft wherever possible by incorporating adjacent parishes to the outlying wards. It acknowledged the fact that Corton has a “non-residential” wedge between it and Gunton. However, other options had been looked at for the area but no alternatives could be agreed.

118 Within a number of the submissions which we received in relation to this issue, it became apparent that there was an element of concern being expressed that the Corton area would lose its parish status if our draft recommendations were to be endorsed. We do not consider, however, that such a concern is warranted. In a number of local authority areas, parishes are combined with neighbouring unparished areas and such a change does not affect the continuing existence of the parished area. It may be worth noting that, as part of the current periodic electoral review, the Commission is unable to modify parish boundaries. Furthermore, an area can only have its parish status removed by means of a parish review and only where such a course of action is the clear preference of local residents.

119 In relation to the Oulton Broad area, we have carefully considered the alternative proposal submitted by Councillor Partridge and supported by the Conservatives and seven local residents. We consider that the proposal does have merit and would achieve acceptable levels of electoral equality by 2005. However, we have not been persuaded by the evidence provided that the identities and interests of the local community would be better served than under our draft recommendations. In particular, we do not concur with the view that Sands Lane is a significant boundary between the two wards, with the area to the north having good communication links with the area to the south, resulting in Sands Lane, in our view, being more of a link between communities rather than a barrier. In addition, we have not been persuaded that the area north of Gresham Avenue, containing Higher Drive, has more community of interest with Oulton Village than with Oulton Broad. In particular, Higher Drive, which extends southwards into Oulton Broad, would appear to have better communication links with the areas to its south and west than to its north. On balance, we are confirming the view that our draft recommendations provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in this area, and propose confirming our proposed Oulton and Oulton Broad wards as final, subject to one minor amendment to the eastern boundary of Oulton ward, as detailed above.

120 Under our final recommendations, Lothingland and Oulton wards would contain 6 per cent and 10 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (9 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more by 2005). Gunton & Corton and Oulton Broad wards would contain 6 per cent and 9 per cent more electors per councillor than the average respectively (1 per cent more and 3 per cent more by 2005). Our proposals for this area are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of this report.

Harbour, Normanston and St Margaret’s wards

121 The existing wards of Harbour, Normanston and St Margaret’s are situated in the north-eastern corner of the district and form part of the unparished area of Lowestoft. All three wards are currently each represented by three councillors. Under existing arrangements, Harbour and Normanston wards contain 27 per cent and 21 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (29 per cent and 25 per cent fewer by 2005). St Margaret’s ward

contains 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (5 per cent more by 2005).

122 At Stage One, the District Council proposed two alternative options for this area. Option 1 proposed broadly retaining the existing three-member St Margaret's ward, with the exception of the transfer of the area in the south-west corner (polling district FB) to the neighbouring Oulton Broad ward, as detailed above. Under this option, the boundaries of the existing Normanston ward would remain unchanged, with the exception of the boundary with Harbour ward. The revised boundary would result in the Winnipeg Road area being transferred from Harbour ward to Normanston ward and the area bounded by Love Road and Avondale Road being transferred from Normanston to Harbour ward. The revised Harbour ward would retain its existing southern boundary of Lake Lothing and the Harbour, but would be expanded northwards to include that part of Gunton ward to the south of St Margaret's Road. Harbour ward would continue to be represented by three councillors, while the revised Normanston ward would be represented by two councillors. Under our proposed council size of 48, Harbour and Normanston wards would have 8 per cent and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (4 per cent more and equal to the average by 2005). St Margaret's ward would have 8 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average (6 per cent fewer by 2005).

123 Under the Council's Option 2, the most significant change would occur in relation to St Margaret's ward, which would be divided between the neighbouring five wards. The majority of St Margaret's ward, the area to the north of Montgomery Avenue and west of Hollingsworth Road would form part of a new Oulton ward, with the south-westerly corner forming part of a new Oulton Broad North ward, as detailed above. The area to the south of Montgomery Avenue and west of Somerton Avenue would be combined with part of the existing Normanston ward in a new Central ward. The area to the east of Hollingsworth Road and Somerton Avenue would form part of a new Gunton & Corton ward, less the Church Road area which would transfer to Harbour ward. The area surrounding Newbon's Meadow and the area bordered by Norwich Road and Rotterdam Road, from Normanston ward, would both be transferred to the neighbouring Harbour ward. The new three-member Central ward would also contain the area to the west of Raglan Street from the existing Harbour ward. The area to the west of Fir Lane would also be transferred from Normanston ward to a new Oulton Broad North ward, as detailed above. The remainder of the existing Harbour ward would be combined with part of the existing Gunton ward, to the south of St Margaret's Road, as detailed above, to form a revised three-member Harbour ward.

124 Under our proposed council size of 48, Central and Harbour wards would contain 3 per cent more and 7 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (1 per cent and 10 per cent fewer by 2005).

125 The Labour Party proposed broadly retaining the existing boundaries of St Margaret's ward subject to the inclusion of a number of streets around Gloucester Avenue from Oulton Broad ward, as detailed above. In addition, they proposed that the Ashley Downs area be transferred to the neighbouring Harbour ward. They proposed that the boundaries of the existing Normanston ward should be broadly retained, with the exception of the boundary between Normanston and Harbour wards, where the area bounded by Roman Road, Clapham Road South and the Harbour (polling district DN), would be transferred from Harbour ward to Normanston ward. The revised

St Margaret's and Normanston wards would both be represented by three councillors. The remaining part of Harbour ward would be combined with the part of Gunton ward to the south of The Ravine and Yarmouth Road and the Ashley Downs area from St Margaret's ward, in a revised three-member Harbour ward, as detailed above.

126 Under the Labour Party's proposals, Harbour and Normanston wards would each contain equal to the average number of electors per councillor (4 per cent and 5 per cent fewer respectively by 2005). St Margaret's ward would contain 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average (1 per cent fewer by 2005).

127 We received a further two representations in relation to this area. The Conservatives expressed support for the District Council's Option 1, while the Liberal Democrats strongly opposed Option 1 and offered alternative proposals for the South Lowestoft wards, discussed in more detail below. As part of the Council's own consultation exercise, two residents of Parkside Drive expressed the view that they would be better represented in Oulton Broad ward. Another local resident opposed the Council's Option 2, arguing that the proposed new Central ward would not adequately reflect community identity. He expressed support for Option 1.

128 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we based our draft recommendations for Harbour, Normanston and St Margaret's wards on the Labour Party's proposals, which we considered provided the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. However, we proposed modifying the Labour Party's proposals in order to better reflect the local communities in the area. Under existing arrangements, the western boundary of St Margaret's ward, which the Labour Party proposed retaining, the Parkhill development and, in particular, Wainright Close are dissected by the ward boundary. We proposed that the whole of the Parkhill development, including that part that currently forms part of Oulton parish, be transferred to a revised St Margaret's ward. In addition, we considered that the Ashley Downs area, which under the Labour Party's proposals would be transferred to a revised Harbour ward, would be better represented in a revised Normanston ward. In addition to this modification and the modifications to the boundary with Oulton Broad ward, as detailed above, we also proposed minor modifications to the boundary between Normanston and Harbour wards.

129 We considered that Bevan Street, Commercial Road and Clapham Road South are integral parts of the current Harbour ward and should not be transferred to Normanston ward. We recognised, however, that it is particularly difficult to provide a good balance between electoral equality and community identities in this area. We proposed that the Princes Road area be transferred from Normanston ward to Harbour ward and the area between Clapham Road South and Trafalgar Street continue to form part of Harbour ward. In addition, we proposed two minor boundary amendments, one to the west side of the football ground on Yeovil Road and to the eastern boundary of St Margaret's ward, in order to tie the existing boundaries to ground detail. These changes would affect no electors.

130 At Stage Three, the District Council expressed support for our proposed Harbour, Normanston and St Margaret's wards, subject to the one minor amendment to the boundary between Oulton and St Margaret's wards as detailed above. The Labour Party also expressed

support for our draft recommendations in this area, as did Bob Blizzard MP. The Conservatives stated that they were “broadly happy” with our proposed Harbour and St Margaret’s wards.

131 Having considered the representations received at Stage Three, we note that our proposals in this area have received a degree of support and therefore propose confirming our draft recommendations for Harbour, Normanston and St Margaret’s wards as final, subject to one minor amendment to the boundary between St Margaret’s and Oulton wards, as detailed above.

132 Under our final recommendations, Harbour ward would contain 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (1 per cent more by 2005). Normanston and St Margaret’s wards would contain 2 per cent and 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (7 per cent fewer and 8 per cent more by 2005). Our proposals for this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

Carlton, Kirkley, Pakefield and Whitton wards

133 The existing wards of Carlton, Kirkley, Pakefield and Whitton cover the unparished area of South Lowestoft. All four wards are currently represented by three councillors. Under existing arrangements, Kirkley and Whitton wards contain 20 per cent and 21 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (23 per cent and 24 per cent fewer by 2005). Pakefield and Carlton wards have equal to and 20 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (5 per cent fewer and 14 per cent more by 2005).

134 At Stage One, the District Council proposed two alternative options for South Lowestoft. Under Option 1, a revised three-member Carlton ward would retain part of its northern boundary of Lake Lothing, west of Oulton Broad to the Saltwater Way. The boundary would then continue in a southerly direction along the Lowestoft to Ipswich railway line to the junction with Beccles Road, easterly along Dell Road, then to the rear of Dell Primary School until it meets the existing boundary. The area to the east of this new boundary, the Victoria Road and Dell Road areas, would be transferred to a revised Whitton ward. The existing Carlton ward boundaries would be retained for the rest of the revised ward, with a minor modification in the south following Bloodmoor Road. The revised three-member Whitton ward would retain its existing northern and southern boundaries, but would be combined with the area surrounding Dell Road and Victoria Road from the existing Carlton ward, as detailed above. In addition, the area to the west of Kirkley Street and north of Carlton Road would be transferred from the existing Kirkley ward. The remaining part of the existing Kirkley ward, less the properties on the east side of The Avenue and adjoining roads and the properties on the west side of London Road, would form a revised two-member Kirkley ward. The existing three-member Pakefield ward would remain broadly unchanged under this option, with the exception of the northern boundary which would follow the rear of The Avenue and the west side of London Road, as detailed above. There would also be a minor modification to the boundary with Carlton ward, near Bloodmoor Road, as detailed above.

135 Under our proposed council size of 48, Whitton ward would have 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (6 per cent fewer by 2005). Kirkley, Carlton and Pakefield wards would have 11 per cent, 5 per cent and 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (6 per cent more, 1 per cent fewer and 2 per cent fewer by 2005).

136 Under Option 2, the District Council proposed a new three-member Oulton Broad South ward comprising part of the existing Oulton Broad ward, as detailed above, together with the area of Carlton ward to the north-west of Cotmer Road, Colville Road and Rowan Way, and the Aubretia Close area from the existing Whitton ward. The remaining part of the existing Carlton ward would be combined with Long Road and adjoining roads from Pakefield ward together with the part of Whitton ward to the south of Hawthorn Avenue and Cypress Way to the west of Kirkley Run, in a revised three-member Carlton ward. The remaining part of the existing Whitton ward would be combined with the existing Kirkley ward, excluding the area surrounding Kirkley Gardens and Kirkley Park Road, to form a new three-member Lake Lothing ward. The part of the existing Kirkley ward surrounding Kirkley Gardens and Kirkley Park Road would then be combined with the remaining part of the existing Pakefield ward in a revised three-member Pakefield ward.

137 Under our proposed council size of 48, Oulton Broad South, Lake Lothing and Pakefield wards would each contain 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (2 per cent, 1 per cent and 2 per cent fewer by 2005). Carlton ward would contain equal to the average number of electors per councillor (5 per cent fewer by 2005).

138 The Labour Party proposed a revised two-member Carlton ward containing the part of the existing ward to the west of Elm Tree Road, Cotmer Road and Bridge Road. The majority of the remaining Carlton ward would be combined with the part of the existing Whitton ward to the west of Kirkley Run, in a revised three-member Whitton ward. The Labour Party proposed that 161 electors on Long Road (from Carlton ward) should be combined with the existing Pakefield ward in a revised three-member Pakefield ward. The remaining part of Whitton ward would be combined with the existing Kirkley ward to form a revised three-member Kirkley ward.

139 Under the Labour Party's proposals, Carlton, Kirkley, Pakefield and Whitton wards would contain 2 per cent, 1 per cent, 2 per cent and 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent fewer, 3 per cent fewer, 2 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more by 2005).

140 We received a further two representations in relation to this area. The Conservatives expressed support for the District Council's Option 1 while the Liberal Democrats strongly opposed the District Council's Option 1, arguing that it was a "political option". It proposed that Pakefield ward remain unchanged and that Kirkley ward should retain three councillors by combining the area to the east of Kirkley Run in the existing ward. As part of the Council's own consultation exercise, a local resident argued that under both Options 1 and 2, Kirkley ward would be "down graded". He suggested that the boundaries of Kirkley ward should be extended to coincide with the boundaries of the Single Regeneration Budget area.

141 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we based our draft recommendations for the South Lowestoft area on the Labour Party's proposals, which we considered provided for the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. In particular, we noted that the proposals would largely retain the current Pakefield ward and would not divide the Kirkley community. However, we proposed a few minor modifications. In relation to Carlton ward, we concurred with the view that Elm Tree Road and Cotmer Road provided a strong eastern boundary for a new ward. However, we proposed that in the north, the boundary

should follow the western side of the Broadlands Holiday Village, transferring this area to the neighbouring Whitton ward. In relation to Whitton ward, we proposed that the western boundary of the revised Kirkley ward should follow the rear of properties on Kirkley Run, resulting in the transfer of an additional 117 electors to the neighbouring Kirkley ward. We considered that the best warding arrangement for the Kirkley area is to retain three councillors but to expand the ward westwards, as proposed by the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats. We considered that the alternative proposal for a two-member ward would divide the Kirkley area, one of the most established communities in Lowestoft. We also proposed a minor amendment to the Labour Party's proposed boundaries for Pakefield ward.

142 We noted the differing views expressed in relation to Long Road. While the District Council's Option 2 transferred the road, together with all streets leading from it, to Carlton ward, the Labour Party proposed that the whole of Long Road form part of Pakefield ward. We considered that the District Council's proposal provided the clearest boundary in this area with the "Green Wedge" to the rear of Long Road earmarked for a new road. We considered, on balance, that the current boundary of Long Road provided the best boundary for the two wards. We did, however, consider that the boundary between Kirkley and Pakefield wards could be improved and proposed that the boundary should follow the rear of properties on The Avenue, resulting in the transfer of 126 electors from Kirkley ward to Pakefield ward. We also proposed that the boundary continue along Kensington Road, resulting in the transfer of 61 electors from Pakefield ward to Kirkley ward. We noted that our proposals reflected elements of views expressed by the Liberal Democrats and a local resident, specifically in relation to the Kirkley and Pakefield wards, which would be broadly retained.

143 At Stage Three, the District Council, the Liberal Democrats, the Labour Party and Bob Blizzard MP all expressed support for our draft recommendations in relation to this area. Kirkley Health Group expressed full support for our proposed Kirkley ward, stating that the proposals give Kirkley a "fair and just" deal while broadly retaining the existing Kirkley ward.

144 The Conservatives opposed our proposed wards in this area and reiterated their support for the Council's Option 1 relating to South Lowestoft. They proposed that Carlton ward should retain three councillors and that Kirkley, Whitton and Pakefield wards should be modified as in the original Option 1 proposals. In addition, the Conservatives proposed a variation on Option 1. They proposed that the three-member Carlton ward should retain its present boundaries, while the area broadly bounded by Kirkley Run and Waveney Drive and the area broadly to the north of Pakefield Street should form part of a revised three-member Kirkley ward. The area to the north of Stradbroke Road, currently in Pakefield ward, would form part of a revised two-member Whitton ward. The remaining part of Pakefield ward would form a revised two-member Pakefield ward. The Conservatives argued that these proposals would utilise Stadbroke Road as a boundary between the proposed Whitton and Pakefield wards, which they argued is, "a natural boundary as this is a main A road cutting into the present Pakefield ward". They also argued that these proposals would unite Kirkley High School within the Kirkley ward.

145 Having considered the representations received at Stage Three, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations for South Lowestoft as final. We have not been persuaded by the evidence provided that the Conservatives' proposals would provide for a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than our draft recommendations. We consider that our

proposals in this area utilise strong boundaries such as Elm Tree Road, Long Road and Kirkley Run. We also note that our proposals for this area have received support from the District Council, the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats and Kirkley Health Group.

146 Under our final recommendations, Carlton, Kirkley, Pakefield and Whitton wards would contain 2 per cent, 1 per cent, 1 per cent and 9 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent fewer, 3 per cent fewer, 4 per cent fewer and 4 per cent more by 2005). Our proposals for this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Electoral Cycle

147 At Stage One, we received no proposals in relation to the electoral cycle of the district. Accordingly, we made no recommendation for change to the present system of elections by thirds for Waveney District Council.

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

Conclusions

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

- we propose that Gisleham parish should be transferred from Wrentham ward to Kessingland ward;
- we propose that St Andrew Ilketshall and St John Ilketshall parishes should be transferred from Wainford ward to The Saints ward;
- we propose that Brampton with Stoven parish should be transferred from Blything ward to Wrentham ward;
- we propose that Spexhall parish should be transferred from The Saints ward to Blything ward;
- we propose a minor amendment to the boundary between Oulton and St Margaret's wards affecting one property.

150 We conclude that, in Waveney:

- a council size of 48 members should be retained;
- there should be 23 wards, two more than at present;

- the boundaries of 17 of the existing wards should be modified;
- the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

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

Figure 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	48	48	48	48
Number of wards	21	23	21	23
Average number of electors per councillor	1,826	1,826	1,928	1,928
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	11	1	12	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	7	0	8	0

152 As Figure 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 11 to one. This level of electoral equality would improve further in 2005, with no wards projected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Waveney District Council should comprise 48 councillors serving 23 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A, and on the large map inside the back cover of this report. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

153 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides 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 district. Accordingly, in our draft recommendations report, we proposed consequential warding

arrangements for the town of Beccles and the parish of Oulton to reflect the proposed district wards.

154 The town of Beccles is currently served by 16 councillors representing four wards: Centre, Common, Rigbourne and School, each returning four councillors. At Stage One, the District Council and the Labour Party proposed the creation of new Beccles North and Beccles South district wards comprising the four wards of Beccles Town. As part of our draft recommendations, we proposed the creation of two new wards in the Beccles area based on elements of both the District Council’s and the Labour Party’s proposals, together with some of our own proposals. The new Beccles South district ward would be coterminous with a revised Rigbourne ward and a new Darby ward of Beccles Town. At Stage One, the Labour Party proposed that Beccles School ward be renamed. In the absence of any locally generated proposals, we proposed the name of Darby ward, reflecting Darby Road as one of the main focal points of the revised parish ward. We proposed that the revised Rigbourne ward should contain the current ward, less that area to the north of properties on Ellough Road, with the addition of the St Andrew’s Road area from the current School ward, as its main access is from Banham Road. We proposed that the new Darby ward should reflect the current School ward less the area to the west of Beccles Cemetery and the St Andrew’s Road area.

155 The new Beccles North district ward would be coterminous with Centre and Common wards of Beccles Town. As proposed by the Labour Party, we also proposed modifying the current Centre and Common wards to equalise electorates. We proposed that Common ward be expanded to include the whole of Grove Road, The Harbourage, Holly Grove and Kibrack areas from Centre ward, in addition to the Lowestoft Road area from Rigbourne ward. Centre ward would, in turn, be expanded to include the area to the south of Ashman’s Road and west of Beccles Cemetery from School ward, and all residential properties in the Newgate, Smallgate, Saltgate and Manor House Lane area. We considered that these proposals would provide more even-sized town council wards and would unite the main shopping area in Centre ward.

156 At Stage Three, no representations were received in relation to our proposed Beccles Town wards. In the absence of any further evidence and in light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in this area, we confirm our draft recommendation for the revised warding arrangements of Beccles Town Council as final.

Final Recommendation
Beccles Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Centre, Common, Darby and Rigbourne, each returning four councillors. The town ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, and are illustrated and named on Maps A2 and A3 in Appendix A.

157 The parish of Oulton is currently served by nine councillors and is not warded. As part of our draft recommendations we proposed dividing the parish of Oulton between the three district wards of Lothingland, Oulton and St Margaret’s. Consequently, we proposed that the parish should be divided into three parish wards. Camps Heath ward, which would form part of

Lothingland ward, would be represented by one councillor; Oulton ward, which would form part of the new Oulton ward, would be represented by five councillors; and Parkhill ward, which would form part of St Margaret's ward, would return four councillors.

158 At Stage Three, no representations were received in relation to our proposed Oulton parish wards. In the absence of any further evidence and in the light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in this area, we confirm our draft recommendation for the revised warding arrangements of Oulton Parish Council as final.

Final Recommendation
Oulton Parish Council should comprise 10 councillors, one more than at present, representing three wards: Camps Heath, returning one councillor; Oulton, returning five councillors; and Parkhill returning four councillors. The boundaries between the three parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted in the back cover of this report.

159 In our draft recommendations report we proposed that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the district, and are confirming this as final.

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

Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Waveney

6 NEXT STEPS

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

161 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 6 August 2001.

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

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

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for Waveney: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for the Waveney 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 Maps A2 and A3 and the large map at the back of the report.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed boundaries in the Beccles area – Beccles South ward.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed boundaries in the Beccles area – Beccles North ward.

The **large map** inserted in the back cover of this report illustrates the proposed warding arrangements for the Lowestoft area.

Map A1: Final Recommendations for Waveney: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed boundaries in the Beccles area – Beccles South ward

Map A3: Proposed boundaries in the Beccles area – Beccles North ward

APPENDIX B

Draft Recommendations for Waveney

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of only seven wards, where our draft proposals are set out below.

Figure B1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Blything	Blything ward (part – Blyford, Brampton with Stoven, Holton, Sotherton and Westhall parishes); Southwold ward (part – Wangford with Henham parish)
Kessingland	Kessingland ward (part – Kessingland parish)
Oulton	Lothingland ward (part – Oulton ward of Oulton parish (as proposed)); Oulton Broad ward (part))
St Margaret's (in Lowestoft)	Lothingland ward (part – Parkhill ward of Oulton parish (as proposed)); Oulton Broad ward (part); St Margaret's ward (part)
The Saints	Blything ward (part – Spexhall and Wissett parishes); South Elmham ward (part – Flixton, St Mary South Elmham, otherwise Homersfield, St Lawrence Ilketshall, St Margaret Ilketshall, Rumburgh, All Saints & St Nicholas South Elmham, St Cross South Elmham, St James South Elmham, St Margaret South Elmham, St Michael South Elmham and St Peter South Elmham parishes)
Wainford	South Elmham ward (part – St John Ilketshall and Mettingham parishes); Wainford ward (Barsham, Ellough, St Andrew Ilketshall, Redisham, Ringsfield, Shadingfield, Shipmeadow, Sotterley, Weston and Willingham St Mary parishes); Mutford ward (part – Mutford parish)
Wrentham	Kessingland ward (part – Gisleham parish); Mutford ward (part – Henstead with Hulver Street and Rushmere parishes); Southwold ward (part – Benacre, Covehithe, Frostenden, South Cove, Uggeshall and Wrentham parishes)

Figure B2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: 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 %
Blything	1	1,963	1,963	7	2,043	2,043	6
Kessingland	2	3,288	1,644	-10	3,582	1,791	-7
Oulton	2	3,277	1,639	-10	3,899	1,950	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 %
St Margaret's (in Lowestoft)	3	5,341	1,780	-3	6,234	2,078	8
The Saints	1	1,687	1,687	-8	1,753	1,753	-9
Wainford	1	1,998	1,998	9	2,055	2,055	7
Wrentham	1	1,786	1,786	-2	1,828	1,828	-5

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

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

APPENDIX C

Code of Practice on Written Consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm, requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Non-Departmental Public Bodies, such as the Local Government Commission, 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 C1: Commission compliance with Code criteria

Criteria	Compliance/departure
Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process for a policy (including legislation) or service from the start, so that it has the best prospect of improving the proposals concerned, and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage	The Commission complies with this requirement
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose	The Commission complies 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	The Commission complies 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	The Commission complies 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	The Commission consults 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	The Commission complies with this requirement
Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated	The Commission complies with this requirement