

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Gosport in Hampshire

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

July 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Gosport in Hampshire.

Members of the Commission are:

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



Local Government Commission for England

25 July 2000

Dear Secretary of State

On 20 July 1999 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Gosport under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in January 2000 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 one minor modification has been made (see paragraph 86) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Gosport.

We recommend that Gosport Borough Council should be served by 34 councillors representing 17 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 Bill, containing legislative proposals for a number of changes to local authority electoral arrangements, is currently being considered by Parliament. However, until such time as that new legislation is in place 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 Borough 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

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Gosport on 20 July 1999. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 18 January 2000, 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 Gosport:

- **in two of the 10 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and one ward varies by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2004 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 five wards and by more than 20 per cent in two wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 86–87) are that:

- **Gosport Borough Council should have 34 councillors, four more than at present;**
- **there should be 17 wards, instead of 10 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In 13 of the proposed 17 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This level of electoral equality is expected to improve with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 5 per cent from the average for the borough in 2004.**

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 5 September 2000:

**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 Alverstoke	2	Alverstoke ward (part); Anglesey ward (part); Leesland ward (part)	Large map
2 Anglesey	2	Anglesey ward (part); Leesland ward (part)	Large map
3 Bridgemy North	2	Bridgemy ward (part)	Large map
4 Bridgemy South	2	Bridgemy ward (part); Brockhurst ward (part); Rowner ward (part)	Large map
5 Brockhurst	2	Brockhurst ward (part); Leesland ward (part)	Large map
6 Christchurch	2	Hardway & Forton ward (part); Leesland ward (part); Town ward (part)	Map A1 and large map
7 Elson	2	Elson ward (part)	Large map
8 Forton	2	Elson ward (part); Hardway & Forton ward (part)	Large map
9 Grange	2	Alverstoke ward (part)	Large map
10 Hardway	2	Elson ward (part); Hardway & Forton ward (part)	Large map
11 Lee East	2	Lee ward (part)	Large map
12 Lee West	2	Lee ward (part)	Large map
13 Leesland	2	Hardway & Forton ward (part); Leesland ward (part)	Large map
14 Peel Common	2	Rowner ward (part)	Large map
15 Privett	2	Alverstoke ward (part); Anglesey ward (part); Brockhurst ward (part)	Large map
16 Rowner & Holbrook	2	Alverstoke ward (part); Brockhurst ward (part); Rowner ward (part)	Large map
17 Town	2	Town ward (part)	Map A1 and large map

Notes: 1 The whole borough is unparished.

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Gosport

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Alverstoke	2	3,562	1,781	4	3,615	1,808	1
2 Anglesey	2	3,119	1,560	-9	3,435	1,718	-4
3 Bridgemary North	2	3,678	1,839	7	3,622	1,811	2
4 Bridgemary South	2	3,670	1,835	7	3,524	1,762	-1
5 Brockhurst	2	3,686	1,843	7	3,626	1,813	2
6 Christchurch	2	3,303	1,652	-4	3,526	1,763	-1
7 Elson	2	3,736	1,868	9	3,536	1,768	-1
8 Forton	2	3,479	1,740	1	3,661	1,831	3
9 Grange	2	3,989	1,995	16	3,707	1,854	4
10 Hardway	2	2,622	1,311	-24	3,719	1,860	4
11 Lee East	2	2,532	1,266	-26	3,464	1,732	-3
12 Lee West	2	3,462	1,731	1	3,595	1,798	1
13 Leesland	2	3,246	1,623	-5	3,542	1,771	-1
14 Peel Common	2	3,575	1,788	4	3,389	1,695	-5
15 Privett	2	3,382	1,691	-1	3,458	1,729	-3
16 Rowner & Holbrook	2	3,795	1,898	11	3,688	1,844	3
17 Town	2	3,482	1,741	2	3,553	1,777	0
Totals	34	58,318	-	-	60,660	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,715	-	-	1,784	-

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

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Gosport in Hampshire. We have now reviewed the 11 districts in Hampshire, and Portsmouth and Southampton city councils, 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 Gosport. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in January 1977 (Report No. 201). The electoral arrangements of Hampshire County Council were last reviewed in October 1980 (Report No. 397). We expect to review 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 Borough Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards.

5 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (third edition published in October 1999), 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 borough as a whole. Our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable, having regard to our statutory criteria. 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 borough 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 borough's electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a borough council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other boroughs.

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 borough and county councils would hold elections every two years, i.e. in year one half of the borough council would be elected, in year two half 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 were taken forward in a Local Government Bill, published in December 1999, and are currently being considered by Parliament.

10 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/2000 PER programme, including the Hampshire districts, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the October 1999 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State's intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas.

11 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 20 July 1999, when we wrote to Gosport Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Hampshire County Council, Hampshire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Hampshire Association of Parish & Town Councils, the Member of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough and the Members of the European Parliament for the South East region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 8 November 1999. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

12 Stage Three began on 18 January 2000 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Gosport in Hampshire*, and ended on 13 March 2000. 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

13 The borough of Gosport is situated on the peninsula on the western side of Portsmouth Harbour and has a coastline of six miles to the Solent. It is bounded to the north by the borough of Fareham. Gosport is mainly urban, covering some 2,518 hectares, and with a population of some 75,060, it has a population density of around 30 people per hectare.

14 With a strategic location at the entrance to Portsmouth Harbour, Gosport has developed mainly in response to the growth and requirements of the Royal Navy, with which it has been closely linked for over 250 years. Apart from the Service establishments, there are some industries, including boat-building, plastics and chemicals. Gosport's main transport links are the ferry service, which operates across Portsmouth Harbour between Gosport and Portsmouth, and the A32 (Fareham Road). There are no parishes in the borough.

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

16 The electorate of the borough is 58,318 (February 1999). The Council at present has 30 members who are elected from 10 wards, all of which are relatively urban. All of the wards are each represented by three councillors, and the Council is elected by thirds.

17 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Gosport borough, with around 17 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Lee and Alverstoke wards, with approximately 50 per cent more electors in both wards than 20 years ago.

18 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,944 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,022 by the year 2004 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 two of the 10 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average and in one ward by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Alverstoke ward where the councillor represents 37 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Gosport

Figure 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Alverstoke	3	7,998	2,666	37	7,493	2,498	24
2 Anglesey	3	5,223	1,741	-10	5,691	1,897	-6
3 Bridgemary	3	4,954	1,651	-15	4,780	1,593	-21
4 Brockhurst	3	6,115	2,038	5	6,092	2,031	0
5 Elson	3	5,409	1,803	-7	5,214	1,738	-14
6 Hardway & Forton	3	5,391	1,797	-8	6,704	2,235	11
7 Lee	3	5,994	1,998	3	7,059	2,353	16
8 Leesland	3	5,631	1,877	-3	5,673	1,891	-6
9 Rowner	3	5,936	1,979	2	5,722	1,907	-6
10 Town	3	5,667	1,889	-3	6,232	2,077	3
Totals	30	58,318	–	–	60,660	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,944	–	–	2,022	–

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1999, electors in Bridgemary ward were relatively over-represented by 15 per cent, while electors in Alverstoke ward were relatively under-represented by 37 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

19 During Stage One we received one representation; a borough-wide scheme from Gosport Borough Council, which provided details of how the Council had carried out its own local consultation on its proposed scheme and which enclosed copies of the responses that it had received. In the light of this representation and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Gosport in Hampshire*.

20 In view of the broad degree of consensus behind the Council's proposals, and given the broad support from the local residents who responded to the Council's consultation exercise, our draft recommendations were based on the Council's scheme which secured improved electoral equality and provided a pattern of two-member wards throughout the borough. However, in order to provide for more identifiable boundaries and to improve electoral equality further, having regard to local community identities and interests, we moved away from the Borough Council's scheme in one area, affecting five wards, using some of our own proposals. We proposed that:

- Gosport Borough Council should be served by 34 councillors, compared with the current 30, representing 17 wards, seven more than at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified;

Draft Recommendation

Gosport Borough Council should comprise 34 councillors, serving 17 wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

21 Our draft recommendations for Gosport Borough Council would have resulted initially in an increase in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from two to four. However, as detailed in our *Guidance* (paragraphs 3.15–3.20) we have to have regard to the five-year forecast of electorate and take into account any changes in the number and distribution of electors likely to take place over the next five years. Consequently, the initial level of electoral inequality was forecast to improve by 2004, when no ward was forecast to vary by more than 5 per cent from the average for the borough.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

22 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 14 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Gosport Borough Council and the Commission.

Gosport Borough Council

23 The Borough Council supported our draft recommendations in their entirety. It also expressed its support for biennial elections for the borough, stating that “subject to the enactment of empowering legislation, the Borough Council support a request being made to the Secretary of State to change the Council’s electoral cycle to permit the Council to elect by halves”.

Gosport Constituency Labour Party

24 The Gosport Constituency Labour Party opposed our proposal to transfer the area around Millpond Road/Greenway Road (to the east of The Crossways) into the proposed Leesland ward. It argued that these two roads form part of the Forton Estate community, having been built at the same time, contending that “the inclusion of these roads within the Forton ward would give a neater and more easily definable boundary between the Forton and Leesland wards”. It further suggested that the proposed Lee West and Lee East wards should be named Lee ward and Alver ward respectively, and that the proposed Bridgemary North and Bridgemary South wards should be named Woodcot ward and Bridgemary ward respectively.

Other Representations

25 A further 12 representations were received. The 11 Labour members on the Council (the Labour Group) also opposed our proposal to transfer the area around Millpond Road/Greenway Road (to the east of The Crossways) into the proposed Leesland ward, arguing that this area forms part of the Forton Estate community. Ten of the Labour councillors further contended that as we had proposed retaining the A32 as the boundary between our proposed Brockhurst and Forton wards, we should not breach it as a result of our proposed Leesland ward.

26 Councillor Dennis Wright contended that the proposed Lee West and Lee East wards should be named Lee ward and Alver ward respectively, and that the proposed Bridgemary North and Bridgemary South wards should be named Woodcot ward and Bridgemary ward respectively.

27 Hampshire County Council did not make any specific comments regarding our draft recommendations for Gosport Borough Council.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

29 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.

30 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.

31 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 change in electorates.

Electorate Forecasts

32 At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 4 per cent from 58,318 to 60,660 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expects most of the growth to be in Hardway & Forton ward, although significant growth is also expected in Lee ward. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

33 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

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

35 Gosport Borough Council is at present served by 30 councillors. At Stage One the Borough Council proposed increasing the council size from 30 to 34, based on 17 two-member wards. It stated that in proposing a pattern of all two-member wards it had taken account of the Government's *Modernising Local Government* White Paper and its proposals for future electoral arrangements. The Council also stated that it was in the process of reviewing its internal political management arrangements and argued that the slight increase in the number of councillors would facilitate a proposed "Leader with Cabinet" system.

36 In our draft recommendations report we stated that while we were generally cautious about increases in council size, we had noted the cross-party support for this increase, and judged that it would facilitate a scheme which would secure good electoral equality and reflect local communities, particularly in the south-west of the borough. We therefore put forward a council size of 34 as part of our draft recommendations.

37 During Stage Three the Borough Council supported our draft recommendations in their entirety and no other representations were received relating to council size. Therefore, we remain of the view that, having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representation received, the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 34 members.

Electoral Arrangements

38 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered the borough-wide scheme from the Borough Council received at Stage One. From this representation, some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations.

39 In view of the broad degree of consensus behind the Council's proposals, and given the broad support from the local residents who had responded to the Council's own consultation exercise, we concluded that we should base our recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme. We considered that its scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements.

40 However, we sought to build on these proposals in order to put forward electoral arrangements which would provide for more identifiable boundaries and improved electoral equality, while having regard to local community identities and interests. We moved away from the Borough Council's proposals in one area, affecting five wards.

41 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported our draft recommendations in their entirety. However, a number of respondents expressed the view that the boundary between our proposed Leesland and Forton wards should be modified in order to better reflect local community identities. Four revised ward names were also put forward during Stage Three.

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

- (a) Lee ward;
- (b) Bridgemary and Rowner wards;
- (c) Alverstoke and Brockhurst wards;
- (d) Elson and Hardway & Forton wards;
- (e) Leesland, Town and Anglesey wards.

43 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.

Lee ward

44 The three-member Lee ward is situated in the south-west of the borough and covers the area to the west of the River Alver and the settlement of Lee-on-the-Solent. The number of electors per councillor in the ward is currently 3 per cent above the borough average; however, this is expected to deteriorate to 16 per cent above the borough average by 2004, due to forecast housing development in the area.

45 At Stage One we received only one submission; a borough-wide scheme based on a uniform pattern of 17 two-member wards put forward by the Borough Council. In order to address the forecast under-representation of Lee ward and to facilitate a good scheme across the borough as a whole, the Council proposed dividing the existing ward into two new two-member wards: Lee East and Lee West.

46 It proposed that the area to the west of the River Alver, to the north of Gosport Road, to the east of Russell Road/Leamington Crescent, and to the east of the northern section of Broom Way, should form the new Lee East ward. The remainder of the ward (predominantly the coastal area) would form Lee West ward. Under the Council's scheme the proposed Lee East ward would be over-represented by 26 per cent initially; however, this level of electoral inequality was forecast to improve to 3 per cent by 2004 due to projected housing development. The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Lee West ward would be 1 per cent above the borough average both initially and by 2004.

47 In view of the broad support for the Council's scheme, and given that its proposals in this area would provide for improved electoral equality by 2004, in addition to facilitating a good scheme elsewhere in the borough, we adopted the Council's proposed Lee East and Lee West wards as part of our draft recommendations.

48 At Stage Three the Council supported our draft recommendations for these two wards in their entirety. Gosport Constituency Labour Party and Councillor Dennis Wright proposed that Lee West and Lee East wards should be named Lee ward and Alver ward respectively. However, neither representation put forward any evidence as to why these alternative ward names were more appropriate than our proposals.

49 Given the support shown for our draft recommendations in this area, we are confirming our proposed Lee East and Lee West wards, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report, as final. Furthermore, we have not been persuaded that there is sufficient evidence or support in favour of amending our proposed Lee East and Lee West ward names and are therefore retaining them as part of our final recommendations.

Bridgemary and Rowner wards

50 The three-member wards of Bridgemary and Rowner are situated in the northern part of the borough. Bridgemary ward is currently the most over-represented ward in the borough, with an electoral variance of 15 per cent, forecast to deteriorate to 21 per cent by 2004. The number of electors per councillor in Rowner ward is 2 per cent above the borough average (6 per cent below by 2004).

51 At Stage One, in order to improve electoral equality and provide for a better reflection of local community identities and interests, the Council proposed creating three new two-member wards in this area. It proposed a new Bridgemary North ward comprising the GJ3, GJ4 and GJ5 polling districts and part of the GJ2 polling district (to the north of Gregson Avenue) from the existing Bridgemary ward. It also proposed a new Bridgemary South ward, comprising the remainder of the existing Bridgemary ward, together with the eastern part of the current Rowner ward (to the east of Wych Lane/Rowner Lane, excluding Alliance Close) and Acorn Close from the existing Brockhurst ward. The remainder of the existing Rowner ward (to the west of Wych Lane and to the north of Rowner Road) would comprise the Council's proposed Peel Common ward.

52 Under the Council's scheme the proposed Bridgemary North and Bridgemary South wards would both vary from the borough average by 7 per cent initially (2 per cent and 1 per cent by 2004). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Peel Common ward would be 4 per cent above the borough average initially (5 per cent below by 2004).

53 In our draft recommendations report we noted that the proposed Peel Common ward would possess the worst level of electoral equality in the borough by 2004, varying from the borough average by 5 per cent. However, we were of the view that this would be acceptable given that the proposed ward was constrained by the borough boundary to the west and Rowner Road to the south. Given the broad support for the Council's scheme, and the improved electoral equality and better reflection of local community identities that would be secured, we adopted the Council's proposals as our draft recommendations in this area.

54 The Council supported our draft recommendations for these three wards in their entirety at Stage Three. Gosport Constituency Labour Party and Councillor Dennis Wright proposed that Bridgemary North and Bridgemary South wards should be named Woodcot ward and Bridgemary ward respectively. However, no evidence as to why these alternative ward names were more appropriate than our proposals was put forward to support these suggestions.

55 Given the support shown for our draft recommendations in this area, we are confirming our proposed Bridgemary North, Bridgemary South and Peel Common wards, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report, as final. Furthermore, we have not been persuaded that

there is sufficient evidence or support in favour of amending our proposed Bridgemary North and Bridgemary South ward names and are therefore retaining them as part of our final recommendations.

Alverstoke and Brockhurst wards

56 The three-member wards of Alverstoke and Brockhurst are situated in the centre of the borough, to the east of the Alver River and to the west of the A32 (Brockhurst Road/Fareham Road). Alverstoke is currently the most under-represented ward in the borough, with an electoral variance of 37 per cent. However, this level of electoral inequality is forecast to improve slightly to 24 per cent by 2004, due to housing redevelopment. The number of electors per councillor in Brockhurst ward is 5 per cent above the borough average (equal to the average by 2004).

57 At Stage One the Council proposed two new two-member wards, Rowner & Holbrook and Grange, and a revised two-member Brockhurst ward for this area. The Council's proposed Rowner & Holbrook ward would comprise the northern part of Alverstoke ward (the area to the north of St Nicholas Avenue) and the northern part of Brockhurst ward (to the north of Rowner Road). Its proposed Grange ward would comprise the majority of the remainder of the existing Alverstoke ward (to the north of Privett Road). The new wards of Rowner & Holbrook and Grange would be under-represented initially by 11 per cent and 16 per cent, improving to 3 per cent and 4 per cent by 2004.

58 The Council also proposed a revised Brockhurst ward which would be represented by two councillors rather than the present three. The revised ward would comprise the GF2, GF3 and GF4 polling districts from the current Brockhurst ward, the eastern side of Brockhurst Road and an area to the south of Chantry Road, the east of Vale Grove and the north of Avery Lane (currently in Elson ward). The number of electors per councillor in this revised two-member Brockhurst ward would be 5 per cent above the average for the borough initially (1 per cent below by 2004).

59 We considered the Council's Stage One proposals for this area and, in view of the improved level of electoral equality and better reflection of local community identity and interests that would be secured, we adopted its proposed Rowner & Holbrook and Grange wards as part of our draft recommendations.

60 However, we also considered the Council's proposed Brockhurst ward but did not agree that the inclusion of the area to the south of Chantry Road (currently in Elson ward) in the revised ward would provide for an identifiable northern boundary. We were of the view that the ward should be modified slightly in order to secure more identifiable boundaries, therefore providing for more effective and convenient local government.

61 We therefore retained the ward's existing northern boundary (the A32 Brockhurst Road), together with a longer section of the A32 (Brockhurst Road/Forton Road) until it reached Reeds Place. We also transferred the area to the west of Reeds Place and to the north of Donnelly Street/St Anne's Crescent into the proposed Brockhurst ward, in order to secure a reasonable level of electoral equality. The number of electors per councillor in our proposed Brockhurst ward would be 7 per cent above the borough average initially (2 per cent above by 2004).

62 At Stage Three the Council supported our draft recommendations in their entirety. Ten of the Labour members on the council questioned our proposal to use the A32 Brockhurst Road as the northern boundary of Brockhurst ward. They contended that if the Commission proposed using the A32 road as the boundary for Brockhurst ward then it should also be used as a ward boundary between the proposed Forton and Leesland wards. Eleven of the Labour councillors opposed our proposal to transfer the area around Millpond Road/Greenway Road (to the east of The Crossway) into the proposed Leesland ward.

63 We have considered all the representations received during Stage Three, however, we have not been persuaded to move away from our draft recommendations in this area. We acknowledge the comments made regarding the use of the A32 road as a boundary; however, as detailed in our draft recommendations report, we remain of the view that it would provide for a more identifiable northern boundary for Brockhurst ward than that proposed by the Council at Stage One.

64 We have also noted the comments submitted regarding the effects of the boundary modifications that we put forward for adjoining wards in the area as a consequence of our proposed Brockhurst ward. We acknowledge that the area we proposed transferring into Leesland ward does share community links with the Forton Estate area. However, we have also noted that if the A32 road were retained as a ward boundary (and as a result the area around Millpond Road was not transferred into Leesland ward), the proposed Forton ward would be under-represented by 21 per cent both initially and by 2004, and the proposed Leesland ward would be over-represented by 24 per cent initially and 19 per cent by 2004.

65 We are of the view that this level of electoral inequality is unacceptable in an urban area such as Gosport, and given that we cannot view any area in isolation and must have a view to the electoral arrangements in the area as a whole, and in the absence of any viable alternative being submitted, we remain of the view that our draft recommendations in this area provide for the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We are therefore confirming our proposed Rowner & Holbrook, Grange and Brockhurst wards, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report, as final.

Elson and Hardway & Forton wards

66 The three-member Elson and Hardway & Forton wards are situated in the eastern part of the borough, to the east of the A32 (Fareham Road/Brockhurst Road/Forton Road). Elson ward is currently over-represented by 7 per cent, a variance which is forecast to deteriorate to 14 per cent by 2004. Hardway & Forton ward is also over-represented at present, by 8 per cent; however, by 2004 the ward is forecast to be under-represented by 11 per cent, due to housing development.

67 In its Stage One submission the Council proposed three new two-member wards in this area. Its proposed two-member Elson ward would comprise the majority of the existing Elson ward (that area to the north of Chantry Road), although it proposed transferring the eastern side of Brockhurst Road and an area to the south of Chantry Road into a revised Brockhurst ward (as detailed earlier in paragraph 58), transferring part of Palmyra Road into a new Hardway ward and transferring the area around Welch Road/Avery Lane/Teignmouth Road into a new Forton ward. The number of electors per councillor in the Council's revised Elson ward would be 7 per cent above the borough average initially (3 per cent below by 2004).

68 The Council proposed a new two-member Hardway ward, comprising the northern part of the current Hardway & Forton ward (to the north of Palmyra Road/Felix Road/St Vincent Road) and the remainder of Palmyra Road, currently in Elson ward. The number of electors per councillor in the Council's proposed Hardway ward would be 24 per cent below the borough average initially; however, by 2004 this level of electoral inequality would improve to be 4 per cent above the borough average, due to expected housing development.

69 The Council also proposed a new Forton ward comprising the remaining southern part of the existing Hardway & Forton ward (except Ferrol Road and the area to the east of it, which the Council proposed transferring into a new Christchurch ward), and the area around Welch Road/Avery Lane/Teignmouth Road from Elson ward (as detailed above). The number of electors per councillor in the Council's proposed Forton ward would be 2 per cent above the borough average initially (3 per cent above by 2004).

70 Under our draft recommendations, as detailed earlier, we retained the A32 Brockhurst Road as a ward boundary in this area. As a consequence of our modifications to the proposed Brockhurst ward, the proposed Elson ward also included the east side of Brockhurst Road. Therefore, the number of electors per councillor in our proposed Elson ward would be 9 per cent above the borough average initially (1 per cent below by 2004). Given the more identifiable boundary and improved electoral equality that would be secured, we put forward this revised Elson ward as part of our draft recommendations.

71 A further consequence of our revised Brockhurst ward was the inclusion of the area to the south of Chantry Road (which the Council proposed transferring into Brockhurst ward) in our proposed Forton ward. Therefore, in order to secure a reasonable level of electoral equality in the revised ward, we transferred an area to the east of The Crossways (and to the west of Ferrol Road) into a revised Leesland ward. The number of electors per councillor in our revised Forton ward would be 1 per cent above the borough average initially (3 per cent above by 2004). Given the more identifiable boundary and the good electoral equality that would be secured, we put this revised Forton ward forward as part of our draft recommendations.

72 Given the broad support for the Council's proposed Hardway ward, and in view of the good electoral equality that would be secured by 2004, we adopted it as part of our draft recommendations.

73 As detailed earlier, at Stage Three Gosport Constituency Labour Party and the Labour Group opposed our proposal to transfer the area around Millpond Road (to the east of The Crossways) into the proposed Leesland ward, arguing that these roads form part of the Forton Estate community. However, as argued earlier in paragraphs 64–65, we have not been persuaded to move away from our draft recommendations in this area. We remain of the view that our proposals provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We are therefore confirming our proposed Elson, Hardway and Forton wards, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report, as final.

Leesland, Town and Anglesey wards

74 The three-member wards of Leesland, Town and Anglesey are situated in the south of the borough. Leesland ward is situated to the south of the A32 (Forton Road/Mumby Road). Town ward is situated to the east of Leesland ward, comprising the areas surrounding the High Street, South Street and Gosport Park. Anglesey ward covers the most southerly coastal area of the borough, bordering Browndon Training Camp to the west, Privett Park to the north-west, and Little Anglesey Road and Stoke Lake/Haslar Lake to the north. The number of electors per councillor in the Leesland, Town and Anglesey wards is 3 per cent below, 3 per cent below and 10 per cent below the borough average respectively (6 per cent below, 3 per cent above and 6 per cent below by 2004).

75 At Stage One the Council proposed six new two-member wards in this southern part of the borough. It proposed a new two-member Christchurch ward comprising the south-eastern part of Hardway & Forton ward, the most eastern part of Leesland ward and the GA2 and GA3 polling districts from Town ward. The number of electors per councillor in its proposed Christchurch ward would be 3 per cent below the average initially (equal to the average by 2004). The remainder of the existing Town ward (polling districts GA1, GA4 and GA5) would comprise the Council's revised two-member Town ward. The number of electors per councillor in this revised ward would be 2 per cent above the borough average initially (equal to the average by 2004).

76 The Council also proposed a revised two-member Leesland ward, comprising the northern part of the existing Leesland ward (to the north of Bury Road), except that area it proposed transferring into Christchurch ward. The number of electors per councillor in its revised Leesland ward would be 3 per cent below the borough average initially (2 per cent above by 2004). The Council also proposed a revised two-member Anglesey ward, comprising the GB1 and GB2 polling districts from the existing Anglesey ward and the south-eastern part of the existing Leesland ward. The number of electors per councillor in the revised ward would be 9 per cent below the borough average initially (4 per cent below by 2004).

77 The Council put forward a revised Alverstoke ward, comprising part of the existing Anglesey ward (to the south of Solent Way and to the east of Jellicoe Avenue), the south-western part of Leesland ward and part of the southern part of the existing Alverstoke ward (to the south of Privett Road and west of Gomer Lane). The number of electors per councillor in this revised ward would be 4 per cent above the borough average initially (1 per cent above by 2004).

78 Finally in this area the Council proposed a new Privett ward, comprising the north-eastern part of Anglesey ward (to the north of Solent Way and to the west of Jellicoe Avenue), the south-eastern part of Alverstoke ward (to the east of Gomer Lane) and the southern part of Brockhurst ward (to the south of Wilmott Lane). The number of electors per councillor in the new Privett ward would be 1 per cent below the borough average initially (3 per cent below by 2004).

79 We based our draft recommendations on the Council's proposals. However, as a consequence of our modifications to its scheme in the eastern part of the borough, we transferred part of the proposed Christchurch ward (to the west of Albert Street) into the proposed Leesland ward, in order to secure a reasonable level of electoral equality and to provide for better access points between the areas being joined together. Under our draft recommendations the number of

electors per councillor in our proposed Leesland and Christchurch wards would be 5 per cent below and 4 per cent below the borough average initially (1 per cent below in both wards by 2004).

80 In view of the broad support for the Council's scheme, and the better reflection of local community identities and improved electoral equality that would be secured, we also adopted the Council's proposed Town, Anglesey, Alverstoke and Privett wards as part of our draft recommendations in this area.

81 At Stage Three the Council supported our draft recommendations for this area in their entirety; however, Gosport Constituency Labour Party and the Labour Group opposed our proposed Leesland ward. As detailed earlier in this chapter, we have not been persuaded to modify our draft recommendations in this area, and remain of the view that they represent the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Given the support for the majority of our proposals in this area we are therefore confirming our proposed Leesland, Anglesey, Alverstoke and Privett wards, as shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report, as final.

82 We are also confirming our proposed Christchurch and Town wards as final; however, having consulted Ordnance Survey regarding our proposed boundary between the two wards we are putting forward a minor modification in order to secure a more easily identifiable boundary. It has been brought to our attention that some of the properties which are on the northern side of and have a postal address of Jamaica Place (and are currently included in the GA4 polling district), are, to all intents and purposes, an integral part of the buildings that face northwards onto Stoke Road. As a consequence, Ordnance Survey advised that, in a number of places, it would not be possible to align (or 'mere') the ward boundary to an identifiable topographical feature. Therefore, in order to secure a more identifiable boundary, thus securing more effective and convenient local government, we are proposing that the boundary should follow the centre of Jamaica Place, as shown on Map A1 in Appendix A and on the large map inserted at the back of this report. This modification would affect only 10 electors and would have a negligible effect on electoral equality.

Electoral Cycle

83 At Stage One we received no proposals in relation to the electoral cycle of the borough. Accordingly, we made no recommendation for change to the present system of elections by thirds.

84 At Stage Three the Borough Council expressed its support for biennial elections for the borough, stating that "subject to the enactment of empowering legislation, the Borough Council support a request being made to the Secretary of State to change the Council's electoral cycle to permit the Council to elect by halves".

85 However, as detailed earlier in Chapter One, notwithstanding the proposals taken forward in the Local Government Bill (published in December 1999), currently being considered by Parliament, the Commission is statutorily unable to recommend any electoral cycle other than whole council elections or elections by thirds. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendation for no change to the present system of elections by thirds, as final.

Conclusions

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

- the boundary between the proposed Christchurch and Town wards should be modified to follow the centre of Jamaica Place.

87 We conclude that, in Gosport:

- there should be an increase in council size from 30 to 34;
- there should be 17 wards, seven more than at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified;
- the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

88 Figure 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1999 and 2004 electorate figures.

Figure 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	1999 electorate		2004 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	30	34	30	34
Number of wards	10	17	10	17
Average number of electors per councillor	1,944	1,715	2,022	1,784
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	2	4	5	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	1	2	2	0

89 Our final recommendations for Gosport Borough Council would initially result in an increase in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from two to four. However, as detailed in our *Guidance* (paragraphs 3.15–3.20) we have to have regard to the five-year forecast of electorate and take into account any changes in the number and distribution of electors likely to take place over the next five years. Consequently, the initial level of electoral inequality is forecast to improve by 2004, when no ward is forecast to vary by more than 5 per cent from the average for the borough. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Gosport Borough Council should comprise 34 councillors serving 17 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Gosport

6 NEXT STEPS

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

91 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 5 September 2000.

92 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 Gosport: Detailed Mapping

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

Map A1 illustrates the proposed boundary between Christchurch and Town wards.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the proposed warding arrangements for Gosport.

Map A1: Proposed Boundary between Christchurch and Town Wards

APPENDIX B

Draft Recommendations for Gosport

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

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

Ward name	Constituent areas
Christchurch	Hardway & Forton ward (part); Leesland ward (part); Town ward (part)
Town	Town ward (part)

Figure B2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Christchurch	2	3,293	1,647	-4	3,516	1,758	-1
Town	2	3,492	1,746	2	3,563	1,782	0

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

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

