

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for King's Lynn & West Norfolk

Report to The Electoral Commission

July 2002

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Large maps illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for King's Lynn and Downham Market are inserted at the back of this report.

WHAT IS THE BOUNDARY COMMITTEE FOR ENGLAND?

The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of The Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. The functions of the Local Government Commission for England were transferred to The Electoral Commission and its Boundary Committee on 1 April 2002 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001 (SI 2001 No 3692). The Order also transferred to The Electoral Commission the functions of the Secretary of State in relation to taking decisions on recommendations for changes to local authority electoral arrangements and implementing them.

Members of the Committee are:

Pamela Gordon (Chair)
Professor Michael Clarke CBE
Robin Gray
Joan Jones
Ann M Kelly
Professor Colin Mellors

Archie Gall (Director)

We are required by law to review the electoral arrangements of every principal local authority in England. Our aim is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, the number of councillors and ward names. We can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils.

This report sets out our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of King's Lynn & West Norfolk.

SUMMARY

The Local Government Commission for England (LGCE) began a review of King's Lynn & West Norfolk's electoral arrangements on 31 July 2001. It published its draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 26 March 2002, after which it undertook an eight-week period of consultation. As a consequence of the transfer of functions referred to earlier, it falls to us, The Boundary Committee for England, to complete the work of the LGCE and submit final recommendations to The Electoral Commission.

- **This report summarises the representations received by the LGCE during consultation on its draft recommendations, and contains our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission.**

We found that the existing arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in King's Lynn & West Norfolk:

- **in 29 of the 40 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10% from the average for the borough and 18 wards vary by more than 20%;**
- **by 2006 this situation is not expected to improve significantly, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10% from the average in 27 wards and by more than 20% in 16 wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 154-155) are that:

- **King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council should have 62 councillors, two more than at present;**
- **there should be 42 wards, instead of 40 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 36 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of two, and four wards should retain their existing boundaries.**

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

- **In 28 of the proposed 42 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10% from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in only Heacham and Hunstanton wards expected to vary by more than 10% from the average for the borough in 2006.**

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

- **New warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for Downham Market Town Council and Walsoken Parish Council.**

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to The Electoral Commission, which will not make an Order implementing them before 10 September 2002:

**The Secretary
The Electoral Commission
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

Table 1: Final Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Airfield	2	The parishes of Marham, Shouldham, Shouldham Thorpe, Tottenhill, Runcton Holme and Wormegay	Map 2
2	Burnham	1	The parishes of Burnham Market, Burnham Norton, Burnham Overy, Burnham Thorpe and North Creake	Map 2
3	Clenchwarton	1	<i>Unchanged</i> - the parish of Clenchwarton	Map 2
4	Denton	3	The parishes of Feltwell, Hockwold cum Wilton, Methwold, Northwold and Southery	Map 2
5	Denver with Hilgay	1	The parishes of Denver, Fordham, Hilgay and Ryston	Map 2
6	Dersingham	2	The parish of Dersingham	Map 2
7	Docking	1	The parishes of Bircham, Bagthorpe with Barmer, Barwick, Docking and Stanhoe	Map 2
8	Downham Old Town	1	Part of Downham Market parish (the proposed Downham Old Town parish ward)	Large Map
9	East Downham	1	Part of Downham Market parish (the proposed East Downham parish ward)	Large Map
10	Emneth with Outwell	2	The parishes of Emneth and Outwell	Map 2
11	Fairstead*	2	Part of Gaywood Central ward, part of Gaywood South ward	Large Map
12	Gayton	1	The parishes of Bawsey, Gayton and Leziate	Map 2
13	Gaywood Chase*	2	Part of Chase ward; part of Gaywood Central ward; part of Gaywood South ward; part of Lynn Central ward	Large Map
14	Gaywood North Bank*	3	Part of Gaywood North ward	Large Map
15	Grimston	1	The parishes of Grimston and Roydon	Map 2
16	Heacham	2	The parish of Heacham	Map 2
17	Hunstanton	3	The parishes of Holme-next-the-Sea, Hunstanton, Old Hunstanton and Ringstead	Map 2
18	Mershe Lande	1	Part of Walsoken parish (the proposed Walsoken Main parish ward) and Marshland St James parish	Maps 2 & A2
19	North Coast	1	The parishes of Brancaster, Choseley, Thornham and Titchwell	Map 2
20	North Downham	1	Part of Downham Market parish (the proposed North Downham parish ward)	Map 2
21	North Lynn*	2	Part of Gaywood North ward; part of Lynn Central ward; part of Lynn North ward	Large Map
22	North Wootton	1	The parish of North Wootton	Map 2
23	Old Gaywood*	1	Part of Gaywood Central ward; part of Gaywood North ward	Large Map
24	Rudham	1	The parishes of East Rudham, Harpley, Houghton, South Creake, Syderstone and West Rudham	Map 2
25	St Lawrence	1	<i>Unchanged</i> - the parishes of Terrington St John and Tilney St Lawrence	Map 2

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
26	St Margarets with St Nicholas*	2	Part of Chase ward; part of Lynn Central ward; part of Lynn South West ward; part of St Margarets ward	Large Map
27	Snettisham	2	The parishes of Fring, Ingoldisthorpe, Sedgeford, Sherborne and Snettisham	Map 2
28	South & West Lynn*	2	Part of Chase ward; part of Lynn South West ward; part of St Margarets ward	Large Map
29	South Downham	1	Part of Downham Market parish (the proposed South Downham parish ward)	Map 2
30	South Wootton	2	The parishes of South Wootton and Castle Rising; part of Gaywood North ward	Map 2
31	Spellowfields	2	<i>Unchanged</i> - the parishes of Terrington St Clement and Tilney All Saints	Map 2
32	Springwood*	1	Part of Gaywood Central ward; part of Gaywood South ward	Large Map
33	The Priors	1	The parishes of Castle Acre, East Winch, East Walton West Acre and Pentney	Map 2
34	Upwell with Downham West	2	The parishes of Downham West, Nordelph, Upwell and Welney and the Barroway Drove and West Stow parish wards of Stow Bardolph parish	Map 2
35	Valley Hill	1	The parishes of Anmer, Congham, Flitcham with Appleton, Great Massingham, Hillington, Little Massingham and Sandringham	Map 2
36	Walpole	1	The parishes of Walpole and Walpole Cross Keys	Map 2
37	Walton	1	The parishes of Walpole Highway and West Walton; part Walsoken parish (the proposed North Walsoken parish ward)	Maps 2 & A2
38	Watlington	1	The parish of Watlington	Map 2
39	West Winch	2	The parishes of Middleton, North Runcton and West Winch	Map 2
40	Wiggenhall	1	<i>Unchanged</i> - the parishes of Wiggenhall St Germans and Wiggenhall St Mary Magdalen	Map 2
41	Wimbotsham with Fincham	1	The parishes of Barton Bendish, Crimplesham, Fincham, Stradsett, West Dereham, Wimbotsham and the East Stow parish ward of Stow Bardolph parish	Map 2
42	Wissey	1	The parishes of Boughton, Stoke Ferry, Wereham and Wretton	Map 2

Notes: 1 King's Lynn is the only unparished part of the district and comprises the eight wards indicated* above.

2 The wards in the above table are illustrated on Map 2 and Maps A1 and A2 in Appendix A and the large maps inserted in the back of the report.

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

Table 2: Final Recommendations for King's Lynn & West Norfolk

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Airfield	2	2,953	1,477	-13	3,437	1,719	-3
2	Burnham	1	1,655	1,655	-3	1,672	1,672	-5
3	Clenchwarton	1	1,775	1,775	4	1,727	1,727	-2
4	Denton	3	5,001	1,667	-2	4,929	1,643	-7
5	Denver with Hilgay	1	1,768	1,768	4	1,783	1,783	1
6	Dersingham	2	3,820	1,910	12	3,902	1,951	10
7	Docking	1	1,701	1,701	0	1,672	1,672	-5
8	Downham Old Town	1	1,598	1,598	-6	1,777	1,777	1
9	East Downham	1	1,075	1,075	-37	1,780	1,780	1
10	Emneth with Outwell	2	3,373	1,687	-1	3,572	1,786	1
11	Fairstead	2	3,445	1,723	1	3,823	1,912	8
12	Gayton	1	1,680	1,680	-1	1,665	1,665	-6
13	Gaywood Chase	2	3,508	1,754	3	3,712	1,856	5
14	Gaywood North Bank	3	5,746	1,915	13	5,704	1,901	8
15	Grimston	1	1,918	1,918	13	1,866	1,866	6
16	Heacham	2	3,998	1,999	17	3,929	1,965	11
17	Hunstanton	3	4,791	1,597	-6	4,732	1,577	-11
18	Mershe Lande	1	1,925	1,925	13	1,882	1,882	7
19	North Coast	1	1,732	1,732	2	1,783	1,783	1
20	North Downham	1	1,344	1,344	-21	1,777	1,777	1
21	North Lynn	2	3,558	1,779	5	3,567	1,784	1
22	North Wootton	1	1,839	1,839	8	1,859	1,859	5
23	Old Gaywood	1	1,466	1,466	-14	1,615	1,615	-9
24	Rudham	1	1,877	1,877	10	1,880	1,880	6
25	St Lawrence	1	1,841	1,841	8	1,820	1,820	3
26	St Margarets with St Nicholas	2	3,015	1,508	-11	3,209	1,605	-9
27	Snettisham	2	3,245	1,623	-5	3,348	1,674	-5
28	South & West Lynn	2	2,718	1,359	-20	3,467	1,734	-2
29	South Downham	1	1,587	1,587	-7	1,777	1,777	1

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
30 South Wootton	2	3,330	1,665	-2	3,435	1,718	-3
31 Spellowfields	2	3,466	1,733	2	3,422	1,711	-3
32 Springwood	1	1,660	1,660	-2	1,732	1,732	-2
33 The Priors	1	1,870	1,870	10	1,838	1,838	4
34 Upwell with Downham West	2	3,400	1,700	0	3,476	1,738	-2
35 Valley Hill	1	1,812	1,812	7	1,736	1,736	-2
36 Walpole	1	1,647	1,647	-3	1,640	1,640	-7
37 Walton	1	1,917	1,917	13	1,893	1,893	7
38 Watlington	1	1,631	1,631	-4	1,781	1,781	1
39 West Winch	2	3,772	1,886	11	3,686	1,843	4
40 Wiggshall	1	1,498	1,498	-12	1,654	1,654	-6
41 Wimbotsham with Fincham	1	1,828	1,828	7	1,793	1,793	2
42 Wissey	1	1,697	1,697	0	1,746	1,746	-1
Totals	62	105,480	-	-	109,498	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,701	-	-	1,766	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council.

Notes: 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.

The total 2006 electorate differs by four electors between the existing arrangements and the final recommendations. This is due to rounding and does not have a substantive effect on the recommendations.

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of King's Lynn & West Norfolk. The seven districts in Norfolk have now been reviewed as part of the programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England started by the LGCE in 1996. We have inherited that programme, which we currently expect to complete in 2004.

2 King's Lynn & West Norfolk's last review was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which reported to the Secretary of State in April 1979 (Report no. 323). The electoral arrangements of Norfolk County Council were last reviewed in June 1984 (Report no. 472). We expect to begin reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements towards the end of the year.

3 In making final recommendations to The Electoral Commission, we have had regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No 3692), i.e. the need to:
 - a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
 - b) secure effective and convenient local government; and
 - c) achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of King's Lynn & West Norfolk was conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (LGCE, fourth edition, published in December 2000). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review.

5 Our task is to make recommendations on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also propose changes to the electoral arrangements for parish and town councils in the borough.

6 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as possible, equal representation across the district as a whole. Schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10% in any ward will have to be fully justified. Any imbalances of 20% or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

7 The LGCE was not prescriptive on council size. Insofar as King's Lynn & West Norfolk is concerned, it started from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but was willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, the LGCE found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and that any proposal for an increase in council size would need to be fully justified. In particular, it did not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

8 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 31 July 2001, when the LGCE wrote to King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. It also notified Norfolk County Council, Norfolk Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Norfolk County Association of Parish & Town Councils, parish and town councils in the borough, the Members of Parliament with constituencies in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the Eastern region, and the headquarters of the

main political parties. It 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 22 October 2001. At Stage Two it considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared its draft recommendations.

9 Stage Three began on 26 March 2002 with the publication of the LGCE's report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for King's Lynn & West Norfolk* and ended on 20 May 2002. During this period comments were sought from the public and any other interested parties on the preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four the draft recommendations were reconsidered in the light of the Stage Three consultation and we now publish the final recommendations.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

10 The borough of King's Lynn & West Norfolk lies in the west of the county of Norfolk. It covers the town of King's Lynn and the settlements of Downham Market and Hunstanton as well as a large rural area. The borough covers 142,877 hectares. Downham Market has experienced a high degree of growth, a trend which is forecast to continue.

11 The borough contains 101 civil parishes but the town of King's Lynn itself is unparished and comprises over 20% of the borough's total electorate.

12 The electorate of the borough is 105,476 (February 2001). The Council presently has 60 members who are elected from 40 wards, eight of which are relatively urban, in King's Lynn, one covering the parish of Downham Market, with the remainder being mainly rural. Four wards are each represented by three councillors, 12 are each represented by two councillors and 24 are single-member wards. The Council is elected as a whole every four years.

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

14 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,758 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,825 by the year 2006 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 29 of the 40 wards varies by more than 10% from the borough average and in 18 wards by more than 20%. The worst imbalance is in West Winch ward where the councillor represents 47% more electors than the borough average. The degree of imbalance across the borough is also illustrated by the fact that the councillor for West Winch ward represents more than twice as many electors as the councillor for West Walton ward.

Map 1: Existing Wards in King's Lynn & West Norfolk

Table 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Airfield	2	2,832	1,416	-19	3,341	1,671	-8
2	Burnham	1	1,341	1,341	-24	1,358	1,358	-26
3	Chase	2	3,011	1,506	-14	3,180	1,590	-13
4	Clenchwarton	1	1,775	1,775	1	1,727	1,727	-5
5	Creake	1	1,490	1,490	-15	1,522	1,522	-17
6	Denton	3	4,158	1,386	-21	4,062	1,345	-26
7	Denver	1	1,205	1,205	-31	1,173	1,173	-36
8	Dersingham	2	4,605	2,303	31	4,662	2,331	28
9	Docking	1	1,545	1,545	-12	1,543	1,543	-15
10	Downham Market	3	6,580	2,193	25	8,081	2,694	48
11	Emneth	1	1,939	1,939	10	2,031	2,031	11
12	Gayton	1	1,680	1,680	-4	1,665	1,665	-9
13	Gaywood Central	2	3,213	1,607	-9	3,379	1,690	-7
14	Gaywood North	3	5,758	1,919	9	5,720	1,907	4
15	Gaywood South	3	4,879	1,626	-7	5,392	1,797	-2
16	Grimston	1	2,329	2,329	32	2,252	2,252	23
17	Heacham	2	4,290	2,145	22	4,213	2,107	15
18	Hunstanton	2	4,203	2,102	20	4,151	2,076	14
19	Lynn Central	2	2,096	1,048	-40	2,222	1,111	-39
20	Lynn North	2	2,371	1,186	-33	2,350	1,175	-36
21	Lynn South West	2	2,331	1,166	-34	3,037	1,519	-17
22	Mershe Lande	1	2,058	2,058	17	2,013	2,013	10
23	Middleton	1	1,812	1,812	3	1,766	1,766	-3
24	North Coast	1	2,028	2,028	15	2,080	2,080	14
25	Priory	1	1,254	1,254	-29	1,246	1,246	-32
26	Rudham	1	1,098	1,098	-38	1,076	1,076	-41
27	St Lawrence	1	1,841	1,841	5	1,820	1,820	0
28	St Margarets	1	1,466	1,466	-17	1,557	1,557	-15
29	Snettisham	1	1,985	1,985	13	2,087	2,087	14
30	Spellowfields	2	3,466	1,733	-1	3,422	1,711	-6

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
31 Ten Mile	1	1,775	1,775	1	1,837	1,837	1
32 The Walpoles	1	2,198	2,198	25	2,199	2,199	21
33 The Woottons	2	4,957	2,479	41	5,091	5,091	39
34 Upwell, Outwell & Delph	2	4,349	2,175	24	4,525	2,263	24
35 Valley Hill	1	1,834	1,834	4	1,766	1,766	-3
36 Watlington	1	2,363	2,363	34	2,489	2,489	36
37 West Walton	1	1,233	1,233	-30	1,203	1,203	-34
38 West Winch	1	2,576	2,576	47	2,512	2,512	38
39 Wiggshall	1	1,498	1,498	-15	1,654	1,654	-9
40 Wissey	1	2,054	2,054	17	2,089	2,089	14
Totals	60	105,476	-	-	109,493	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,758	-	-	1,825	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Lynn Central ward were relatively over-represented by 40%, while electors in West Winch ward were significantly under-represented by 47%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

15 During Stage One the LGCE received 40 representations, including borough-wide schemes from the Conservative/Independent Group on the Borough Council, the North West and South West Liberal Democrat Constituency Parties, the Labour Party and two borough councillors. In the light of these representations and evidence available to it, the LGCE reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in its report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for King's Lynn & West Norfolk*.

16 The LGCE's draft recommendations were based on a mixture of the schemes received plus some of its own proposals. It proposed that:

- King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council should be served by 62 councillors, compared with the current 60, representing 40 wards, as at present;
- the boundaries of 36 of the existing wards should be modified, while four wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- there should be new warding arrangements for Downham Town Council.

Draft recommendation

King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council should comprise 62 councillors, serving 40 wards. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

17 The LGCE's proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 26 of the 40 wards varying by no more than 10% from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with only two wards having a variance of more than 10% from the average in 2006.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

18 During the consultation on its draft recommendations report, the LGCE received 86 representations. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of the Borough Council.

King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council

19 The Borough Council acknowledged receipt of the draft recommendations and commented on the general content of the draft recommendations. It also reiterated its support for the electorate forecasts it submitted at Stage One.

The Conservative/Independent Group

20 The Conservative/Independent Group supported the majority of the draft recommendations.

The South West Norfolk Conservative Association

21 The South West Norfolk Conservative Association (hereafter the Conservatives) expressed a preference for two two-member wards in Downham Market. It also objected to the draft proposals for a two-member West Winch ward.

The Liberal Democrats

22 North West Norfolk Liberal Democrat Constituency Party and the Liberal Democrat Group on the Borough Council (hereafter the Liberal Democrats), in a joint submission, objected to the proposed West Winch ward. The South West Norfolk Constituency Liberal Democrat Party supported Wissey ward remaining a single-member ward. It also supported single-member wards in Downham Market and proposed that the West Winch ward be divided into two single-member wards.

The King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Labour Party

23 The King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Labour Party (hereafter the Labour Party) commented on the draft recommendations ward by ward. It objected to the proposals for Hunstanton Town and West Winch ward.

Parish and town councils

24 We received 47 submissions from parish and town councils. The parish councils of Bircham, Burnham Market, Burnham Norton, Denver, Docking, Flitcham, Hunstanton, Syderstone, Terrington St Clement and Wretton expressed support for the draft recommendations. Downham Market Town Council objected to the town being warded. Downham West Parish Council objected to the draft recommendations for their area. Castle Acre and Emneth parish councils proposed ward name changes. Outwell Parish Council proposed being placed in a single-member ward. Congham, Roydon and Grimston parish councils stated they preferred to remain together within the same ward. Northwold Parish Council expressed the preference for being combined with Methwold parish in a single-member ward. The parishes of Fring, Ringstead, Holme-next-the-Sea, Snettisham and Old Hunstanton Parish Meeting opposed the ward pattern proposed in the draft recommendations for the north-west of the borough.

25 In the east of the borough the parish councils of Barton Bendish, Leziate, North Runcton, Shouldham and Tottenhill opposed the ward pattern proposed in the draft recommendations. West Winch Parish Council objected to the draft recommendations and proposed two

alternative options. Gayton Parish Council proposed three single-member Gayton, Nar Valley and Middleton borough wards. West Acre Parish Council stated that it should remain linked with East Walton parish. Wiggenhall St Germans Parish Council stated that it supported the proposals submitted by the Borough Council Working Group at Stage One. West Dereham Parish Council objected to not being placed in the proposed Wissey ward.

26 Both South Wootton and North Wootton parish councils proposed the division of the proposed Woottons ward. Castle Rising Parish Council objected to being placed in the proposed ward of The Woottons. The parish councils of Marshland St James, Walsoken and West Walton all proposed that Walsoken parish be warded. Walpole Parish Council stated it preferred the present arrangements but acknowledged the alternative of being placed with Walpole Highway and Walpole Cross Keys parishes. North Creake and South Creake parish councils both opposed being separated into two different wards. Houghton Parish Council stated it preferred to remain in the existing Rudham ward. The parish councils of Harpley and Little Massingham opposed the proposed Valley Hill ward. Boughton Parish Meeting commented on proposed parish boundary amendments with Stoke Ferry parish.

Borough councillors

27 We received 13 submissions from borough councillors. Councillor Fredericks, member for Grimston ward and Councillor Cobb, member for Heacham ward, supported the draft recommendations. Councillor Ansell, member for Watlington ward, proposed an alternative ward pattern for the east of the borough. Councillor Groom, member for West Walton ward, submitted two representations, proposing the warding of Walsoken parish. Councillor Humphrey, member for Emneth ward, proposed that the proposed ward containing Emneth parish be renamed Emneth & Outwell ward. Councillor Ives, member for Docking, submitted an alternative borough-wide scheme. Councillor Joyce, member for Lynn South West ward, proposed an alternative electorate forecast. Councillors Lovett, Legg and Forgan, all members for Downham Market ward, made a joint submission opposing the draft recommendations for Downham Market town. Councillor Loveless, member for Gaywood Central ward, proposed amendments to the wards within Kings Lynn town. Councillor Nockolds, member for The Woottons ward, expressed support for North Wootton parish forming a single-member ward. Councillor Richards, member for St Margarets ward, proposed that the new Central ward be renamed St Margaret and St Nicholas. Councillor Tilbury, member for Snettisham ward, supported Snettisham remaining a single-member ward.

Other representations

28 A further 20 representations were received in response to the LGCE's draft recommendations from local residents. Twelve residents supported amendments to the West Winch/Nar Valley area in the east of the borough. Three residents opposed the proposed Denver ward. One resident supported the proposed Denver ward. Three residents supported the proposed Heacham ward. Another resident proposed that Walsoken parish be warded.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

29 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for King's Lynn & West Norfolk 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 (as amended) – the need to secure effective and convenient local government; reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and secure the matters referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (equality of representation). Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being 'as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough'.

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

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

32 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 minimised, the aim of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should make electoral equality their starting point, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate must also be considered and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

Electorate forecasts

33 Since 1975 there has been a 19% increase in the electorate of King's Lynn & West Norfolk borough. At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 4% from 105,476 to 109,493 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in Downham Market and King's Lynn, although some is also expected in Marham parish in Airfield ward. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Having accepted that this is an inexact science and, having considered the forecast electorates, the LGCE stated in its draft recommendations report that it was satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

34 During Stage Three, Councillor Joyce proposed an alternative electorate forecast, stating that planning consent had been granted for over 1,000 additional properties within two developments in King's Lynn town.

35 In view of this submission we sought further clarification from the Borough Council as to the status of its electorate forecast for 2006. In response the Borough Council reconfirmed its commitment to its 2006 electorate forecast. We therefore remain satisfied that these forecasts represent the best estimates currently available.

Council size

36 As already explained, the LGCE started its review by assuming that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although it was willing to carefully look at arguments why this might not be the case.

37 At Stage One, the LGCE received schemes based on the current council size of 60 members and on a council size of 61 members. In considering the borough-wide schemes the LGCE noted that some schemes based on a council size of 60 or 61 contained large elements of parish warding which often went against the preferences of the parish councils involved. Other schemes had linked part of the urban town of King's Lynn with the parish of South Wootton, in what the LGCE considered to be an arbitrary way or retained the link between the parish of Wimbotsham with the more urban area of Downham Market.

38 The LGCE sought, wherever possible, to link rural areas with other rural areas and the urban areas with other urban areas. In its draft recommendations report the LGCE adopted a council size of 62 members as it considered that this would allow for the correct level of representation for the different areas of the borough and would not require the substantial parish warding proposed under a number of the schemes received.

39 During Stage Three, the Borough Council acknowledged the increase in council size of two members proposed in the draft recommendations. Councillor Ives expressed support for the increase in council size.

40 We received no further alternatives to the council size of 62 members as proposed within the LGCE's draft recommendations. We are therefore content to confirm this recommendation for council size as final.

Electoral arrangements

41 At Stage One, the LGCE found the review of King's Lynn & West Norfolk to be relatively contentious. It received a number of different borough-wide schemes. It also noted that the scheme developed and consulted upon by the Working Group was not subsequently approved by the Council.

42 A major issue at Stage One was the relative merits of single versus multi-member wards. Both the Council and the Working Group adopted a general preference for single-member wards. It conceded that other factors such as community identity and convenient and effective local government would in some areas conflict with this policy.

43 In accordance with its *Guidance*, the LGCE did not seek to take a prescriptive approach. In making its recommendations it provided for a combination of single and multi-member wards. It did not restrict itself to a particular pattern of wards and found that having this flexibility enabled it to meet its objectives of securing electoral equality while reflecting the statutory criteria.

44 The different views expressed over these conflicting factors led to a lack of consensus on locally generated schemes. A number of schemes the LGCE received proposed the warding of a large number of parishes. This was the case even in the face of strong objections from parish councils and local residents. The LGCE's approach was to use parish warding only in order to propose borough wards that provided good levels of electoral equality, or in areas where it would reflect different community identities, or where not to do so would result in extremely poor levels of electoral equality. Therefore where a scheme proposed additional parish warding in order to meet the preference for single-member wards but did not, according to other local

respondents, particularly the parish councils, reflect community identities, the LGCE considered alternative options based on multi-member wards which used whole parishes as building blocks.

45 In attempting to reflect the identities and interests of the local communities by using whole parishes as building blocks, the LGCE was not able to make minor adjustments to any of the locally generated schemes. It therefore proposed generally adopting the Labour Party's proposals for the north of the borough and using the schemes from the Working Group and the Liberal Democrat Constituency Party as the basis of recommendations in Downham Market. The LGCE's recommendations for the town of King's Lynn had some similarities to the proposals from the Working Group. It also put forward its own proposals for the rest of the borough.

46 In response to the LGCE's draft recommendations report, the Borough Council acknowledged receipt of the draft recommendations and noted that the LGCE was not predisposed to 'favour single-member wards as a means of securing convenient and effective local government'.

47 The Labour Party supported much of the draft recommendations but proposed amendments. The Conservative/Independent Group stated that it generally supported the draft recommendations. The Conservatives stated that they preferred two two-member wards for Downham Market town and objected to the proposed two-member West Winch ward.

48 The Liberal Democrats supported Wissey ward remaining a single-member ward and North Wootton parish becoming a single-member ward. They also expressed opposition to the draft recommendations that combined West Winch parish with the rural areas to the south of the parish. They also noted that there was opposition to the recommendations that linked Hunstanton town with the parishes of Old Hunstanton and Ringstead. South West Norfolk Liberal Democrat Constituency Party also supported a single-member Wissey ward and expressed support for single-member wards in Downham Market.

49 In light of all the submissions received and the general support for the draft recommendations in various areas, we propose generally to confirm the draft recommendations. However, we do propose amendments to the some warding arrangements in the east and west of the borough and various ward name changes.

50 The draft recommendations have been reviewed 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) King's Lynn (the wards of Chase, Gaywood Central, Gaywood North, Gaywood South, Lynn Central, Lynn North, Lynn South West and St Margarets) and The Woottons wards;
- (b) Downham Market ward;
- (c) Denton, Denver and Ten Mile wards;
- (d) Emneth and Upwell, Outwell & Delph wards;
- (e) Mershe Lande, The Walpoles and West Walton wards;
- (f) Clenchwarton, St Lawrence, Spellowfields and Wiggenhall wards;
- (g) Airfield, Watlington, West Winch and Wissey wards;
- (h) Gayton, Grimston, Middleton and Priory wards;
- (i) Creake, Dersingham, Docking, Rudham, Snettisham and Valley Hill wards;
- (j) Burnham, Heacham, Hunstanton and North Coast wards.

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

King's Lynn (the wards of Chase, Gaywood Central, Gaywood North, Gaywood South, Lynn Central, Lynn North, Lynn South West and St Margarets) and The Woottons wards

51 The unparished area of King's Lynn is currently divided into eight wards and is situated in the centre of the borough. Chase ward is represented by two councillors and is currently 14% over-represented (13% by 2006). Gaywood Central ward is also represented by two councillors and is 9% over-represented (7% by 2006). Gaywood North and Gaywood South wards are each represented by three councillors and are 9% under-represented and 7% over-represented respectively (4% and 2% by 2006). Lynn Central, Lynn North and Lynn South West wards are each represented by two councillors and are 40%, 33% and 34% over-represented respectively (39%, 36% and 17% by 2006). St Margarets ward is represented by a single councillor and is 17% over-represented (15% by 2006). The two-member The Woottons ward, comprising the parishes of North Wootton and South Wootton, is currently 41% under-represented (39% by 2006).

52 At Stage One, the Working Group proposed reducing the number of councillors representing the town of Kings Lynn from 17 to 15. It also proposed that a small area in the north of the current Gaywood North ward be included in an enlarged The Woottons ward. The Labour Party supported the town being represented by 15 councillors. It also proposed a two-member South Wootton ward comprising the parish of the same name and a single-member North Wootton ward comprising the parishes of Castle Rising and North Wootton.

53 The Conservative/Independent Group proposed that King's Lynn be represented by 14 members in a pattern of four three-member wards and one two-member ward. Councillor Cobb proposed that a single-member North Wootton ward be comprised of the parish of the same name. Councillor Joyce proposed that King's Lynn be represented by 17 councillors. The Liberal Democrat Group supported the division of Gaywood Central ward into two wards.

54 In considering the representations received concerning this area the LGCE noted that the parish boundary of South Wootton had become defaced over time in some areas and is not tied to ground detail. It supported the general proposal for a three-member The Woottons ward, comprising the parishes of Castle Rising, North Wootton and South Wootton. It also proposed that a number of properties in the unparished town area be placed within The Woottons ward in order to provide a clearer borough ward boundary.

55 Under a proposed council size of 62, the town would merit 15 councillors. Therefore the LGCE generally adopted the scheme developed by the Working Group. It further proposed that St Margarets and St Nicholas wards be combined in a new two-member Central ward. However, to provide for more coherent and clearly defined wards it proposed minor boundary modifications.

56 Under the LGCE's draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the proposed two-member Central ward would be 11% below the borough average (9% below by 2006), would be 1% above the borough average in a two-member Fairstead ward (8% above by 2006), would be 3% above the borough average in a two-member Gaywood Chase ward (5% above by 2006), would be 13% above the borough average in a three-member Gaywood North Bank ward (8% above by 2006), would be 5% above the borough in a two-member North Lynn ward (1% by 2006), would be 14% below the borough average for single-member Old Gaywood ward (9% below by 2006), would be 20% below the borough average in a two-member South & West Lynn ward (2% above by 2006 due to growth in the area) and would be 2% below the borough average in a single-member Springwood ward (unchanged by 2006).

57 At Stage Three, the Labour Party supported the proposed Central ward but stated that this ward name would be unpopular locally. Councillor Ives supported the majority of the LGCE's

draft recommendations for this area, but he proposed amendments to the boundaries of the proposed Central, Old Gaywood, Gaywood Chase and South & West Lynn wards.

58 Councillor Ives proposed amending the boundary between Old Gaywood and Gaywood Chase wards. He also proposed amending the proposed Gaywood Chase boundary to include Homeland Road within the proposed Central ward. However we have not been persuaded to adopt this proposal as it provides a less identifiable boundary than that proposed by the draft recommendations. He further proposed a minor amendment to the boundary between Central and South & West Lynn wards which we have been persuaded to adopt as we consider that this provides a more identifiable ward boundary. He also proposed that the new Central ward be renamed St Margarets with St Nicholas. Councillor Richards similarly proposed that the new Central ward be renamed St Margarets and St Nicholas ward to more accurately reflect local identity.

59 Councillor Loveless expressed a general preference for single-member wards. He also proposed amendments between the proposed Old Gaywood and Gaywood Chase wards by moving 106 electors from the former to the latter from properties on Gayton Road and Wootton Road. Councillor Loveless further proposed ward boundary amendments to the northern edge of the proposed Old Gaywood and Springwood wards. He proposed moving an area he stated was designated for future development entirely into the proposed Old Gaywood ward. He also proposed a minor amendment to the boundary between these wards along Field Lane taking the boundary down the centre of the road. Councillor Loveless further proposed the division of the proposed North Lynn ward into two single-member wards called North Lynn and North End, as earlier proposed by the Liberal Democrats.

60 Both South Wootton and North Wootton parish councils supported being split between two wards. Councillor Nockolds proposed a single-member North Wootton ward comprised of the parish of the same name and a two-member South Wootton ward would then be comprised of Castle Rising and South Wootton parishes and a small area of Gaywood North ward. Councillor Ives stated support for a similar amendment. Castle Rising Parish Council objected to being placed in a ward with both these parishes and maintained that it would prefer to be grouped with other villages in the area.

61 Having carefully considered the representations received, we remain convinced that the LGCE's proposals continue to provide the best basis for the final recommendations in King's Lynn town. We note the alternative ward boundary arrangements proposed by Councillor Loveless for Old Gaywood and Gaywood Chase wards. However, we consider that this amendment would tend to isolate the eastern and western parts of the proposed Gaywood Chase ward. In regard to the proposals for Old Gaywood and Springwood wards, we remain convinced that the 2006 forecasts reconfirmed by the Borough Council provide the best estimates of growth in the area, and are therefore satisfied that the boundaries proposed by the LGCE meet the statutory criteria. We therefore remain convinced that the ward pattern for King's Lynn proposed by the LGCE provides the best balance between the statutory criteria and therefore have not been persuaded to amend the proposed North Lynn ward.

62 We do, however, accept the boundary modification proposed by Councillor Loveless in relation to Field Lane and that of Councillor Ives in relation to the southern edge of the proposed Central ward both of which do not effect any electors. We have therefore decided to confirm the draft recommendations for the wards within King's Lynn town as final subject to two minor boundary changes and the renaming the proposed Central ward as St Margarets with St Nicholas ward, to more accurately reflect local identity. The levels of electoral equality in King's Lynn town would therefore be the same as under the draft recommendations and are illustrated and named on Map 2 and the large map at the back of this report.

63 However, we have reconsidered the proposals for The Woottons ward and note the support given by both South Wootton and North Wootton parish councils to the division of these

parishes between two wards. We therefore propose adopting the proposals of Councillor Nockolds for a two-member South Wootton ward comprising of the parishes of Castle Rising and South Wootton and part of the unparished Gaywood North ward, and a single-member North Wootton ward comprising the parish of the same name. Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in South Wootton and North Wootton wards would be 2% below and 8% above respectively (3% below and 5% above in 2006). This area is illustrated and named on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Downham Market ward

64 This ward is situated in the south of the borough. The three-member Downham Market ward comprises the parishes of Downham Market, Wimbotsham and the East Stow and West Stow parish wards of Stow Bardolph parish. It is currently 25% under-represented, but by 2006 is projected to be 48% under-represented due to further growth.

65 At Stage One, the Working Group, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrat Constituency Parties proposed schemes that divided Downham Market ward into four single-member wards. The Conservative/Independent Group proposed a pattern of two two-member wards in Downham Market. Councillor Cobb proposed that Downham Market town be represented by four single-member wards. Councillor Joyce proposed a ward comprising the parishes of Downham Market, Ryston and Wimbotsham and part of Downham West parish.

66 As this area merits four members overall, the LGCE noted that during the Working Group's initial consultation Downham Market Town Council opposed the warding of the town. However the LGCE considered Downham Market an area in its own right, which under the 2006 electorate projections should be represented by four councillors. The LGCE was not persuaded that retaining the link between Wimbotsham parish would reflect the different community identities in the area and therefore did not propose adopting either the Conservative/Independent Group or the Labour Party's scheme for this area.

67 The LGCE was particularly concerned at the high levels of electoral inequality that would initially result from a four single-member ward pattern. However, after further clarification from Borough Council officers and having visited the area, it was content that the projected increases in electorate were reasonable and in some cases already under way. The LGCE therefore proposed adopting the proposals developed by the Working Group and the Liberal Democrat Constituency Parties as part of the draft recommendations.

68 Under the draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Downham Old Town ward would be 6% below the borough average (1% above in 2006), 37% below the borough average in East Downham ward (1% above in 2006), 21% below the borough average in North Downham ward (1% above in 2006) and 7% below the borough average in South Downham ward (1% above in 2006).

69 In response to the LGCE's draft recommendations the Labour Party expressed support for the draft recommendations for Downham Market town. South West Norfolk Constituency Liberal Democrat Party also expressed support for the draft recommendations. Councillor Ives also expressed support for the draft recommendations. The Conservatives objected to the warding of Downham Market and stated that it preferred a pattern of two two-member wards called Downham Market North and Downham Market South.

70 Within a joint submission, Councillors Lovett, Legg and Forgan argued that the four proposed wards would not assist the retention of community identity. They proposed combining the new North Downham and East Downham wards to create a new two-member Downham North ward, while the proposed Downham Old Town and South Downham wards would be combined to create a new two-member Downham South ward. This proposal was supported by Downham Market Town Council which stated that it was opposed to Downham Market being

warded into four single-member wards on the grounds that such an arrangement would lead to councillors adopting a more 'parochial attitude'.

71 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received. However, we have not been persuaded that the proposed four wards would hinder the retention or development of community identity as stated by Councillors Lovett, Legg and Forgan, nor that they would effect the quality of representation by individual councillors as suggested by the Town Council. We therefore remain convinced that the draft recommendations meet the statutory criteria and provide the correct allocation of members for this distinct area.

72 We have therefore decided to confirm the draft recommendations for Downham Old Town, East Downham, North Downham and South Downham wards as final. The levels of electoral equality would therefore be the same as under the draft recommendations. This area is illustrated and named on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Denton, Denver and Ten Mile wards

73 These three wards are situated in the south of the borough. The three-member Denton ward comprises the parishes of Feltwell, Hockwold cum Wilton, Methwold and Northwold and is currently 21% over-represented (26% by 2006). The single-member Denver ward comprises the parishes of Crimplesham, Denver, Downham West, Fordham and Ryston and is 31% over-represented (36% by 2006). The single-member Ten Mile ward comprises the parishes of Hilgay and Southery and is 1% under-represented both now and by 2006.

74 At Stage One, the LGCE received a number of proposals for this area. The Working Group and the Liberal Democrat Constituency Party proposed similar ward patterns based on four single-member wards for this area. The Labour Party and the Conservative/Independent Group and the two options proposed by Councillor Cobb proposed different ward patterns based on one two-member ward and two single-member wards. Councillor Joyce proposed a pattern of one single-member ward and one two-member ward.

75 The LGCE also received five responses from local residents objecting to proposals for a ward named Downham Manors. Councillor Spikings commented on the current Delph ward but also supported Welney Parish Council's proposals to be joined with Hilgay parish.

76 The LGCE was concerned that a number of these schemes proposed parish warding that would not facilitate a borough-wide scheme within the terms of the statutory criteria. It therefore proposed that the area be divided into two borough wards: a three-member Denton ward, comprising the parishes of Feltwell, Hockwold cum Wilton, Methwold, Northwold and Southery; and a single-member Denver ward comprising the parishes of Denver, Fordham, Hilgay and Ryston.

77 Under the draft recommendations the proposed Denton and Denver wards would be 2% over-represented and 4% under-represented respectively (7% and 1% by 2006).

78 At Stage Three, Denver Parish Council expressed support for the draft recommendations. The Labour Party also expressed support but stated the ward name did not reflect local identities particularly with the inclusion of Hilgay parish in the proposed Denver ward. It objected to the draft recommendations for the proposed Denton ward, stating that it should be divided into two or three wards. One resident objected to Downham West and Denver parishes being placed in a ward with Hilgay parish. Two residents objected to the draft recommendations that combined Fordham and Hilgay parishes in the proposed Denver ward. Another resident expressed support for the draft recommendations for the proposed Denver ward. The Labour Party and Councillor Ives both commented on the proposed ward name for the new Denver ward. Councillor Ives proposed that the ward name be changed to Hilgay & Denver to more accurately reflect community identity.

79 Northwold Parish Council objected to the draft recommendations for the proposed Denton ward and proposed that it be combined with Methwold parish to form a single-member ward. Councillor Ives stated a preference for a single-member Little Ouse ward and a two-member Denton ward comprising Northwold, Methwold and Feltwell parishes.

80 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received. We note the support received from Denver Parish Council for the draft recommendations and also note that there was no opposition from any of the other constituent parishes. We also note that the alternative ward pattern proposed by Councillor Ives would entail warding Feltwell parish. As there is no evidence of support for this measure from Feltwell Parish Council, we are not persuaded that this amendment would reflect local community identity. We therefore do not propose moving away from the draft recommendations put forward by the LGCE.

81 We are therefore content to confirm the draft recommendations for these wards as final. However, in light of the comments we received regarding the most appropriate ward name for the new ward including Denver and Hilgay parishes, we recommend the renaming of this ward as Denver with Hilgay to reflect local identity more accurately. The levels of electoral equality would therefore be the same as under the draft recommendations for these wards and are illustrated and named on Map 2.

Emneth and Upwell, Outwell & Delph wards

82 The single-member Emneth ward and the two-member Upwell, Outwell & Delph ward lie in the south-west of the borough. Emneth ward comprises the parish of the same name and is 10% under-represented (11% by 2006). Upwell, Outwell & Delph ward comprises the parishes of Nordelph, Outwell, Upwell and Welney and the Barroway Drove parish ward of Stow Bardolph parish. This ward is under-represented by 24% both now and by 2006.

83 At Stage One, LGCE received various proposals for this area. The Working Group and the Liberal Democrat Constituency Parties proposed similar ward patterns based on four single-member wards. The Labour Party and Councillor Cobb's second option proposed a ward pattern of three single-member wards. The Conservative/Independent Group, Councillor Cobb's first option and Councillor Joyce proposed various ward patterns based on two two-member wards and one single-member ward.

84 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed that Upwell form a single-member ward on its own and that Outwell parish be 'joined with one of its smaller neighbours' in a single member ward. Councillor Spikings proposed that Upwell parish remain a single-member ward or be joined with the parishes of Outwell and Upwell. Nordelph Parish Council stated a preference for the current arrangements. If amendments had to be made, it proposed a ward comprising the parishes of Nordelph, Outwell, Downham West and part of Barroway Drove parish ward. Outwell Parish Council supported the division of the Delph ward and the creation of an Outwell and Emneth ward.

85 The LGCE developed its own proposals in this area. Although acknowledging that its ward pattern was not developed locally, was content that it did reflect some of the local comments received.

86 The LGCE recommended a new two-member Outwell & Emneth ward, which would have 1% fewer electors than the borough average (1% more by 2006) and a two-member Upwell & Downham West ward, comprising the parishes of Downham West, Nordelph, Upwell, Welney and the Barroway Drove and West Stow parish wards of Stow Bardolph parish. This ward would initially have the same number of electors per councillor as the borough average (2% fewer by 2006).

87 At Stage Three, Emneth Parish Council stated that it preferred the ward name Emneth & Outwell, due to the larger population in Emneth parish as opposed to Outwell parish. This proposal received the support of Councillor Humphrey. Councillor Ives expressed support for the draft recommendations for this area, but also proposed that the ward be renamed Emneth and Outwell ward. The Conservatives proposed that the ward be renamed Emneth with Outwell. The Labour Party expressed support for the draft recommendations in this area.

88 Outwell Parish Council objected to the draft recommendations and proposed that Emneth parish be warded and part of it be combined with Outwell parish to form two separate single-member wards.

89 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received. Due to the general support given to the draft recommendations in this area we propose adopting the ward pattern of the draft recommendations for this area as part of the final recommendations. We note that Emneth Parish Council did not object to the proposed ward, which would include Outwell parish, and only proposed a ward name amendment. We have therefore not been persuaded to adopt Outwell Parish Council's proposals for the warding of Emneth parish, as we do not consider that this would reflect a better balance of the statutory criteria or local preferences.

90 We therefore propose to confirm the draft recommendations for these wards as final. However, in light of the support from Emneth Parish Council for a more appropriate ward name to reflect community identity we propose renaming Outwell & Emneth ward as Emneth with Outwell ward. The levels of electoral equality would therefore be the same as under the draft recommendations. This area is illustrated and named on Map 2.

Mershe Lande, The Walpoles and West Walton wards

91 These wards are situated in the south-west of the borough. The single-member Mershe Lande ward comprises the parishes of Marshland St James and Walsoken and is currently 17% under-represented (10% by 2006). The single-member The Walpoles ward comprises the parishes of Walpole Highway, Walpole and Walpole Cross Keys and is 25% under-represented (21% by 2006). The single-member West Walton ward comprises the parish of the same name and is currently 30% over-represented (34% by 2006).

92 At Stage One, the LGCE received various proposals for this area. The Working Group, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrat Constituency Party proposed various schemes based on a ward pattern of three single-member wards. The Conservative/Independent Group proposed a pattern of two single-member wards and one two-member ward. Both Councillor Cobb's options and Councillor Joyce's proposals were based on a ward pattern of one single-member and one two-member ward.

93 Councillor Groom supported West Walton Parish Council's proposals to remain a single-member ward. Walpole Parish Council expressed concern that the review process might result in a larger parish.

94 The LGCE was concerned about the level of parish warding proposed in West Walton and Walsoken parishes under a number of the proposals. It considered that a more preferable pattern, which would provide good levels of electoral equality and was not detrimental to local communities, was a two-member West Walton & Walsoken ward comprising the parishes of Marshland St James, Walpole Highway, Walsoken and West Walton. It also proposed a single-member Walpole ward comprising the parishes of Walpole and Walpole Cross Keys.

95 The LGCE's proposed two-member West Walton & Walsoken ward would have a variance of 13% initially (7% by 2006) and Walpole ward would have a variance of 3% initially (7% by 2006).

96 At Stage Three, Walpole Parish Council stated it preferred no change to the existing arrangements but acknowledged the alternative to place West Walton parish in a ward with Walpole Highway to meet the statutory criteria.

97 West Walton Parish Council proposed two options. Its preferred option would be a Walton ward comprising West Walton parish and Walpole parish, and a Mershe Lande ward comprising Marshland St James and Walsoken parishes. However this ward pattern would result in an electoral variance of 15% by 2006 in the proposed Mershe Lande ward. The Parish Council's second option was for a Walton ward comprising West Walton, Walpole Highway and a new North Walsoken parish ward. Mershe Lande ward would then comprise of Marshland St James parish and a Walsoken Main parish ward.

98 These proposals were supported by Walsoken Parish Council which also proposed warding the parish, and then combining the 133 electors in the north of the parish with the parishes of West Walton and Walpole Highway. The proposed North Walsoken parish ward would generally incorporate the area between Wheatley Field in the east and Floral Farm in the west and Whitwell Field in the north and Adderley House in the south. The remaining Walsoken Main parish ward would be combined with the parish of Marshland St James to form the proposed Mershe Lande ward.

99 These proposals received the support of Marshland St James Parish Council, the Labour Party, Councillors Groom and Ives and one local resident.

100 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received. In light of the general agreement reached between the parish councils in respect of parish warding, the level of local support and the good balance between the statutory criteria these achievements would achieve, we are persuaded to adopt these particular amendments as part of the final recommendations.

101 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Mershe Lande, Walton and Walpole wards would be 13% above, 13% above and 3% below the borough average respectively (7% above, 7% above and 7% below in 2006). This area is illustrated and named on Map 2 and Map A2.

Clenchwarton, St Lawrence, Spellowfields and Wiggshall wards

102 These wards are situated in the west of the borough. The single-member Clenchwarton ward comprises the parish of the same name and is 1% under-represented (5% over-represented by 2006). The single-member St Lawrence ward comprises the parishes of Terrington St John and Tilney St Lawrence and is 5% under-represented currently, but is projected equal the average by 2006. The two-member Spellowfields ward comprises the parishes of Terrington St Clement and Tilney All Saints and is currently 1% over-represented (6% by 2006). The single-member Wiggshall ward comprises the parish of Wiggshall St Germans and Wiggshall St Mary Magdalen and is currently 15% over-represented (9% by 2006).

103 At Stage One, the LGCE received proposals from the Labour Party, Councillor Cobb (under option one) and Councillor Joyce proposing no change to these four wards. The Working Group proposed that the current Wiggshall ward be enlarged to include part of the unparished area of King's Lynn. The Liberal Democrat Constituency Parties proposed dividing the current Spellowfields ward into two single-member wards. St Clement & All Saints ward would comprise Terrington St Clement village and the parish of Tilney All Saints, while North Terrington ward would comprise the rural part of Terrington St Clement parish.

104 The Conservative/Independent Group proposed that Terrington St John parish be included in a modified West Walton ward. The Liberal Democrat Group and Clenchwarton Parish Council both supported no change to Clenchwarton ward. Councillor Harwood supported the retention of Spellowfields ward and submitted a petition of 353 signatures supporting the retention of a two-member ward for the parishes of Terrington St Clement and Tilney All Saints. Terrington St Clement Parish Council supported the retention of the current two-member ward. This view was also expressed by a parish councillor and two local residents

105 In the light of all the evidence received during Stage One the LGCE proposed no change to these four wards. Under a council size of 62, the wards of Clenchwarton, St Lawrence, Spellowfields and Wiggshall would be 4% under-represented (2% over-represented by 2006), 8% under-represented (3% by 2006), 2% under-represented (3% over-represented by 2006) and 12% over-represented (6% by 2006).

106 At Stage Three, Terrington St Clement Parish Council stated that it supported the draft recommendations. Wiggshall St Germans Parish Council supported the retention of Wiggshall as a separate unit. However it reiterated its support for the Working Group's Stage One proposals for the inclusion of parts of the unparished area of King's Lynn. Councillor Ives expressed support for the draft recommendations for this area. The Labour Party supported the draft recommendations for Clenchwarton, St Lawrence and Wiggshall wards. However, it objected to the draft recommendation for the Spellowfields ward. It stated that the electorate of that 'rural area' consisted of urban developments that were quite distinct from the two old villages along the main road. It stated that if there was local support it would prefer that this ward be divided into two single-member wards.

107 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received. We noted the Labour Party's proposal of the division of the proposed Spellowfields ward. This proposal being contingent on there being local support. However, during Stage Three, we received no such support for this proposal. In light of the general support for the draft recommendations received for this area, we propose confirming the draft recommendations as final. The levels of electoral equality would therefore be the same as under the draft recommendations for these wards. This area is illustrated and named on Map 2.

Airfield, Watlington, West Winch and Wissey wards

108 These wards are situated in the south-east of the borough. The two-member Airfield ward comprises the parishes of Barton Bendish, Fincham, Marham, Shouldham, Shouldham Thorpe, Stradsett and Wormegay. It is currently 19% over-represented (8% by 2006). The single-member Watlington ward comprises the parishes of Runcton Holme, Tottenhill and Watlington and is currently 34% under-represented (36% by 2006). The single-member West Winch ward comprises the parishes of North Runcton and West Winch and is 47% under-represented (38% by 2006). The single-member Wissey ward comprises the parishes of Boughton, Stoke Ferry, Wereham, West Dereham and Wretton and is currently 17% under-represented (14% by 2006).

109 During Stage One, the Working Group, The Liberal Democrat Constituency Parties and Councillor's Cobb's option two proposed various five single-member ward options for this area. Under his option one Councillor Cobb proposed a pattern of four single-member wards. The Labour Party and Councillor Joyce proposed a ward pattern based on six-single member wards. The Conservative/Independent Group proposed a pattern of one two-member and three single-member wards.

110 The LGCE adopted the proposals of the Working Group and Liberal Democrat Constituency Parties for a single-member North Wissey ward, comprising the parishes of Boughton, Stoke Ferry, Wereham and Wretton, however it proposed retaining the ward name Wissey. It also proposed new single-member Wimbotsham & Fincham, Watlington and Marham wards and a two-member West Winch ward. Given the LGCE's proposals for the surrounding areas it considered that it was unable to adopt any of the other schemes for this area.

111 Under the draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the wards of Marham, Watlington, West Winch, Wimbotsham & Fincham and Wissey would be 23% below the borough average, 4% below the borough average, 11% above the borough average, 7% above the borough average and equal to the borough average (4% above, 1% above, 4% above, 2% above and 1% below by 2006).

112 At Stage Three, the Labour Party expressed support for the proposed Watlington, Wissey and Marham wards, but objected to the proposed West Winch ward. The Liberal Democrats supported the proposed Wissey ward but also objected to the new West Winch ward and proposed that West Winch parish be warded. The South West Norfolk Liberal Democrat Constituency Party proposed that the two-member West Winch ward be split into two single-member wards, as there was no logical connection between the rural villages and the more suburban area of West Winch. The Conservatives supported the proposed Watlington and Wissey wards, but proposed that a two-member West Winch ward should comprise the parishes of West Winch, Middleton and North Runcton.

113 West Dereham Parish Council stated it objected to being placed outside the proposed Wissey ward. The Parish Council of Barton Bendish objected to the proposed division of the current Airfield ward. Shouldham Parish Council opposed the proposal to place Shouldham parish within the proposed West Winch ward. It stated that it preferred to be linked with other smaller rural parishes in a single-member ward. Boughton Parish Meeting commented on proposed parish boundary amendments with Stoke Ferry parish. Tottenhill Parish Council proposed a two-member Airfield ward consisting of the parishes of Wormegay, Tottenhill, Shouldham Thorpe, Shouldham, Runcton Holme and Marham.

114 North Runcton Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations and proposed that it be placed in a two-member ward with West Winch ward. West Winch Parish Council objected to the draft recommendations and proposed a two-member West Winch ward comprising the parishes of West Winch, Middleton and North Runcton. Wretton Parish Council expressed support for the provision of a single-member Wissey ward.

115 Councillor Ansell also proposed a two-member West Winch ward comprising the parishes of West Winch, Middleton and North Runcton. He also proposed a two-member Airfield ward comprising the parishes of Wormegay, Tottenhill, Shouldham Thorpe, Shouldham, Runcton Holme and Marham. These amendments were proposed in conjunction with a proposed single-member Nar Valley ward comprising East Winch, Pentney, East Walton, West Acre and Castle Acre parishes; and a single-member Gayton ward comprising Gayton, Leziate and Bawsey parishes. These proposals received the support of five local residents. One resident proposed that West Winch be warded and part of it be combined with North Runcton parish. Another resident objected to Wormegay parish being placed in the same parish as West Winch parish.

116 Councillor Ives proposed that West Winch be warded with a proposed Setchey parish ward being linked to neighbouring parishes to the east and the remainder becoming a single-member West Winch ward.

117 We have given careful consideration to all the evidence and representations received concerning this area. With regard to the Watlington and Wissey wards we are convinced that the draft recommendations continue to provide the best balance between the statutory criteria.

We therefore are content to adopt them as final, subject to the change of the proposed Wimbotsham & Fincham ward name to Wimbotsham with Fincham ward as proposed by the Conservatives.

118 In light of local objections to the placement of West Winch with the more rural villages to the south of the River Nar, we have looked carefully at the alternatives proposed by Councillor Ansell. We have noted that these arrangements provide good levels of electoral equality and, from the evidence of responses received at Stage Three, provide a better reflection of the community identity in this area. We therefore propose adopting the proposals for a single-member Nar Valley ward comprising of Castle Acre, East Walton, East Winch and Pentney parishes and a two-member Airfield ward comprising the parishes of Marham, Runcton Holme, Shouldham, Shouldham Thorpe, Tottenhill and Wormegay (see below). However in light of the submission of Castle Acre Parish Council (see below) we propose using the ward name The Priors as we consider this would better reflect community identity. Within these amendments we also propose a two-member West Winch ward comprising the parishes of West Winch, Middleton and North Runcton.

119 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Airfield Watlington, West Winch, Wimbotsham with Fincham and Wissey wards would be 13% below the borough average, 4% below the borough average, 11% above the borough average, 7% above the borough average and equal to the borough average respectively (3% below, 1% above, 4% above 2% above and 1% below in 2006). This area is illustrated and named on Map 2.

Gayton, Grimston, Middleton and Priory wards

120 These wards lie in the east of the borough. The single-member Gayton ward comprises the parishes of Bawsey, Gayton and Leziate and is currently 4% over-represented (9% in 2006). The single-member Grimston ward comprises the parishes of Castle Rising, Congham, Grimston and Roydon and is currently 32% under-represented (23% in 2006). The single-member Middleton ward comprises the parishes of East Winch and Middleton and is currently 3% under-represented (3% over-represented by 2006). The single-member Priory ward comprises the parishes of Castle Acre, East Walton, Pentney and West Acre and is currently 29% over-represented (32% by 2006).

121 At Stage One, the LGCE received various proposals for this area. The Labour Party, the Conservative/Independent Group and Councillor Joyce submitted different proposals for four single-member wards in this area. The Working Group proposed a two-member and a single member ward pattern for this area. Councillor Cobb's option one and the Liberal Democrat Constituency Party proposed different patterns of one two-member and three single-member wards. Under option two Councillor Cobb proposed a ward pattern of two two-member wards and one single-member ward.

122 The LGCE noted that many submissions it received took opposing views concerning this area. Again, it was not able to consider any proposals in isolation but was concerned to facilitate a scheme for the whole borough. It therefore proposed a single-member Gayton ward comprising the parishes of Gayton, Castle Acre and West Acre; a single-member Grimston ward, comprising the parishes of Grimston and Roydon; and a two-member Middleton ward comprising the parishes of Bawsey, East Walton, East Winch, Leziate, Middleton, North Runcton and Pentney. It considered that such warding would provide for an appropriate balance between the statutory criteria. Such warding would also facilitate a borough-wide scheme and would reflect some of the comments the LGCE received during Stage One.

123 Under the LGCE's draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 12 per cent above the borough average initially in Gayton ward (8 per cent by 2006), 13 per cent above the borough in Grimston ward (6 per cent above by 2006) and 4 per cent below the borough average in Middleton ward (9 per cent by 2006).

124 At Stage Three, the parish councils of Gayton and Leziate both objected to the draft recommendations. Gayton Parish Council proposed three single-member wards for this area with the proposed Gayton ward comprising the parishes of Gayton, Leziate and Bawsey; also a proposed Nar Valley ward comprising the parishes of West Acre, Castle Acre, East Walton, Pentney and East Winch. Finally it proposed a Middleton ward comprising Middleton and North Runcton parishes. Leziate Parish Council stated that it preferred to be placed in a ward with Gayton parish. Castle Acre Parish Council stated that it did not want to lose its identity within a 'Gayton' ward and proposed that the ward be renamed 'The Priors and Gayton'. Grimston Parish Council objected to not being placed in the same ward as the parishes of Congham and Roydon.

125 Congham Parish Council also objected to Grimston and Roydon parishes being separated from Congham in different borough wards on the grounds of community identity. Roydon Parish Council also objected to the draft recommendations placing Congham parish in the proposed Valley Hill ward. It stated that its preference would be to combine the three parishes within a single-member ward. Alternatively, it stated that it would reluctantly accept the two-member North Freebridge ward proposed by the Working Group at Stage One.

126 West Acre Parish Council stated that it preferred to be placed in a ward with East Walton parish on grounds of community identity.

127 In accordance with its proposals for West Winch with Middleton, the Conservatives proposed a single-member Nar Valley ward comprising East Winch, East Walton, Pentney, West Acre and Castle Acre parishes. The Labour Party proposed that Gayton parish should be retained with the villages of Grimston with Pott Row, Roydon and Congham or alternatively with the parishes of Bawsey and Leziate. Councillor Fredericks expressed support for the draft recommendations. The Liberal Democrats proposed that Gayton ward remain as at present comprising Gayton, Bawsey and Leziate parishes. They also stated that they preferred a single-member Middleton ward, comprising Middleton, North Runcton and West Winch parishes.

128 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received. In light of this evidence and the amendments we propose around the West Winch and Nar Valley areas (discussed above) we propose adopting Councillor Ansell's ward pattern. We therefore propose a two-member Airfield ward. We also propose a single-member Gayton ward comprised of Bawsey, Gayton and Leziate parishes. We note the opposition of Grimston, Roydon and Congham parishes to the draft recommendations. However, in seeking to provide a viable ward pattern for the whole of the eastern area of the borough that meets the statutory criteria, we have not been persuaded to move away from the provision of the Grimston ward proposed in the draft recommendations.

129 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Grimston, Gayton and The Priors wards would be 13% above the borough average, 1% below the borough average and 10% above the borough average respectively (6% above, 6% below and 4% above by 2006). This area is illustrated and named on Map 2.

Creake, Dersingham, Docking, Rudham, Snettisham and Valley Hill wards

130 These wards lie to the north-east of the borough. The single-member Creake ward comprises the parishes of Bagthorpe with Barmer, Barwick, North Creake, South Creake, Stanhoe and Syderstone. It is currently 15% over-represented (17% by 2006). Dersingham ward is represented by two councillors and comprises the parishes of Anmer, Dersingham,

Ingoldisthorpe and Shernborne. It is currently 31% under-represented (28% by 2006). The single-member Docking ward comprises the parishes of Docking, Fring and Sedgford. It is currently 12% over-represented (15% by 2006). The single-member Rudham ward comprises the parishes of Bircham, East Rudham, Houghton and West Rudham and is currently 38% over-represented (41% by 2006). The single-member Snettisham ward, which comprises the parish of the same name, is currently 13% under-represented (14% by 2006). The single-member Valley Hill ward comprises the parishes of Flitcham with Appleton, Great Massingham, Harpley, Hillington, Little Massingham and Sandringham. It is currently 4% under-represented (3% over-represented by 2006).

131 At Stage One, the Working Group proposed a pattern of three two-member and two two-member wards for this area. Both Councillor Cobb's options and the Labour Party proposed different ward patterns based on three single-member and two two-member wards. The Liberal Democrat Constituency Party proposed a pattern of seven single-member wards for this area. The Conservative/Independent Group proposed a pattern of two three-member wards and four single-member wards. Councillor Joyce proposed a pattern of one two-member and five single-member wards.

132 Snettisham Parish Council supported the retention of the current arrangements and attached a 273-signature petition supporting this position. Councillor Tilbury supported the retention of a single-member Snettisham ward while one resident proposed a two-member ward comprising the parishes of Fring, Ingoldisthorpe, Sedgford, Shernborne and Snettisham.

133 Great Massingham Parish Council objected to the Working Group's proposals linking the Massinghams to the parishes of Castle Acre, West Acre and East Walton and proposed instead that it remain in a ward with the parishes of Harpley and Little Massingham. Harpley Parish Council stated that only the wards in King's Lynn and along the North Norfolk coast should be altered. This view was echoed by Little Massingham Parish Council, which supported no change for its area.

134 In this area the LGCE developed its own proposals for a two-member Dersingham ward, comprising only the parish of Dersingham; a single-member Docking ward comprising the parishes of Bagthorpe with Barmer, Barwick, Bircham, Docking and Stanhoe; a single-member Rudham ward comprising the parishes of East Rudham, Harpley, Houghton, South Creake, Syderstone and West Rudham; a two-member Snettisham ward comprising the parishes of Fring, Ingoldisthorpe, Sedgford, Shernborne and Snettisham; and a single-member Valley Hill ward comprising the parishes of Anmer, Congham, Flitcham, Great Massingham, Hillington, Little Massingham and Sandringham. However in relation to the proposed Snettisham ward it adopted proposals from the Working Group and a local resident for a two-member ward.

135 The LGCE further proposed a Docking ward similar to that proposed by a number of respondents. Valley Hill ward would retain much of the current ward, although some reconfiguration was proposed in order to reduce electoral inequality, and to facilitate a scheme for the whole borough.

136 The LGCE noted that the proposed Rudham ward would place the parishes of North Creake and South Creake in different borough wards, but was not able to identify a warding pattern for the area as a whole which would retain that link, provide good levels of electoral equality and reflect community identities in other areas.

137 Under these proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 12% above the average in Dersingham ward (10% by 2006), equal to the average in Docking ward (5% below the average in 2006), 10% above the average in Rudham ward (6% by 2006), 5% below the average in Snettisham ward (unchanged in 2006) and 7% above the average in Valley Hill ward (2% below by 2006).

138 At Stage Three, North Creake Parish Council stated that it did not support being placed in a separate ward from South Creake parish. It stated it would prefer to remain within the present arrangements, although alternatively it stated that it had no objection to being part of a Burn Valley ward also comprising South Creake and Burnham Market parishes. South Creake Parish Council also objected to being placed in a separate ward from North Creake parish. It stated that it had more affinity with North Creake and Burnham Market parishes than with the Rudhams and Harpley parishes. It also supported the earlier proposal of the Working Group for a Burn Valley ward comprising the parishes of North Creake, South Creake, Burnham Market and Burnham Thorpe.

139 Snettisham Parish Council objected to the draft recommendations and stated that it preferred Snettisham parish to remain as a single-member ward because of community identity. However it admitted that to do so would mean retaining the current high electoral variances. Councillor Tilbury supported this proposal. Fring Parish Meeting stated that it would prefer to be placed in a ward with the parishes of Ingoldisthorpe, Sedgeford, Shernbourne and Snettisham. Harpley Parish Council stated that it was disappointed that its present ward boundaries were being altered under the draft recommendations. Houghton Parish Council expressed a preference to remain within a ward containing Harpley parish. The Labour Party expressed support for the proposed Dersingham and Snettisham wards.

140 Syderstone Parish Council supported the draft recommendation to include it in a Rudham ward with the parishes of East Rudham, Harpley, Houghton, South Creake and West Rudham.

141 Docking and Flitcham parish councils both stated that they supported the draft recommendations. Bircham Parish Council also expressed support for the proposed single-member Docking ward. Councillor Ives stated support for the draft recommendations for the proposed Dersingham, Heacham, Snettisham and Docking wards.

142 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received. We note the objections expressed by both North Creake and South Creake parishes. However we have not been persuaded that any of the alternative ward patterns we have considered would provide for a better balance between the statutory criteria for us to maintain the link between the two parishes. In light of the evidence we have received and the good level of local support for the draft recommendations in this area we propose adopting them as final.

143 We have therefore also decided to confirm the draft recommendations for Dersingham, Docking, Rudham, Snettisham and Valley Hill wards as final. The levels of electoral equality would therefore be the same as under the draft recommendations for these wards. This area is illustrated and named on Map 2.

Burnham, Heacham, Hunstanton and North Coast wards

144 These wards are situated in the north of the borough. Heacham and Hunstanton wards are each represented by two councillors, while Burnham and North Coast wards are both single-member wards. Heacham ward comprises the parishes of Heacham and Ringstead and is 22% under-represented (15% by 2006). Hunstanton ward comprises the parishes of Hunstanton and Old Hunstanton and is currently 20% under-represented (14% by 2006). Burnham ward comprises the parishes of Burnham Market, Burnham Norton, Burnham Overy and Burnham Thorpe and is 24% over-represented (26% by 2006). North Coast ward comprises the parishes of Brancaster, Choseley, Holme-next-the-Sea, Thornham and Titchwell and is 15% under-represented (14% by 2006).

145 At Stage One, the Working Group and the Labour Party made submissions for this area, proposing different schemes both of which were based on a ward pattern of five single-member wards and one two-member ward. The Liberal Democrat Constituency Party proposed a ward

pattern of four single-member wards and one two-member ward. The Conservative/Independent Group proposed that this area be represented by one two-member and two single-member wards. Both Councillor Cobb's options and Councillor Joyce proposed that this area be represented by two, two-member wards and two single-member wards. Ringstead Parish Council opposed the parish being included in a ward with the parish of Hunstanton.

146 The LGCE developed its own proposals for this area. It proposed a three-member Hunstanton ward comprising the parishes of Holme-next-the-Sea, Hunstanton, Old Hunstanton and Ringstead; a single-member Burnham ward, comprising the parishes of Burnham Market, Burnham North, Burnham Overy, Burnham Thorpe and North Creake; and a single-member North Coast ward, comprising the parishes of Brancaster, Choseley, Thornham and Titchwell.

147 With an electorate of over 4,000, Hunstanton merits three members. The LGCE considered that its proposals would reflect some of the community identity arguments put to it and did not agree with the view that councillors for a three-member Hunstanton ward would inevitably come from the town of Hunstanton and would only represent the interests of the electors from the town. It stated that this view is not always borne out in practice in other areas.

148 Under the LGCE's draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent below the borough average in Burnham ward (5 per cent by 2006), 6 per cent below the borough average in Hunstanton ward (11 per cent by 2006) and 2 per cent above the borough average in North Coast ward (1 per cent in 2006).

149 At Stage Three, Hunstanton Town Council expressed support for the draft recommendations. Councillor Cobb and three local residents expressed support for the draft recommendations for Heacham. Burnham Market Parish Council supported the draft recommendations that placed it in the same ward as the parishes of Burnham Norton, Burnham Overy, Burnham Thorpe and North Creake. Burnham Norton Parish Meeting also expressed support for the draft recommendations.

150 The Labour Party objected to the draft recommendations for this area. The Parish of Great Ringstead objected to being warded with Hunstanton parish and said that it preferred the alternative proposal from the Labour Party that warded Ringstead with the parishes of Holme-next-the-Sea, Thornham and Old Hunstanton in a one-member ward. Holme-next-the-Sea parish also objected to the draft recommendations and stated a preference for Councillor Cobb's option one at Stage One. Old Hunstanton Parish Meeting expressed a preference for being placed along with the rural parishes of Holme-next-the-Sea, Ringstead and Thornham. Councillor Ives also objected to the draft recommendations for this area.

151 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received. We have noted the opposition to the proposals regarding the three-member Hunstanton ward. However in light of the need to secure the correct allocation of members and given the wider effect on the warding pattern in the northern area of the borough we have not been persuaded to move away from the draft recommendations.

152 We have therefore decided to confirm the draft recommendations for Burnham, Hunstanton and North Coast wards as final. The levels of electoral equality would therefore be the same as under the draft recommendations for these wards. This area is illustrated and named on Map 2.

Electoral cycle

153 By virtue of the amendments made to the Local Government Act 1992 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001, we have no powers to make recommendations concerning electoral cycle.

Conclusions

154 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to the LGCE's consultation report, we have decided substantially to endorse its draft recommendations, subject to the following amendments:

- in King's Lynn we propose minor boundary amendments between Old Gaywood and Springwood wards and between Central ward (which we propose renaming St Margarets with St Nicholas) and South & West Lynn ward;
- in the eastern area we propose amending the proposed ward boundaries between Airfield, Gayton, Middleton, West Winch and The Priors wards;
- in Walsoken parish we propose warding the parish into North Walsoken and Walsoken Main parish wards;
- in the west of the borough we propose dividing The Woottons ward into South Woottons and North Woottons wards;
- we propose renaming Denver, Outwell & Emneth, Upwell & Downham West and Wimbotsham & Fincham wards as Denver with Hilgay, Emneth with Outwell, Upwell with Downham West and Wimbotsham with Fincham wards respectively.

155 We conclude that in King's Lynn & West Norfolk:

- there should be an increase in council size from 60 to 62;
- there should be 42 wards, two more than at present;
- the boundaries of 36 of the existing wards should be modified.

156 Table 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2001 and 2006 electorate figures.

Table 4: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	60	62	60	62
Number of wards	40	42	40	42
Average number of electors per councillor	1,758	1,701	1,825	1,766
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	29	14	27	2
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	18	2	16	0

157 As Table 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from 29 to 14, with two wards varying by more than 20% from the borough average. This level of electoral equality would continue to improve in 2006, with only two wards, Heacham and Hunstanton, varying by more than 10% from the average, both at 11%. We conclude that our final recommendations would best meet the statutory criteria.

Final recommendation

King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council should comprise 62 councillors serving 42 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, Appendix A and the large maps inside the back cover.

Parish and town council electoral arrangements

158 When reviewing parish electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule states that if a parish is to be divided between different borough wards, it should also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. In the LGCE's draft recommendations report it proposed consequential changes to the warding arrangements for Downham Market to reflect the proposed borough wards.

159 The parish of Downham Market is currently served by 20 councillors; the town is currently unwarded. As part of its proposals at borough level the LGCE recommended that Downham Market be divided into four wards. It therefore proposed that it also be divided into four parish wards: Downham Old Town, East Downham, North Downham and South Downham, each of which should be represented by five parish councillors, thereby retaining the total number of parish councillors.

160 In response to the LGCE's consultation report, Downham Market Town Council objected to being warded into four single-member wards. It stated that it preferred the option proposed by three councillors for two two-member wards. However the draft recommendations received support from two local political groups and one borough councillor. The Borough Council made no proposals with regard to this town.

161 Having considered all the evidence received, and in light of the confirmation of our proposed borough wards in the area, we confirm the draft recommendation for warding Downham Market parish as final.

Final recommendation

Downham Market Town Council should comprise 20 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Downham Old Town (returning five councillors), East Downham (five councillors), North Downham (five councillors) and South Downham (five councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of this report.

162 The parish of Walsoken is currently served by 10 councillors and is currently unwarded. At Stage Three, the parishes of Walsoken, West Walton and Marshland St James all proposed the warding of Walsoken parish to facilitate a ward boundary amendment between the proposed Walton and Mershe Lande wards.

163 As part of our proposals at borough level we therefore recommended that Walsoken parish be divided between two borough wards. North Walsoken, represented by one councillor, and Walsoken Main, represented by nine councillors. These recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and Map A2 in Appendix A.

Final recommendation

Walsoken Parish Council should comprise 10 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: North Walsoken (represented by one councillor) and Walsoken Main (represented by nine councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

Map 2: Final recommendations for King's Lynn & West Norfolk

6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

164 Having completed the review of electoral arrangements in King's Lynn & West Norfolk and submitted our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No 3692).

165 It is now up to The Electoral Commission to decide whether to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 10 September 2002.

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

The Secretary
The Electoral Commission
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW

APPENDIX A

Final recommendations for King's Lynn & West Norfolk: detailed mapping

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for the Kings Lynn & West Norfolk area.

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

Map A2 illustrates the proposed parish warding of Walsoken parish.

The **large maps** inserted at the back of this report illustrate the proposed warding arrangements for King's Lynn and the proposed borough and parish warding of Downham Market.

Map A1: Final recommendations for King's Lynn & West Norfolk: key map

Map A2: Proposed warding in Walsoken parish