

Draft recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements for  
Uttlesford in Essex

*May 2000*

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

The Local Government Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament. Our task is to review and make recommendations to the Government on whether there should be changes to the structure of local government, the boundaries of individual local authority areas, and their electoral arrangements.

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

We are statutorily required to review periodically the electoral arrangements – such as the number of councillors representing electors in each area and the number and boundaries of wards and electoral divisions – of every principal local authority in England. In broad terms our objective is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, and the number of councillors and ward names. We can also make recommendations for change to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils in the district.

This report sets out the Commission's draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Uttlesford in Essex.

© Crown Copyright 2000

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

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

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

This report is printed on recycled paper.

# CONTENTS

	page
SUMMARY	<i>v</i>
1 INTRODUCTION	<i>1</i>
2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS	<i>5</i>
3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED	<i>9</i>
4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>11</i>
5 NEXT STEPS	<i>27</i>
APPENDICES	
A Draft Recommendations for Uttlesford: Detailed Mapping	<i>29</i>
B The Statutory Provisions	<i>33</i>

A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for Great Dunmow, Saffron Walden and Stansted Mountfitchet is inserted inside the back cover of this report.



## SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Uttlesford on 30 November 1999.

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

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

- **in 16 of the 31 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and 10 wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2004 electoral equality is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 18 wards and by more than 20 per cent in ten wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraph 90) are that:

- **Uttlesford District Council should have 44 councillors, two more than at present;**
- **there should be 27 wards, instead of 31 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 22 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of four, and nine wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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

- **In 21 of the proposed 27 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to improve further with the number of electors per councillor in all but one of the proposed 27 wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2004.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Great Dunmow, Great Easton, Saffron Walden and Stansted Mountfitchet.**

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

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for eight weeks from 16 May 2000. Because we take this consultation very seriously, we may move away from our draft recommendations in the light of Stage Three responses. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations and then make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.**
- **It will then be for the Secretary of State to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. He will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 10 July 2000:

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

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

Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
1	Ashdon	1	Ashdon ward; Saffron Walden (Shire) ward (part – part of Shire parish ward of Saffron Walden parish)	Large Map and Map 2
2	Barnston & High Easter	1	Great Dunmow South ward (part – the parish of Barnston); The Canfields ward (part – the parish of High Easter)	Map 2
3	Birchanger	1	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
4	Clavering	1	Clavering ward (part – the parishes of Clavering and Wicken Bonhunt)	Map 2
5	Elsenham	2	Elsenham ward; Henham ward (part – the parish of Henham); The Canfields ward (part – the parish of Chickney)	Map 2
6	Felsted	2	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
7	Great Dunmow North	2	Great Dunmow (North) ward (part – part of Great Dunmow North parish ward of Great Dunmow parish)	Large Map
8	Great Dunmow South	3	Great Dunmow (North) ward (part – part of Great Dunmow North parish ward of Great Dunmow parish); Great Dunmow (South) ward	Large Map
9	Hatfield Forest	2	Great Hallingbury ward; Hatfield Broad Oak ward; Little Hallingbury ward	Map 2
10	Hatfield Heath	1	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
11	Littlebury	1	Clavering ward (part – the parish of Arkesden); Littlebury ward	Map 2
12	Newport	2	Newport ward; Rickling ward	Map 2
13	Saffron Walden Audley	3	Saffron Walden (Audley) ward; Saffron Walden (Castle) ward (part – part of Castle parish ward of Saffron Walden parish); Saffron Walden (Plantation) ward (part – part of Plantation parish ward of Saffron Walden parish)	Large Map
14	Saffron Walden Common	3	Saffron Walden (Castle) ward (part – part of Castle parish ward of Saffron Walden parish); Saffron Walden (Shire) ward (part – part of Shire parish ward of Saffron Walden parish)	Large Map
15	Saffron Walden Shire	3	Saffron Walden (Plantation) ward (part – part of Plantation parish ward of Saffron Walden parish); Saffron Walden (Shire) ward (part – part of Shire parish ward of Saffron Walden parish)	Large Map

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
16	Stansted North	2	Stansted Mountfitchet ward (part – part of Benfield and Castle parish wards of Stansted Mountfitchet parish)	Large Map
17	Stansted South	2	Stansted Mountfitchet ward (part – Stansted Mountfitchet parish ward and part of Benfield and Castle parish wards of Stansted Mountfitchet parish)	Large Map
18	Stebbing	1	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
19	Stort Valley	1	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
20	Takeley	2	Takeley ward (part – the parish of Takeley); The Canfields ward (part – the parishes of Great Canfield and Little Canfield)	Map 2
21	Thaxted	2	Thaxted ward; The Eastons ward (part – part of Great Easton parish)	Maps 2 and A2
22	The Chesterfords	1	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
23	The Eastons	1	Takeley ward (part – the parish of Broxted); The Eastons ward (part – part of Great Easton parish and the parishes of Little Easton and Tilty)	Maps 2 and A2
24	The Rodings	1	The Canfields ward (part – the parish of High Roothing); The Rodings ward	Map 2
25	The Sampfords	1	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
26	Wenden Lofts	1	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
27	Wimbish & Debden	1	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2

Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Uttlesford

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (1999)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>	<b>Electorate (2004)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
1	Ashdon	1	1,261	1,261	3	1,271	1,271	-2
2	Barnston & High Easter	1	1,268	1,268	4	1,288	1,288	-1
3	Birchanger	1	795	795	-35	1,233	1,233	-5
4	Clavering	1	1,173	1,173	-4	1,185	1,185	-9
5	Elsenham	2	2,769	1,385	13	2,803	1,402	8
6	Felsted	2	2,374	1,187	-3	2,934	1,467	13
7	Great Dunmow North	2	1,735	868	-29	2,430	1,215	-7
8	Great Dunmow South	3	3,422	1,141	-6	3,691	1,230	-6
9	Hatfield Forest	2	2,621	1,311	7	2,669	1,335	2
10	Hatfield Heath	1	1,316	1,316	8	1,360	1,360	4
11	Littlebury	1	1,224	1,224	0	1,268	1,268	-3
12	Newport	2	2,545	1,273	4	2,569	1,285	-1
13	Saffron Walden Audley	3	3,628	1,209	-1	3,868	1,289	-1
14	Saffron Walden Common	3	3,610	1,203	-1	3,877	1,292	-1
15	Saffron Walden Shire	3	3,884	1,295	6	3,900	1,300	0
16	Stansted North	2	2,625	1,313	8	2,693	1,347	3
17	Stansted South	2	2,111	1,056	-13	2,611	1,306	0
18	Stebbing	1	1,240	1,240	2	1,266	1,266	-3
19	Stort Valley	1	1,160	1,160	-5	1,212	1,212	-7
20	Takeley	2	2,455	1,228	1	2,526	1,263	-3
21	Thaxted	2	2,616	1,308	7	2,693	1,347	3
22	The Chesterfords	1	1,330	1,330	9	1,344	1,344	3

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
23 The Eastons	1	1,250	1,250	2	1,278	1,278	-2
24 The Rodings	1	1,402	1,402	15	1,410	1,410	8
25 The Sampfords	1	1,379	1,379	13	1,419	1,419	9
26 Wenden Lofts	1	1,218	1,218	0	1,256	1,256	-4
27 Wimbish & Debden	1	1,263	1,263	4	1,275	1,275	-2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>53,674</b>	–	–	<b>57,329</b>	–	–
<b>Averages</b>	–	–	<b>1,220</b>	–	–	<b>1,303</b>	–

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

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

# 1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Uttlesford in Essex on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the 12 districts in Essex as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Uttlesford. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in July 1975 (Report No. 21), the electoral arrangements for Essex County Council were last reviewed in November 1980 (Report No.401). We completed a directed electoral review of Thurrock in 1996 and a periodic electoral review of Southend-on-Sea in 1999. We expect to undertake a periodic electoral review of Thurrock in 2000 and a review of the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002. We expect to review the County Council's electoral arrangements shortly after completion of the district reviews to enable orders to be made by the Secretary of State in time for the 2005 county elections.

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

- the statutory criteria in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992, ie the need to:
  - (a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
  - (b) secure effective and convenient local government;
- the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements* in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (see Appendix B).

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

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

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

7 The broad objective of PERs is then to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the district as a whole. For example, we will require particular justification for schemes

which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

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

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

*Figure 3: Stages of the Review*

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

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

11 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/2000 PER programme, including the Essex districts, that until any direction is received from the Secretary of State, the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the October 1999 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State’s intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas. The proposals are now being taken forward in a Local Government Bill published in December 1999 and are currently being considered by Parliament.

12 Stage One began on 30 November 1999, when we wrote to Uttlesford District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Essex County Council, Essex Police Authority, the local authority associations, Essex Local Councils Association, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district and the Members of the European Parliament for the South East Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 28 February 2000.

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

14 Stage Three began on 16 May 2000 and will end on 10 July 2000. This stage involves publishing the draft recommendations in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations.**

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



## 2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

16 The district of Uttlesford is situated in north-west Essex and is bounded by Cambridgeshire to the north, and Hertfordshire to the west. It is rural in character and covers the largest acreage of any district in the county. Uttlesford covers 64,158 hectares and has a population of approximately 69,000. The district contains 58 parishes, and is entirely parished. The main settlements in Uttlesford district are Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow and Stansted Mountfitchet; the district is also home to Stansted Airport. Saffron Walden town comprises 20 per cent of the district's total electorate.

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

18 The electorate of the district is 53,674 (February 1999). The Council presently has 42 members who are elected from 31 wards. One of the wards is represented by three councillors, nine are each represented by two councillors and 21 are single-member wards. The whole Council is elected every four years.

19 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Uttlesford district, with around 30 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Great Dunmow, Saffron Walden and Stansted Mountfitchet, with approximately 49 per cent, 44 per cent and 25 per cent more electors respectively than 20 years ago.

20 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,278 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,365 by the year 2004 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 16 of the 31 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, 10 wards by more than 20 per cent and six wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Great Hallingbury ward where the councillor represents 59 per cent fewer electors than the district average.

*Map 1: Existing Wards in Uttlesford*

Figure 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Ashdon	1	903	903	-29	909	909	-33
2 Birchanger	1	795	795	-38	1,233	1,233	-10
3 Clavering	1	1,449	1,449	13	1,475	1,475	8
4 Elsenham	1	1,811	1,811	42	1,839	1,839	35
5 Felsted	2	2,374	1,187	-7	2,934	1,467	7
6 Great Dunmow (North)	2	2,513	1,257	-2	3,257	1,629	19
7 Great Dunmow (South)	2	3,369	1,685	32	3,601	1,801	32
8 Great Hallingbury	1	520	520	-59	542	542	-60
9 Hatfield Broad Oak	1	946	946	-26	956	956	-30
10 Hatfield Heath	1	1,316	1,316	3	1,360	1,360	0
11 Henham	1	1,269	1,269	-1	1,277	1,277	-6
12 Little Hallingbury	1	948	948	-26	978	978	-28
13 Littlebury	1	1,155	1,155	-10	1,171	1,171	-14
14 Newport	1	1,694	1,694	33	1,714	1,714	26
15 Rickling	1	851	851	-33	855	855	-37
16 Saffron Walden (Audley)	2	2,636	1,318	3	2,876	1,438	5
17 Saffron Walden (Castle)	2	3,017	1,509	18	3,177	1,589	16
18 Saffron Walden (Plantation)	2	3,251	1,626	27	3,257	1,629	19
19 Saffron Walden (Shire)	2	2,576	1,288	1	2,697	1,349	-1
20 Stansted Mountfitchet	3	4,392	1,464	15	4,958	1,653	21
21 Stebbing	1	1,240	1,240	-3	1,266	1,266	-7
22 Stort Valley	1	1,160	1,160	-9	1,212	1,212	-11
23 Takeley	2	2,357	1,179	-8	2,430	1,215	-11

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
24 Thaxted	2	2,327	1,164	-9	2,396	1,198	-12
25 The Canfields	1	1,470	1,470	15	1,484	1,484	9
26 The Chesterfords	1	1,330	1,330	4	1,344	1,344	-2
27 The Eastons	1	1,111	1,111	-13	1,139	1,139	-17
28 The Rodings	1	1,034	1,034	-19	1,042	1,042	-24
29 The Sampfords	1	1,379	1,379	8	1,419	1,419	4
30 Wenden Lofts	1	1,218	1,218	-5	1,256	1,256	-8
31 Wimbish & Debden	1	1,263	1,263	-1	1,275	1,275	-7
<b>Totals</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>53,674</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>57,329</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,278</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,365</b>	<b>-</b>

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1999, electors in Great Hallingbury ward were over-represented by 59 per cent, while electors in Newport ward were under-represented by 33 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

### 3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

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

22 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met with officers and members from the District Council. We are most grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received eight representations during Stage One, including district-wide schemes from the District Council and Saffron Walden Constituency Liberal Democrats, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the District Council and the Commission by appointment.

#### **Uttlesford District Council**

23 The District Council undertook public consultation on a 42-member scheme. After receiving a number of negative comments regarding its proposals for Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow, the Council made amendments to the scheme to address the concerns. The official submission was based on a council size of 44, two members more than at present, serving 27 wards, compared to the existing 31. The scheme would retain the present mix of single- and multi-member wards. The District Council stated that with the imminent implementation of new political management structures, the workload of the councillor was likely to increase.

24 The proposals would retain nine of the existing wards and create new and revised wards across the district, to improve electoral equality. The scheme would provide improved levels of electoral equality. Twenty-six of the 27 proposed wards would have an electoral variance of less than 10 per cent by 2004, with the member for Felsted ward representing 13 per cent more electors than the district average. No change was proposed to the current cycle of whole-council elections every four years.

#### **Liberal Democrat Groups**

25 Saffron Walden Constituency Liberal Democrats (the Liberal Democrats) proposed a district-wide scheme based on a 38-member council, four fewer than at present, serving a mix of single- and two-member wards. They argued that “a 38-member solution would be the best way to ensure that community of interest is maximised” and that the new political management structure of the council will reduce the workload of councillors. Under these proposals all wards would vary by less than 10 per cent from the district average by 2004.

26 The Stansted & District Liberal Democrats also proposed a 38-member council, but only submitted proposals for the area immediately surrounding Stansted Mountfitchet. They proposed new Stansted South & Birchanger, Stansted North and Stort Valley wards, to improve electoral equality. They stated that their proposal would better reflect community identities in the area, most notably between the parishes of Stansted and Birchanger.

## **Saffron Walden Constituency Conservative Association**

27 Saffron Walden Constituency Conservative Association (Dunmow & Barnston Branch) opposed the District Council's proposals for the Great Dunmow area. It proposed three wards, Dunmow North, Dunmow Central and Dunmow South & Barnston, to better reflect community identities. However, no detailed boundaries were submitted.

## **Parish and Town Councils**

28 We received representations direct from three parish and town councils. Great Dunmow Town Council objected to the District Council's draft scheme in its area, however, the Council moved away from a number of these proposals in its official submission. The Town Council proposed a different configuration of wards in its area, including retaining the link between Barnston parish and the south of Great Dunmow town.

29 Great Easton and Little Easton Parish Councils objected to the District Council's proposal to divide Great Easton parish between two district wards. It argued that such a proposal would not reflect community identities and would link urban and rural settlements in the same wards. Additionally, Little Easton Parish Council suggested that Great Easton and Little Easton parishes form a ward with Tilty, to best reflect community interests.

## **Other Representations**

30 We received a representation from a resident of Saffron Walden, who expressed opposition to the District Council's draft proposal to include a small number of electors from Saffron Walden town in a revised Littlebury ward. The District Council moved away from this proposal before submitting its scheme at Stage One.

## 4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

31 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Uttlesford is, so far as reasonably practicable and consistent with the statutory criteria, to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor is as nearly as possible the same. In doing so we have regard to section 13 (5) of the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the interests and identities of local communities – and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

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

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

34 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. We consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, the objective of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of electoral equality, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates. We will require particular justification for schemes which result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent and over should arise only in the most exceptional of circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

### **Electorate Forecasts**

35 The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of 6 per cent from 53,674 to 57,161 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expects most of the growth to be in Great Dunmow (North) ward, although a significant amount is also expected in the wards of Birchanger and Stansted Mountfitchet. The Council has estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates.

36 Uttlesford District Council later submitted a revised electorate forecast for a new housing development in Little Dunmow parish. It stated that an additional 85 units were now forecast to be completed (a total of 168 electors) by 2004. After discussion with the District Council, we have decided to accept the revised figure and take it into account when describing the District

Council's and Liberal Democrat Groups' schemes and our draft recommendations. We would welcome further views on the revised forecast electorate in this area at Stage Three.

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

## **Council Size**

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

39 The District Council proposed a council of 44 members. In support of its proposal the Council acknowledged that the "precise consequences of the new political management arrangements are unpredictable", but suggested that "the workload of members, whether fulfilling an executive or non-executive role, will intensify not least because of the potentially greater emphasis on the constituency role and the key task of ensuring Best Value". It also argued that because the district is primarily rural in nature it should be "considered appropriate to continue with a relatively low elector/member ratio" and that "in a sparsely populated area there is inevitably a demanding constituency workload" for those members who represent a number of parishes.

40 Both Saffron Walden Constituency Liberal Democrats and Stansted & District Liberal Democrats proposed a 38-member council, four fewer than at present. Both groups asserted that a scheme based on this council size would best reflect community identities in Uttlesford. Saffron Walden Constituency Liberal Democrats also suggested that "with the imminent implementation of revised political structures, and the setting up of a political executive, non-executive members will have less involvement in the day-to-day business of the Council and more time to work on ward issues".

41 We have carefully considered the proposals for both a 44- and 38-member council size. We have noted that the District Council's proposal for a 44-member council has received cross-party support from members on the District Council, we have also noted the argumentation outlining its perspective of the future role of the individual member. We have also noted that the District Council's proposed council size of 44 is not that which was consulted on locally (42-members). However, we understand that it became apparent to the District Council that a 42-member scheme does not facilitate a convenient distribution of members between the three main settlements in Uttlesford (Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow and Stansted Mountfitchet), and therefore achieving electoral equality would be at the cost of convenient and effective local government and community identities. Much of the feedback from the District Council's consultation process confirmed this view.

42 We have also considered the proposal for a 38-member scheme and have noted that the supporting argumentation regarding the future role of the councillor in Uttlesford is dramatically

different from that of the District Council. Due to the contradictory nature of the District Council's and Liberal Democrats' statements on this issue, it has been difficult for the Commission to fully understand the local perspective on the future role of the councillor. We are concerned that the Liberal Democrats' proposed council size of 38 has not been, to the best of our knowledge, made available for public inspection or the subject of local consultation, neither has it received cross-party support from members on the District Council. We therefore recommend that the District Council's proposal to increase the number of members from 42 to 44 be adopted as part of our draft recommendations.

43 Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the issues outlined above, we have concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 44 members.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

44 We have carefully considered all the representations received, including the district-wide schemes from the District Council and Saffron Walden Constituency Liberal Democrats. Both schemes would facilitate substantial improvements in electoral equality.

45 We have noted consensus behind a number of the District Council's proposals, the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties and the significant improvements in electoral equality achieved. Although we are aware that the District Council consulted locally on a 42-member scheme, not on the 44-member scheme submitted, the official submission largely reflected the scheme which was consulted on. The Liberal Democrats' scheme, although providing moderately better electoral equality, would not, in our opinion, better reflect community identities in Uttlesford; in particular Stansted Mountfitchet parish would be divided between three district wards and the groups of parishes known as The Canfields and The Rodings would be split between wards. We are also concerned, as stated above, that this scheme does not command a substantial amount of local support, neither has it been consulted on locally. In view of this and the arguments outlined above regarding council size we consider that the District Council's scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or other schemes submitted at Stage One, and we have therefore based our draft recommendations on the District Council's 44-member scheme.

46 Additionally, in view of our proposal to recommend that Uttlesford be represented by 44 members, we have been unable to make detailed comparisons with the boundaries proposed under the Liberal Democrat Groups' 38-member schemes, as ward sizes and configurations vary substantially. It is important to note that (based on the 1999 electorate) under a council size of 44 the number of electors per councillor would be 1,220 while under a council size of 38, the number of electors per councillor would be 1,412, a difference of nearly 200 electors per ward. Such a difference in ward size in a parished area such as Uttlesford could necessitate district wards containing a completely different configuration of parishes. However, we have attempted to draw on the local knowledge that the alternative schemes provide and have made comparisons where appropriate.

47 As part of its Stage One submission the District Council forwarded to us copies of all representations it received during its own consultation process. We are therefore aware that a number of parishes and interested groups did not wholly support the District Council's draft scheme. Therefore, as part of our Stage Three consultation exercise, we ask that these groups make representations to the Commission directly and provide evidence and argumentation regarding the proposed warding arrangements in their areas, offering alternatives that provide as equally good or better electoral equality and reflection of community identities as our draft recommendations, where possible.

48 For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Saffron Walden wards (Audley, Castle, Plantation and Shire);
- (b) Littlebury, The Chesterfords and Wenden Lofts wards;
- (c) Ashdon, The Sampfords and Wimbish & Debden wards;
- (d) Clavering, Newport and Stort Valley wards;
- (e) Elsenham, Henham, Rickling and Takeley wards;
- (f) Stebbing, Thaxted and The Eastons wards;
- (g) Birchanger, Great Hallingbury, Little Hallingbury and Stansted Mountfitchet wards;
- (h) Felsted, Great Dunmow (North) and Great Dunmow (South) wards;
- (i) Hatfield Broad Oak, Hatfield Heath, The Canfields and The Rodings wards.

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

### **Saffron Walden – Audley, Castle, Plantation and Shire wards**

50 The town of Saffron Walden is situated in the north of the district and covers the parish of the same name. At present Saffron Walden is represented by four two-member wards: Audley, Castle, Plantation and Shire. The number of electors per councillor is 3 per cent above the district average in Audley ward (5 per cent by 2004), 18 per cent above the average in Castle ward (16 per cent by 2004), 27 per cent above the average in Plantation ward (19 per cent by 2004) and 1 per cent above the average in Shire ward (1 per cent below by 2004).

51 The District Council proposed that the urban centre of Saffron Walden be divided between three wards, rather than four as at present. A new three-member Saffron Walden Audley ward would include the whole of the existing Saffron Walden (Audley) ward, that part of Saffron Walden (Castle) ward south of Castle Street and west of Castle Hill and that part of Saffron Walden (Plantation) ward west of Landscape View and Rods Hill. It also proposed a new three-member Saffron Walden Common ward comprising the remainder of Saffron Walden (Castle) ward and that part of Saffron Walden (Shire) ward north of East Street and Radwinter Road. A new three-member Saffron Walden Shire ward was proposed to include the eastern part of the existing Saffron Walden (Plantation) ward and the southern part of the existing Saffron Walden (Shire) ward. Swards End, a village on the outskirts of Saffron Walden town, part of the existing Shire ward and Saffron Walden parish, would be included in a revised Ashdon ward (see below).

Under these proposals no ward would vary by more than 1 per cent from the district average by 2004.

52 The Liberal Democrats proposed that Saffron Walden town be represented by four two-member wards and that Swards End form part of a modified Wimbish & Debden ward. However, as previously discussed, we were unable to consider the Liberal Democrats' proposed boundaries in detail, owing to the difference in ward patterns under schemes based on 44- and 38-member councils.

53 We have considered carefully all the representations received at Stage One. As stated earlier, we are basing our draft recommendations on the District Council's scheme and note that in this area it would provide excellent levels of electoral equality by 2004 and clearly identifiable boundaries. We have been made aware that the proposal to include Swards End in a revised Ashdon ward, to improve electoral equality, has been opposed locally. However, we have been unable to find an alternative arrangement for the area that would strike an equally good balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. It is also interesting to note that the Liberal Democrats proposed that Swards End be separated from Saffron Walden town for district warding purposes. We therefore propose adopting the District Council's scheme in this area without modification. The recommendations are outlined on the large map at the back of the report. The electoral variances under our draft recommendations would be the same as those under the District Council's scheme. These proposals would have a consequential effect on the parish warding of Saffron Walden parish, detailed later in this chapter.

#### **Littlebury, The Chesterfords and Wenden Lofts wards**

54 These three wards are situated in the north-west of the district and are represented by one member each. Littlebury ward comprises the parishes of Littlebury, Strethall and Wendens Ambo and is 10 per cent over-represented (14 per cent by 2004), The Chesterfords ward comprises the parishes of Great Chesterford and Little Chesterford and is 4 per cent under-represented (2 per cent over-represented by 2004) and Wenden Lofts ward comprises the parishes of Chrishall, Elmdon, Langley and Wenden Lofts and is 5 per cent over-represented (8 per cent by 2004).

55 The District Council proposed no change to the level of representation or to the boundaries of the existing The Chesterfords and Wenden Lofts wards. However, it proposed that the existing single-member Littlebury ward be extended south-westwards to include Arkesden parish (part of the existing Clavering ward, see below). Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be equal to the average in Littlebury and Wenden Lofts wards (3 per cent and 4 per cent below the district average respectively by 2004) and 9 per cent above the average in The Chesterfords ward (3 per cent by 2004), under a 44-member scheme.

56 The Liberal Democrats proposed a different configuration of wards to cover the area currently represented by these wards. However, as previously discussed, we were unable to consider the Liberal Democrats' proposed boundaries in detail, owing to the difference in ward patterns under schemes based on 44- and 38-member councils.

57 A resident of Saffron Walden expressed opposition to the District Council's proposal to include a small number of electors from Saffron Walden town in a revised Littlebury ward. However, this proposal did not form part of the District Council's final Stage One submission.

58 We have carefully considered the Stage One representations and given our proposal to adopt a council size of 44, we recommend that the District Council's proposed Littlebury, The Chesterfords and Wenden Lofts wards be adopted without modification. We consider that the revised wards would accurately reflect local communities, whilst providing improved electoral equality. The recommendations are illustrated on Map 2.

### **Ashdon, The Sampfords and Wimbish & Debden wards**

59 These three wards are situated in the north-east of the district and are represented by one member each. Ashdon ward comprises Ashdon and Hadstock parishes, The Sampfords ward comprises the parishes of Great Sampford, Hempstead, Little Sampford and Radwinter and Wimbish & Debden ward comprises the parishes of Debden and Wimbish. The number of electors per councillor is 29 per cent below the district average in Ashdon ward (33 per cent by 2004), 8 per cent above the average in The Sampfords ward (4 per cent by 2004) and 1 per cent below the average in Wimbish & Debden ward (7 per cent by 2004).

60 In this area the District Council proposed no change to the representation or boundaries of the existing The Sampfords and Wimbish & Debden wards. However, it proposed that the existing single-member Ashdon ward be extended westwards to include Swards End, a small village situated to the east of Saffron Walden town and part of Saffron Walden parish. In its submission the Council argued that adding Swards End to the existing Ashdon ward, rather than the alternatives of neighbouring Great Chesterford and Radwinter parishes, would strike the best balance between electoral equality and the reflection of community identities. Under its proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the district average in Ashdon ward (2 per cent below by 2004), 13 per cent above the average in The Sampfords ward (9 per cent by 2004) and 4 per cent above the average in Wimbish & Debden ward (2 per cent below by 2004), under a 44-member scheme.

61 The Liberal Democrats proposed a different configuration of wards in this area. They proposed that Swards End (part of Saffron Walden parish) be included in a revised Wimbish & Debden ward, that Hadstock parish be included in a ward with The Chesterfords and that Radwinter and Hempstead parishes be included in a revised Ashdon ward with Ashdon parish. However, as previously discussed, we were unable to consider the Liberal Democrats' proposed boundaries in detail, owing to the difference in ward patterns under schemes based on 44- and 38-member councils.

62 We have carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One and recommend that the District Council's proposals for The Sampfords and Wimbish & Debden wards, which provide good electoral equality under the new council size, reflect existing community ties and would command some local support, be endorsed as part of our draft recommendations. It is important to note that if Ashdon ward were to remain unchanged it would be 33 per cent over represented by 2004 and in our view, it is therefore inevitable that the ward be modified. We have

been unable to find an alternative to the District Council's proposed Ashdon ward that would strike an equally good balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. It is important to note two issues; firstly, that the alternatives for improving electoral equality in Ashdon ward are restricted because of where it is situated in the district, and secondly, that Swards End is a community separated from Saffron Walden by some distance (it currently forms a separate polling district) and therefore appears to be the most suitable settlement to transfer. We therefore propose adopting the District Council's proposed Ashdon ward, without modification. These proposals are outlined on Map 2.

### **Clavering, Newport and Stort Valley wards**

63 The single-member wards of Clavering, Newport and Stort Valley are situated in the west of the district. Clavering ward comprises the parishes of Arkesden, Clavering and Wicken Bonhunt. Newport ward is coterminous with Newport parish and Stort Valley ward comprises the parishes of Berden, Farnham and Manuden. At present, the member for Clavering ward represents 13 per cent more electors than the district average (8 per cent by 2004), the member for Newport ward represents 33 per cent more electors than the district average (26 per cent by 2004) and the member for Stort Valley ward represents 9 per cent fewer electors than the average (11 per cent by 2004).

64 The District Council proposed that Clavering ward retain its existing level of representation but be modified to exclude Arkesden parish (to be included in a revised Littlebury ward, see above). A revised Newport ward would be extended to include Quendon & Rickling and Widdington parishes and be represented by two members, rather than one as at present. The existing Stort Valley ward would remain unchanged under the District Council's scheme. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent below the district average in Clavering ward (9 per cent by 2004), 4 per cent above the average in Newport ward (1 per cent below by 2004) and 5 per cent below the average in Stort Valley ward (7 per cent by 2004).

65 The Liberal Democrats proposed that Ugley parish be included in a revised Stort Valley ward, that a revised Clavering ward should include Arkesden, Clavering and Langley parishes and that a two-member Newport ward should include the whole of the existing Newport and Rickling wards (see below) and parts of Clavering and Littlebury wards. However, as previously discussed, we were unable to consider the Liberal Democrats' proposed boundaries in detail, owing to the difference in ward patterns under schemes based on 44- and 38-member councils. The Stansted & District Liberal Democrats proposals for this area mirrored those of the Saffron Walden Constituency Liberal Democrats.

66 We have carefully considered the Stage One representations and propose that the District Council's recommendations for modified Clavering, Newport and Stort Valley wards be adopted without modification. We consider the arrangement would accurately reflect local communities, whilst providing good electoral equality under a council size of 44. These proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

### **Elsenham, Henham, Rickling and Takeley wards**

67 The single-member wards of Elsenham, Henham and Rickling and the two-member ward of Takeley are situated in the centre of the district. Elsenham ward is coterminous with the parish of the same name, Henham ward comprises the parishes of Henham and Ugley, Rickling ward comprises the parishes of Quendon, Rickling and Widdington. Takeley ward comprises the parishes of Broxted, Chickney and Takeley. The number of electors per councillor is 42 per cent above the district average in Elsenham ward (35 per cent by 2004), 1 per cent below the average in Henham ward (6 per cent by 2004), 33 per cent below the average in Rickling ward (37 per cent by 2004) and 8 per cent below the average in Takeley ward (11 per cent by 2004).

68 The District Council proposed that this area be wholly reconfigured. It proposed a revised two-member Elsenham ward, to include Chickney, Elsenham and Henham parishes and a revised Takeley ward to include the parishes of Great Canfield, Little Canfield and Takeley. Henham and Rickling wards would cease to exist under these arrangements with their constituent parts being included in Stansted North (see below) and Elsenham and Newport wards (see above). Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 13 per cent above the district average in Elsenham ward (8 per cent by 2004) and 1 per cent above the average in Takeley ward (3 per cent below by 2004).

69 The Liberal Democrats proposed that a revised Takeley ward should include the parishes of Hatfield Broad Oak, Little Canfield and Takeley and part of Stansted Mountfitchet parish and a new Elsenham & Henham ward should include Chickney, Elsenham and Henham parishes. Rickling ward would be included in a revised Newport ward and Ugley parish would be included in a revised Stort Valley ward. However, as previously discussed, we were unable to consider the Liberal Democrats' proposed boundaries in detail, owing to the difference in ward patterns under schemes based on 44- and 38-member councils.

70 We have carefully considered the Stage One representations. In our view the District Council's proposals for this area would provide the best balance presently available between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and therefore recommend that the proposed Takeley and Elsenham wards be adopted without modification. The Commission is aware that a number of parishes in this area do not wholly support the District Council's proposals. However, we have considered a number of alternatives and have been unable to find an alternative configuration which would give equitable levels of electoral equality. We are therefore seeking further evidence on this issue at Stage Three and ask that if any local interests are aware of a more locally acceptable arrangement, which would give similar levels of electoral equality, that it be forwarded to us. These proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

### **Stebbing, Thaxted and The Eastons wards**

71 These three wards are situated in the east of the district. The single-member Stebbing ward is 3 per cent over-represented (7 per cent by 2004) and comprises the parishes of Lindsell and Stebbing. The two-member Thaxted ward is 9 per cent over-represented (12 per cent by 2004) and comprises the parishes of Little Bardfield and Thaxted. The single-member The Eastons ward

is 13 per cent over-represented (17 per cent by 2004) and comprises the parishes of Great Easton, Little Easton and Tilty.

72 At Stage One the District Council proposed that the existing Stebbing ward retain its existing level of representation and boundaries and that Thaxted ward, also retaining its existing level of representation, be extended southwards to include Duton Hill village (part of Great Easton parish). The District Council stated that it had considered a number of alternatives in this area, to avoid dividing Great Easton parish between wards, however, it stated that it had been unable to find an alternative proposal that would provide equally good electoral equality. The remainder of Great Easton parish would be included in a revised The Eastons ward with the parishes of Broxted (part of the existing Takeley ward), Little Easton and Tilty (part of the existing The Eastons ward). This proposal would require that Great Easton parish be warded.

73 The Liberal Democrats proposed that Little Bardfield parish (part of the existing Thaxted ward) be included in a revised Stebbing ward, that The Sampfords parishes be included in a modified Thaxted ward and that Broxted parish (part of the existing The Canfields ward) be added to the existing The Eastons ward. However, as previously discussed, we were unable to consider the Liberal Democrats' proposed boundaries in detail, owing to the difference in ward patterns under schemes based on 44- and 38-member councils.

74 We have carefully considered the Stage One representations and are content to endorse the District Council's proposed Thaxted and Stebbing wards as they would provide good electoral equality and meet the statutory criteria. The Commission does not undertake the dividing of parishes between district wards lightly and has therefore attempted to find electoral arrangements for this area that would avoid dividing Great Easton parish between wards. However, we note that due to the nature of the district and particularly the geographic situation of the main towns, it is not possible to use whole parishes as building blocks in this area and provide satisfactory electoral equality under a council size of 44 (to not propose the warding of a parish in this area would result in an electoral variance of over 20 per cent). We noted that the District Council had considered dividing Broxted parish, rather than Great Easton parish, but agreed that because it does not have two distinct settlements, unlike Great Easton, it was not a suitable alternative. We therefore propose adopting the District Council's scheme in this area without modification, but would welcome locally generated alternative suggestions at Stage Three. These proposals are illustrated on Map 2. Under these proposals Great Easton parish would have to be warded, detailed later in this chapter and on Map A2.

### **Birchanger, Great Hallingbury, Little Hallingbury and Stansted Mountfitchet wards**

75 These four wards are situated in the south-west of the district and each is coterminous with the parish of the same name. The number of electors per councillor in Birchanger ward is 38 per cent below the district average (10 per cent by 2004), 59 per cent below the average in Great Hallingbury (60 per cent by 2004), 26 per cent below the average in Little Hallingbury ward (28 per cent by 2004) and 15 per cent above the average in Stansted Mountfitchet ward (21 per cent by 2004).

76 The District Council proposed no change to the existing Birchanger ward and that Great and Little Hallingbury wards (and parishes) be included in a new Hatfield Forest ward (detailed below). It also proposed a total re-configuration of wards in the Stansted area. It proposed a new two-member Stansted North ward to include that part of the existing Stansted Mountfitchet ward north of Stansted Mountfitchet to Elsenham railway line and Chapel Hill and Ugley parish. The remainder of the existing Stansted Mountfitchet ward would form a new two-member Stansted South ward. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 35 per cent below the average in Birchanger ward (5 per cent by 2004), 8 per cent above the average in Stansted North ward (3 per cent by 2004) and 13 per cent below the average in Stansted South ward (equal to the average by 2004).

77 The Liberal Democrats proposed that Stansted Mountfitchet parish be divided between three district wards: Stansted North, Stansted South & Birchanger and Takeley. They also proposed that Great and Little Hallingbury wards form part of a new two-member The Hallingburys ward with Hatfield Heath ward. Stansted & District Liberal Democrats proposals in this area mirrored those of the Saffron Walden Constituency Liberal Democrats. However, as previously discussed, we were unable to consider the Liberal Democrats' proposed boundaries in detail, owing to the difference in ward patterns under schemes based on 44- and 38-member councils.

78 We have carefully considered the Stage One representations and, given our proposal for a council size of 44, we propose that the District Council's recommendations for Birchanger, Stansted North and Stansted South wards be adopted without modification. In our opinion, they would strike the best balance presently available between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. These proposals are illustrated on Map 2. Under these proposals Stansted Mountfitchet parish would have to be warded, detailed later in this chapter and on the large map at the back of the report. We are aware that this particular arrangement is not supported by all local interest groups, and are therefore seeking further evidence on this issue at Stage Three and ask that if anybody is aware of a more locally acceptable arrangement that would give similar levels of electoral equality, that it be forwarded to us.

### **Felsted, Great Dunmow (North) and Great Dunmow (South) wards**

79 These two-member wards are situated in the south-east of the district. Felsted ward comprises the parishes of Felsted and Little Dunmow and is 7 per cent over-represented (7 per cent under-represented by 2004). Great Dunmow (North) covers part of Great Dunmow parish and is 2 per cent over-represented (19 per cent under-represented by 2004). The remainder of Great Dunmow parish forms part of Great Dunmow South ward with Barnston parish. Great Dunmow South ward is 32 per cent under-represented (unchanged by 2004).

80 The District Council proposed that Felsted ward retain its existing level of representation and boundaries, on the basis that such a proposal would best reflect local community identities, particularly as Felsted parish is situated on the far eastern border of the district. However, it proposed a re-configuration of the wards covering Great Dunmow town. Barnston parish would form part of a new Barnston & High Easter ward (see below). Revised Great Dunmow North and Great Dunmow South wards would cover the whole of Great Dunmow parish. The boundary between the two wards would broadly follow Stortford Road, Rosemary Lane and Rosemary

Downs, to The Causeway, continuing on to the town boundary. Under its proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent below the district average in Felsted ward (13 per cent above by 2004 – after the revised forecast was incorporated), 29 per cent below the average in Great Dunmow North ward (7 per cent by 2004) and 6 per cent below the average in Great Dunmow South ward (unchanged by 2004).

81 The Liberal Democrats proposed a very similar configuration of wards to the District Council in this area. They proposed an almost identical Barnston & High Easter ward (to include Margaret Roding parish) and two district wards to cover Great Dunmow parish. However, as previously discussed, we were unable to consider the Liberal Democrats' proposed boundaries in detail, owing to the difference in ward patterns under schemes based on 44- and 38-member councils.

82 Saffron Walden Constituency Conservative Association opposed the District Council's proposal to include Barnston parish in a ward with "the Easters". As an alternative arrangement for the area, it proposed Dunmow North, Dunmow Central and Dunmow South & Barnston wards. It stated that such an arrangement would better reflect community identities in the town, but did not propose detailed boundaries.

83 We have carefully considered the Stage One representations received. We have noted the Conservative Association's proposals for an alternative arrangement in this area and that the scheme would provide good levels of electoral equality locally. However, consideration has not been given to the knock-on effects of these particular proposals; excluding Barnston parish from the proposed Barnston & High Easter ward would result in an electoral variance of 55 per cent. The Commission is unwilling to divide the group of parishes known as The Rodings to improve electoral equality in the area, for reasons of community identity, and it is therefore apparent that the only viable alternative is to include Barnston parish, as proposed by the District Council and Liberal Democrats. We therefore recommend that the District Council's proposed Barnston & High Easter ward form part of our draft recommendations. We also recommend that the District Council's proposed wards for Great Dunmow town be adopted without modification as they would provide good electoral equality under a council size of 44 and are based on identifiable boundaries. These proposals are illustrated on Map 2. These proposals would have consequential implications for the parish warding of Great Dunmow parish, detailed later in this chapter.

84 We have noted the electoral variance of 13 per cent in the District Council's proposed Felsted ward (by 2004). However, we have been unable to identify an alternative arrangement in the area that would provide an equally good balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. To improve this electoral variance would require the creation of a three-member rural ward (opposed locally) or be at the expense of community identities, particularly in Little Dunmow parish. We are not satisfied that the alternatives would provide improved electoral arrangements or facilitate convenient and effective local government.

### **Hatfield Broad Oak, Hatfield Heath, The Canfields and The Rodings wards**

85 These four single-member wards are situated in the far south of the district. The boundaries of Hatfield Broad Oak and Hatfield Heath wards are coterminous with the parishes of the same name, with the number of electors per councillor being 26 per cent below and 3 per cent above

the district average respectively (30 per cent below and equal to the average by 2004). The Canfields ward comprises the parishes of Great Canfield, High Easter, High Roothing and Little Canfield and is 15 per cent under-represented (9 per cent by 2004). The Roding ward comprises the parishes of Aythorpe Roding, Leaden Roding, Margaret Roding and White Roothing and is 19 per cent over-represented (24 per cent by 2004).

86 The District Council proposed that the parishes of Great Hallingbury, Hatfield Broad Oak and Little Hallingbury be included in a new single-member Hatfield Forest ward. Hatfield Heath ward would remain unchanged under the District Council's proposals. The existing The Canfields ward would be divided between a number of revised wards. High Roding would form part of a revised The Rodings ward, High Easter parish would form part of a new single-member Barnston & High Easter ward (see above) and Great and Little Canfield parishes would form part of a revised Takeley ward (see above). The Canfields ward would cease to exist under these arrangements. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent above the district average in Hatfield Forest ward (2 per cent by 2004), 8 per cent above the average in Hatfield Heath ward (4 per cent by 2004) and 15 per cent above the average in The Rodings ward (8 per cent by 2004).

87 The Liberal Democrats proposed that four of the five Rodings parishes and Great Canfield parish form a revised The Rodings ward, that Hatfield Heath parish be included in a ward with The Hallingburys, that Hatfield Broad Oak ward form part of revised Takeley ward (see above) and that High Easter and Margaret Roding parishes form part of a new Barnston & High Easter ward. However, as previously discussed, we were unable to consider the Liberal Democrats' proposed boundaries in detail, owing to the difference in ward patterns under schemes based on 44- and 38-member councils.

88 We have carefully considered the Stage One representations and, given our proposal for a council size of 44, we propose that the District Council's recommendations for Hatfield Forest, Hatfield Heath and The Rodings wards be adopted without modification. We consider that this arrangement would strike the best balance presently available between providing electoral equality and meeting the statutory criteria. These proposals are illustrated on Map 2. We are aware that this particular arrangement is not supported by all local interest groups. We are therefore seeking further evidence on this issue at Stage Three and ask that if anybody is aware of a more locally acceptable arrangement which would give similar levels of electoral equality, that it be forwarded to us.

## **Electoral Cycle**

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

## **Conclusions**

90 Having considered all the evidence and representations received during the initial stage of the review, we propose that the District Council's proposals be adopted without modification and that:

- there should be an increase in council size from 42 to 44;
- there should be 27 wards, four fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 22 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of four wards;
- elections should continue to be held for the whole council.

91 Figure 5 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1999 electorate figures and with forecast electorates for the year 2004.

*Figure 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements*

	1999 electorate		2004 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	42	44	42	44
Number of wards	31	27	31	27
Average number of electors per councillor	1,278	1,220	1,365	1,303
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	16	6	18	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	10	2	10	0

92 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Uttlesford District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the district average from 16 to six. By 2004 only one ward is forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district.

**Draft Recommendation**

Uttlesford District Council should comprise 44 councillors serving 27 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover. Elections should continue to be held for the whole council.

# Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

93 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow, Stansted Mountfitchet and Great Easton to reflect the proposed district wards.

94 The parish of Saffron Walden is currently served by 16 councillors representing four wards: Audley, Castle, Plantation and Shire. Under our draft recommendations, Saffron Walden parish would be divided between four district wards. We propose that the existing town ward boundaries be modified to reflect the proposed district ward boundaries.

**Draft Recommendation**  
Saffron Walden Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Audley, Common and Shire (returning five councillors each) and Swards End (returning one councillor). The town ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

95 The parish of Great Dunmow is currently served by 15 councillors. Under our draft recommendations Great Dunmow parish would be divided between two district wards; Great Dunmow North and Great Dunmow South. We propose that the existing town ward boundaries be modified to reflect the proposed district ward boundaries.

**Draft Recommendation**  
Great Dunmow Town Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Great Dunmow North (returning six councillors) and Great Dunmow South (returning nine councillors). The boundary between the two town wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary between Great Dunmow North and Great Dunmow South wards, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

96 The parish of Stansted Mountfitchet is currently served by 15 councillors. Under our draft recommendations Stansted Mountfitchet parish would be divided between two district wards; Stansted North and Stansted South. We therefore propose that the parish be re-warded. The boundaries of the new parish wards would reflect the proposed district ward boundaries.

**Draft Recommendation**  
Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Stansted North (returning seven councillors) and Stansted South (returning eight councillors). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

97 The parish of Great Easton is currently served by seven councillors, and is not warded. Under our draft recommendations Great Easton parish would be divided between two district wards; Thaxted and The Eastons. We therefore propose that the parish be warded. The boundaries of the new parish wards would reflect the proposed district ward boundaries.

**Draft Recommendation**  
Great Easton Parish Council should comprise seven councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Duton Hill (returning three councillors) and Great Easton (returning four councillors). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

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

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

**99 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Uttlesford and welcome comments from the District Council and others relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, electoral cycle, ward names, and parish and town council electoral arrangements. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.**

*Map 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Uttlesford*

## 5 NEXT STEPS

100 We are putting forward draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Uttlesford. Now it is up to the people of the area. We will take fully into account all representations received by 10 July 2000. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment at the offices of the Commission and the District Council, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission after the end of the consultation period.

101 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

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

Fax: 020 7404 6142

E-mail: [reviews@lgce.gov.uk](mailto:reviews@lgce.gov.uk)

102 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to the Secretary of State, who cannot make an order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after he receives them.



## APPENDIX A

### **Draft Recommendations for Uttlesford: Detailed Mapping**

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

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

**Map A2** illustrates the proposed district ward boundary between the wards of Thaxted and The Eastons.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Great Dunmow, Saffron Walden and Stansted Mountfitchet.

*Map A1: Draft Recommendations for Uttlesford: Key Map*

*Map A2: Proposed District Ward Boundary Between the Wards of Thaxted and The Eastons*



## APPENDIX B

### The Statutory Provisions

#### Local Government Act 1992: the Commission's Role

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

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

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

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

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

4 Unlike the LGBC, the Commission may also make recommendations for changes in respect of electoral arrangements within parish and town council areas. Accordingly, in relation to parish

---

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

or town councils within a principal authority's area, the Commission may make recommendations relating to:

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

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

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

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

7 In relation to shire districts:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

