

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Broadland in Norfolk

Report to The Electoral Commission

July 2002

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CONTENTS

page

WHAT IS THE BOUNDARY COMMITTEE FOR ENGLAND?	5
SUMMARY	7
1 INTRODUCTION	13
2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS	15
3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	19
4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION	21
5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS	23
6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?	53
APPENDIX	
A Final Recommendations for Broadland: Detailed Mapping	55

A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Hellesdon, Old Catton, Sprowston and Thorpe St Andrew is 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
Kru Desai
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 district of Broadland in Norfolk.

SUMMARY

The Local Government Commission for England (LGCE) began a review of Broadland's electoral arrangements on 31 July 2001. It published its draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 26 February 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 Broadland:

- **In 26 of the 35 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10% from the average for the district and 20 wards vary by more than 20%;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10% from the average in 28 wards and by more than 20% in 20 wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 152-153) are that:

- **Broadland District Council should have 47 councillors, two fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 27 wards, instead of 35 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 33 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of eight, and two wards should retain their existing boundaries.**

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

- **In 21 of the proposed 27 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10% from the district average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in only one ward expected to vary by more than 10% from the average for the district in 2006.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Drayton, Hellesdon, Sprowston, Taverham and Thorpe St Andrew.**

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
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	Acle	1	<i>Unchanged</i> ; the parish of Acle	Map 2
2	Aylsham	3	the parishes of Aylsham, Blicking, Burgh & Tuttington, Marsham and Oulton	Map 2
3	Blofield & South Walsham	2	the parishes of Blofield, Hemblington, South Walsham, Upton with Fishley and Woodbastwick	Map 2
4	Brundall	2	the parishes of Brundall, Cantley, Postwick with Witton and Strumpshaw	Map 2
5	Burlingham	1	the parish of Lingwood & Burlingham	Map 2
6	Buxton	1	the parishes of Brampton, Buxton with Lammas and Frettenham	Map 2
7	Coltishall	1	the parishes of Coltishall, Crostwick and Horstead with Stanninghall	Map 2
8	Drayton North	1	part of Drayton parish (the proposed Drayton North parish ward)	Maps 2 and A3
9	Drayton South	1	part of Drayton parish (the proposed Drayton South parish ward)	Maps 2 and A3
10	Eynesford	1	the parishes of Cawston, Foulsham, Guestwick, Heydon, Salle and Wood Dalling	Map 2
11	Great Witchingham	1	the parishes of Alderford, Attlebridge, Booton, Brandiston, Great Witchingham, Haveringland, Honingham, Little Witchingham, Morton on the Hill, Ringland, Swannington and Weston Longville	Map 2
12	Hellesdon North West	2	part of Hellesdon parish (the proposed Hellesdon North West parish ward)	Large map
13	Hellesdon South East	2	part of Hellesdon parish (the proposed Hellesdon South East parish ward)	Large map
14	Hevingham	1	the parishes of Hainford, Hevingham and Stratton Strawless	Map 2
15	Horsford & Felthorpe	2	the parishes of Horsford and Felthorpe	Map 2
16	Marshes	1	the parishes of Beighton, Freethorpe, Halvergate and Reedham	Map 2
17	Old Catton & Sprowston West	3	the parish of Old Catton; part of Sprowston parish (the proposed Sprowston West parish ward)	Large map
18	Plumstead	1	<i>Unchanged</i> ; the parish of Great & Little Plumstead	Map 2
19	Reepham	1	the parish of Reepham	Map 2
20	Spixworth with St Faith's	2	the parishes of Beeston St Andrew, Horsham St Faith & Newton St Faith and Spixworth	Map 2
21	Sprowston Central	2	part of Sprowston parish (the proposed Sprowston Central parish ward)	Large map
22	Sprowston East	3	part of Sprowston parish (the proposed Sprowston East parish ward)	Large map
23	Taverham North	2	part of Taverham parish (the proposed Taverham North parish ward)	Maps 2 and A2
24	Taverham South	2	part of Taverham parish (the proposed Taverham South parish ward)	Maps 2 and A2
25	Thorpe St Andrew North West	3	part of Thorpe St Andrew parish (the proposed Thorpe St Andrew North West parish ward)	Large map
26	Thorpe St Andrew South East	3	part of Thorpe St Andrew parish (the proposed Thorpe St Andrew South East parish ward)	Large map
27	Wroxham	2	the parishes of Belaugh, Rackheath, Salhouse and Wroxham	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.

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

Table 2: Final Recommendations for Broadland

	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	Acle	1	2,217	2,217	9	2,315	2,315	9
2	Aylsham	3	5,580	1,860	-8	5,962	1,987	-6
3	Blofield & South Walsham	2	4,377	2,189	8	4,434	2,217	4
4	Brundall	2	4,614	2,307	14	4,677	2,339	10
5	Burlingham	1	2,023	2,023	-0	2,086	2,086	-2
6	Buxton	1	1,984	1,984	-2	2,012	2,012	-5
7	Coltishall	1	2,047	2,047	1	2,093	2,093	-1
8	Drayton North	1	2,102	2,102	3	2,196	2,196	3
9	Drayton South	1	1,977	1,977	-3	2,064	2,064	-3
10	Eynesford	1	2,250	2,250	11	2,324	2,324	9
11	Great Witchingham	1	1,921	1,921	-5	1,968	1,968	-7
12	Hellesdon North West	2	4,599	2,300	13	4,609	2,305	9
13	Hellesdon South East	2	4,616	2,308	14	4,626	2,313	9
14	Hevingham	1	2,080	2,080	2	2,180	2,180	3
15	Horsford & Felthorpe	2	3,578	1,789	-12	3,882	1,941	-9
16	Marshes	1	2,215	2,215	9	2,359	2,359	11
17	Old Catton & Sprowston West	3	6,078	2,026	0	6,848	2,283	8
18	Plumstead	1	1,987	1,987	-2	2,277	2,277	7
19	Reepham	1	1,981	1,981	-3	2,051	2,051	-3
20	Spixworth with St Faith's	2	4,399	2,200	8	4,436	2,218	4
21	Sprowston Central	2	4,311	2,156	6	4,340	2,170	2
22	Sprowston East	3	5,947	1,982	-2	6,274	2,091	-1
23	Taverham North	2	3,984	1,992	-2	4,045	2,023	-5
24	Taverham South	2	3,914	1,957	-4	3,969	1,985	-7
25	Thorpe St Andrew North West	3	5,909	1,970	-3	5,922	1,974	-7

	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 %
26	Thorpe St Andrew South East	3	5,018	1,673	-18	5,768	1,923	-9
27	Wroxham	2	3,791	1,896	-7	4,062	2,031	-4
	Totals	47	95,499	-	-	99,779	-	-
	Averages	-	-	2,032	-	-	2,123	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Broadland 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 borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Broadland in 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 Broadland's last review was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which reported to the Secretary of State in March 1977 (Report no. 190). The electoral arrangements of Norfolk County Council were last reviewed in 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 Broadland 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 councils in the district.

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 Broadland 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 Broadland District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. It also notified Norfolk County Council, Norfolk Police Authority, the local authority associations, Norfolk Local Councils Association, parish councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituencies in the district, 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 District 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 February 2002 with the publication of the LGCE's report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Broadland in Norfolk*, and ended on 22 April 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 Broadland District Council covers an area of some 55,000 hectares to the north, east and west of the City of Norwich, and currently has a population of some 116,000. The district covers the more urban areas of Thorpe St Andrew, Hellesdon and Sprowston, which abut the district boundary with Norwich, and more rural areas to the north. The district is entirely parished, consisting of 64 civil parishes.

11 The electorate of the district is 95,499 (February 2001). Since 1975 there has been an increase in the size of the electorate of some 30%, which the District Council projects will increase by a further 4% over the course of the next five years. The Council presently has 49 members who are elected from 35 wards, 13 of which are relatively urban, situated adjacent to the district boundary with the City of Norwich, with the remainder being mainly rural. Under the existing arrangements one ward is represented by three councillors, 12 are each represented by two councillors and 22 are single-member wards. The Council is elected by thirds.

12 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 district average. In the text which follows, this calculation may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

13 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,949 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 2,036 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic change and migration since the last review, the number of electors per councillor in 26 of the 35 wards varies by more than 10% from the district average, in 20 wards by more than 20% and in nine wards by more than 30%. The worst imbalance is in Taverham ward, where each councillor represents 110% more electors than the district average. The degree of imbalance across the district is also illustrated by the fact that each of the two councillors for Taverham ward represent nearly four times as many electors as the councillor for Foulsham ward.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Broadland

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	Acle	1	2,217	2,217	14	2,315	2,315	14
2	Aylsham	3	4,825	1,608	-17	5,159	1,720	-16
3	Blofield	2	2,913	1,457	-25	2,942	1,471	-28
4	Brundall	2	3,583	1,792	-8	3,603	1,802	-12
5	Burlingham	1	2,515	2,515	29	2,596	2,596	27
6	Buxton	1	1,623	1,623	-17	1,660	1,660	-18
7	Catton	2	4,755	2,378	22	5,010	2,505	23
8	Cawston	1	1,861	1,861	-5	1,926	1,926	-5
9	Coltishall	1	1,969	1,969	1	2,015	2,015	-1
10	Drayton	1	3,799	3,799	95	3,976	3,976	95
11	Foulsham	1	1,173	1,173	-40	1,206	1,206	-41
12	Freethorpe	1	1,425	1,425	-27	1,478	1,478	-27
13	Great Witchingham	1	1,634	1,634	-16	1,676	1,676	-18
14	Hainford	1	1,406	1,406	-28	1,458	1,458	-28
15	Hellesdon North	2	2,870	1,435	-26	2,872	1,436	-29
16	Hellesdon South East	2	2,872	1,436	-26	2,877	1,439	-29
17	Hellesdon West	2	3,473	1,737	-11	3,486	1,743	-14
18	Hevingham	1	1,844	1,844	-5	1,929	1,929	-5
19	Horsford	1	3,013	3,013	55	3,300	3,300	62
20	Plumstead	1	2,005	2,005	3	2,297	2,297	13
21	Rackheath	1	2,449	2,449	26	2,700	2,700	33
22	Reedham	1	1,329	1,329	-32	1,445	1,445	-29
23	Reepham	1	2,073	2,073	6	2,143	2,143	5
24	South Walsham	1	1,464	1,464	-25	1,492	1,492	-27
25	Spixworth	1	3,000	3,000	54	3,020	3,020	48
26	Sprowston Central	2	4,210	2,105	8	4,239	2,120	4
27	Sprowston East	2	3,564	1,782	-9	3,886	1,943	-5
28	Sprowston South	2	2,386	1,193	-39	2,392	1,196	-41
29	Sprowston West	1	1,419	1,419	-27	1,935	1,935	-5
30	St Faith's	1	1,399	1,399	-28	1,416	1,416	-30

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 Taverham	2	8,178	4,089	110	8,298	4,149	104
32 Thorpe St Andrew North East	2	5,610	2,805	44	6,205	3,103	52
33 Thorpe St Andrew North West	2	3,192	1,596	-18	3,205	1,603	-21
34 Thorpe St Andrew South	1	2,127	2,127	9	2,280	2,280	12
35 Wroxham	1	1,324	1,324	-32	1,342	1,342	-34
Totals	49	95,499	-	-	99,779	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,949	-	-	2,036	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Broadland 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 2001, electors in Wroxham ward were relatively over-represented by 32%, while electors in Taverham ward were significantly under-represented by 110%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

14 During Stage One the LGCE received ten representations, including a district-wide scheme from Broadland District Council and nine representations from parish councils in the district. 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 Broadland in Norfolk*.

15 The LGCE's draft recommendations for the rural area of the district were based on the District Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality, and provided for a mixed pattern of wards. In the urban area of the district the LGCE used the District Council's proposed single-member wards as a base and put forward a mixed pattern of two-member and three-member wards in order to improve electoral equality and secure a better balance between the statutory criteria. It proposed that:

- Broadland District Council should be served by 47 councillors, compared with the current 49, representing 25 wards, 10 fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 33 of the existing wards should be modified, while two wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- there should be new warding arrangements for Drayton, Hellesdon, Sprowston, Taverham and Thorpe St Andrew parish councils.

Draft recommendation

Broadland District Council should comprise 47 councillors, serving 25 wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

16 The LGCE's proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 19 of the 25 wards varying by no more than 10% from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with only one ward (Marshes) varying by more than 10% from the average in 2006.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

17 During the consultation on its draft recommendations report, the LGCE received 45 representations. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Broadland District Council.

Broadland District Council

18 The District Council broadly supported the draft recommendations for the rural area of the district. However, it reiterated its Stage One proposals for two single-member wards in the Buxton and Coltishall area. The District Council opposed the draft recommendations for the urban south of the district and reiterated its proposals for a broadly single-member ward pattern in this area. It argued that single-member wards had received cross-party support, and would ensure greater accountability of the elected member to his or her electorate. It also argued that under the local government modernisation agenda, councillors could more effectively act as “champions of their communities” in a single-member ward configuration.

19 In respect of the Drayton and Taverham area, the District Council argued that the draft recommendations did not reflect the statutory criteria. It noted that the proposed wards would breach revised parish boundaries that had recently been the subject of local consultation. It concluded that the draft recommendations in this area would not provide an effective balance between the statutory criteria and would be confusing to local electors.

Norfolk County Council

20 The County Council expressed concern that a radical change to ward boundaries for rural areas of the county could have a detrimental effect of community identities. It also considered that the review of county council electoral arrangements should have been undertaken at the same time as the district reviews to “maximise coterminosity” between wards and divisions. The County Council also submitted the views of its Labour and Liberal Democrat groups in respect of the reviews of all the districts in Norfolk. In respect of Broadland, the Labour Group opposed the draft recommendations for the Thorpe St Andrew area. It argued that the District Council’s Stage One proposals secured a better reflection the statutory criteria and would enhance “democratic access and accountability” of councillors to their electorate.

Parish Councils

21 Blofield, Horsford, Oulton, Spixworth and Wroxham parish councils supported the draft recommendations in their respective areas. Foulsham Parish Council opposed the proposed Eynesford ward, arguing that it would encompass too large a geographical area and would not secure effective and convenient local government. Buxton with Lammas, Coltishall, Frettenham and Horstead with Stanninghall parish councils and Crostwick Parish Meeting opposed the proposed two-member Buxton & Coltishall ward and favoured the District Council’s Stage One proposals for two single-member wards in this area. Brampton Parish Council and Belaugh Parish Meeting also opposed the draft recommendations in this area and proposed that they be incorporated in adjoining district wards. Horsham & Newton St Faith’s Parish Council opposed the proposed two-member Spixworth ward and reiterated its Stage One proposal that it be warded either with more rural parishes to its north or with the Crostwick Lane area of Spixworth parish.

22 Cantley and Strumpshaw parish councils strongly objected to the proposed warding arrangements for the south-east of the district. In particular, they opposed their inclusion in the proposed two-member Brundall district ward and put forward alternative warding arrangements for this area. Brundall Parish Council commented on the electoral cycle of the district.

23 In respect of the urban area of the district, Hellesdon, Old Catton, Sprowston and Thorpe St Andrew parish councils opposed the draft recommendations. All favoured the broadly single-member warding pattern put forward by the District Council at Stage One, arguing that the District Council's proposals would secure effective and convenient local government and reflect community identities and interests. In particular, Old Catton and Sprowston parish councils opposed the proposed three-member Old Catton & Sprowston West ward, arguing that district ward boundaries should remain coterminous with existing parish boundaries.

24 Taverham and Drayton parish councils opposed the draft recommendations in their respective areas and favoured revised warding arrangements that would adhere to existing parish boundaries. In particular they opposed the proposed Taverham South ward which would include part of Drayton parish, and the proposed Drayton ward which would incorporate that part of the Thorpe Marriott estate that lies in Taverham parish.

Other Representations

25 Further representations were received in response to the LGCE's draft recommendations from local political groups, councillors and residents. Norwich North and Broadland Conservative Association recognised that the proposed Old Catton & Sprowston West ward would address the issue of electoral equality, but argued that the proposed ward would represent an "uneasy alliance" of communities. It opposed the draft recommendations in the Taverham and Drayton areas, arguing that they did not reflect the statutory criteria. The Thorpe St Andrew branch of the Norwich North and Broadland Conservative Association stated that the draft recommendations in the Thorpe St Andrews area were "contrary" to the statutory criteria. Sprowston & Old Catton Labour Party argued that the draft recommendations would achieve better electoral equality "at the expense of community identities" in its area. It argued that the proposed Old Catton & Sprowston West ward failed to recognise community identities and interests.

26 Councillor Mallet (Coltishall ward) opposed the draft recommendations for the Coltishall area and favoured the District Council's Stage One proposal to establish more single-member wards. Councillor Davie (Spixworth ward) supported the proposed Spixworth ward but put forward the alternative ward name of Spixworth with St Faith's. Councillor Illes (Reedham ward) and Councillor Peters (Burlingham ward) opposed the draft recommendations for the south east of the district, arguing that they failed to reflect community identities and interests. Councillor Peters outlined alternative proposals that were identical to those put forward by Strumpshaw Parish Council, while Councillor Illes put forward his own warding arrangements for this area which would necessitate the warding of Acle parish. Councillor Toye (Hellesdon South East ward) opposed the draft recommendations for the Hellesdon area, arguing that the District Council's proposed single-member wards would provide the best balance between the statutory criteria. Councillor Harwood (Thorpe St Andrew North East ward) opposed the draft recommendations in the Thorpe St Andrew area, arguing that the District Council's Stage One proposals secured a better reflection of the statutory criteria.

27 The Chairman of Strumpshaw Parish Council opposed the proposed Brundall ward and endorsed the alternative proposals put forward by Strumpshaw Parish Council at Stage Three. Representations were received from eight local residents opposing the proposed two-member Buxton & Coltishall ward. Two local residents opposed the proposed three-member Old Catton & Sprowston West ward. They proposed that Old Catton and Spixworth parishes be combined in the same district ward, arguing that these areas are subject to similar local issues as a result of their proximity to Norwich Airport. A local resident opposed the proposals suggested by a local political party at Stage One, while another local resident made some general comments in respect of external district boundaries in Norfolk.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

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

31 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 identities and interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate must also be considered and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

Electorate Forecasts

32 Since 1975 there has been a 30% increase in the electorate of Broadland district. At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 4% from 95,499 to 99,779 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in the town of Sprowston, although a significant amount is also expected in the more rural Aylsham and Wroxham wards. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council, using a county-wide methodology, 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.

33 The LGCE received no comments on the District Council’s electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and we remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates currently available.

Council Size

34 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.

35 Broadland District Council currently has 49 members. At Stage One the District Council argued that a small reduction in council size was justified due to a new internal political management structure and the consequential change in the role of elected members. It concluded that a council of 47 members was the minimum required for the Council to operate efficiently and to ensure the effective representation of the constituent communities of the district. Western Longville Parish Council supported an increase in council size to ensure the equitable representation of urban areas while preserving the largely single-member ward pattern in the rural area of the district. It argued that rural wards covering too large a geographical area would prevent councillors effectively representing their electorate.

36 In its draft recommendations the LGCE noted the views of Western Longville Parish Council but was not persuaded that an increase in council size would necessarily ensure the effective representation of electors in Broadland. It also noted that a council size of 47 members would ensure an equitable distribution of councillors between the primary areas of the district. Having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, the LGCE concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 47 members.

37 At Stage Three the District Council supported the draft recommendations for a council size of 47 members. No further representations were received in respect of council size. We concur with the LGCE that a council of 47 members would secure an effective balance between the statutory criteria. In the light of this, we are confirming the LGCE's draft recommendation for a 47-member council as final.

Electoral Arrangements

38 In its draft recommendations the LGCE recognised that Broadland is a diverse district. It combines a significant rural area with larger settlements to the south of the district, and has been subject to significant changes in the size and distribution of its electorate over recent years. The LGCE acknowledged that the District Council's Stage One proposals would secure improved levels of electoral equality and have a measure of local support. For the rural area of the district, the LGCE concluded that the District Council's proposals would provide an effective balance between the statutory criteria. In particular, it considered they would ensure significant improvement in electoral equality, while reflecting the views expressed by interested parties during the Council's local consultation exercise. Subject to one amendment in the Buxton and Coltishall area, the LGCE adopted the District Council's proposals for the rural area of the district as part of its draft recommendations.

39 The LGCE recognised that the District Council's proposals for the urban area of the district had a measure of local support and would achieve some improvement in electoral equality. However, it considered that in attempting to formulate a broadly single-member ward pattern the District Council has not sufficiently addressed the high electoral variances that currently exist in this area. While not opposed in principle to single-member wards in urban areas, the LGCE stated that electoral equality is often more achievable in a multi-member ward structure. It also considered that the District Council's proposals would result in the establishment of single-member wards that would effectively divide communities rather than reflecting them. The LGCE therefore put forward its own proposals for the urban area of the district. It had sought to reflect local preferences within the context of improving electoral equality, and utilised the District Council's proposed single-member wards as the basis of its proposals in this area. By combining a number of the District Council's proposed single-member wards in a mixed two-member and three-member ward pattern, the LGCE considered that electoral equality would be improved without having a detrimental effect on the effective and convenient representation of local communities. However, the LGCE considered it necessary to introduce an element of parish warding in the Sprowston, Drayton and Taverham areas to ensure a better balance between the statutory criteria.

40 At Stage Three the LGCE's draft recommendations for the rural area of the district received a broad degree of support. However, the proposed two-member Buxton & Coltishall ward met with strong opposition among the constituent parishes of the proposed ward, and there was a clear preference for two single-member wards, as put forward by the District Council at Stage One. The draft recommendations for the south-east of the district were also opposed by a number of local interested parties, and several alternative warding schemes were submitted at Stage Three. In the light of representations received we have decided to substantially confirm the draft recommendations for the rural area of the district as final. However, we acknowledge that the alternative proposals put forward for the Buxton and Coltishall area would more accurately reflect community identities and interests while maintaining excellent levels of electoral equality. We have therefore decided to depart from the draft recommendations in this area and also propose adopting an alternative ward name put forward at Stage Three.

41 We note that the draft recommendations for the urban area of the district have proved particularly contentious. We recognise that a substantial number of respondents, including the District Council, have argued that the broadly single-member warding pattern would enhance the accountability of councillors to their electorate and ensure the most effective representation of local communities on the District Council. Like the LGCE, we are not opposed to single-member wards in principle, as long as they reflect the statutory criteria, as set out in the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3692). However, we do not subscribe to the view that single-member wards necessarily secure a better reflection of the statutory criteria than a multi-member warding pattern. While we acknowledge the broad support for the District Council's Stage One proposals in this area, we concur with the LGCE that further improvements in electoral equality are achievable within a multi-member warding pattern. Furthermore, we consider that an element of parish warding in the Old Catton and Sprowston area is essential to secure good electoral equality. We concur with the LGCE that the District Council's proposed two-member Old Catton ward would have an unacceptable electoral variance, particularly for an urban area.

42 We have therefore decided to substantially confirm the draft recommendations for the urban area of the district as final. However, we have been persuaded that there is sufficient evidence to move away from the draft recommendations in the Drayton and Taverham area. We have reservations as to the effectiveness of the revised parish boundary (as amended under the Broadland (Parishes) Order 2001) in reflecting community identities in the Thorpe Marriott area. However, we acknowledge that in attempting to unite this area in a single district ward, the draft recommendations would result in the division of established communities in the south of Drayton parish. The draft recommendations have therefore been reviewed in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

Broadland rural

- (a) Brundall, Burlingham, Freethorpe and Reedham wards;
- (b) Acle, Blofield and South Walsham wards;
- (c) Plumstead, Rackheath and Wroxham wards;
- (d) Horsford, St Faith's and Spixworth wards;
- (e) Aylsham, Buxton, Coltishall, Hainford and Hevingham wards;
- (f) Cawston, Foulsham, Great Witchingham and Reepham wards.

Broadland urban

- (g) Drayton and Taverham wards;
- (h) Hellesdon North, Hellesdon South East and Hellesdon West wards;
- (i) Sprowston West and Catton wards;
- (j) Sprowston East, Sprowston South and Sprowston Central wards;
- (k) Thorpe St Andrew North East, North West and South wards.

43 Details of our final recommendations including changes to district ward boundaries as a consequence of amended parish boundaries which have been approved by the Secretary of State and set out in the Broadland (Parishes) Order 2001, are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Broadland Rural

Brundall, Burlingham, Freethorpe and Reedham wards

44 The existing wards of Brundall, Burlingham, Freethorpe and Reedham are situated in the south-east of the district. Brundall ward is served by two councillors and comprises the parishes of Brundall and Postwick with Witton. Burlingham, Freethorpe and Reedham wards are more rural in nature and each is represented by a single councillor. Burlingham ward comprises the parishes of Lingwood & Burlingham and Strumpshaw; Freethorpe ward comprises the parishes of Beighton, Freethorpe and Halvergate; while Reedham ward comprises the parishes of Cantley and Reedham. Under the existing arrangements, Brundall ward has 8% fewer electors per councillor than the district average now, and is projected to have 12% fewer electors per councillor than the average by 2006. Burlingham, Freethorpe and Reedham wards have 29% more, 27% fewer and 32% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (27% more, 27% fewer and 29% fewer than the average by 2006).

45 At Stage One the District Council proposed a new single-member Marshes ward comprising the existing Freethorpe ward and Reedham parish from the existing Reedham ward. It argued that its proposed ward would combine parishes of a similar nature and would secure improved electoral equality. It proposed that Cantley parish be combined with the existing Brundall ward and Strumpshaw parish from the existing Burlingham ward in a revised two-member Brundall ward. The District Council noted that Strumpshaw Parish Council was opposed to its proposed warding arrangements in this area and favoured alternative proposals that would necessitate the warding of Brundall parish. The District Council argued that such a proposal would result in the “artificial” division of Brundall parish and would therefore have insufficient regard to community identities and interests. It proposed a revised single-member Burlingham ward whose boundaries would be coterminous with Lingwood with Burlingham parish.

46 In its draft recommendations the LGCE noted that the District Council’s proposed Brundall and Marshes wards would have a relatively high electoral variance, both now and in 2006. However, it recognised that the proposed wards had regard for community identities and interests and considered that they took account of the views expressed by local interested parties during the District Council’s consultation exercise. The LGCE acknowledged that its ability to consider alternative warding arrangements was somewhat limited due to the proximity of this area to the district boundary. It also noted that electoral equality in the proposed wards is forecast to improve over the course of the next five years. The LGCE concluded that the District Council’s proposals would provide an effective balance between the statutory criteria and therefore decided to adopt the proposed Brundall, Burlingham and Marshes wards as part of its draft recommendations.

47 At Stage Three the District Council supported the draft recommendations for these wards. Lingwood & Burlingham Parish Council noted that it was not “directly affected” by the draft recommendations. However, it expressed concern that neighbouring parishes would experience “great upheaval for very little gain” and supported retaining the existing warding arrangements in its area. Cantley Parish Council strongly opposed the proposed Brundall ward. It stated that combining it with Brundall parish was a “retrograde step”. It noted in particular that Cantley and Strumpshaw parishes are rural in nature and have “nothing in common” with the more urban Brundall parish, and outlined alternative warding arrangements for this area. It proposed that the existing Reedham ward and Freethorpe ward (less Beighton parish) be combined in a new single-member district ward and that Beighton parish be combined with Lingwood & Burlingham parish in a revised single-member Burlingham ward. The Parish Council argued that the

constituent parishes of Reedham and Freethorpe wards are rural in nature and are subject to similar local issues. While acknowledging that the proposed ward would cover a relatively large geographical area, it noted that the eastern part of the proposed ward, the marshes, is very sparsely populated.

48 Strumpshaw Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations, stating that its constituent communities were of an “entirely different in make-up and structure” from Brundall parish. It argued that Strumpshaw was a rural farming community whereas Brundall was more urban in nature with a local economy based on boat building and hire, as well as marinas and general engineering. The Parish Council also argued that it looked to Acle and Great Yarmouth for the provision of local services while Brundall constitutes a “dormitory” town of Norwich. The Parish Council put forward its own warding arrangements for the south-east of the district. It proposed a revised three-member Brundall ward comprising the parishes of Brundall, Blofield, Postwick & Witton and Hemblington and a new single-member Marshes ward comprising the parishes of Cantley, Freethorpe and Reedham, and also proposed retaining the existing Burlingham ward. As detailed below, in order to facilitate its proposals in this area, it proposed a revised two-member Acle ward comprising the parishes of Acle, Beighton, Halvergate, South Walsham, Upton with Fishley and Woodbastwick. The Chair of Strumpshaw Parish Council reiterated the views of her Parish Council and argued that the draft recommendations would not reflect an effective balance between the statutory criteria. She argued that the communities of the existing Burlingham ward have strong social and community links and have shared educational facilities. She also noted that the District-wide Local Plan and the Norfolk Structure Plan supported the maintenance of a “sizeable green wedge” between Brundall and communities to its east.

49 Councillor Peters (Burlingham ward) also opposed the draft recommendations in this area. She argued that Brundall and neighbouring parishes are similar urban communities that look towards Norwich for the provision of local services. She stated that the existing Burlingham ward accurately reflects community identities and interests and noted in particular that residents of Strumpshaw and Lingwood & Burlingham parishes utilise joint amenities and facilities and have close ecclesiastical ties. Councillor Peters outlined proposals identical to Strumpshaw Parish Council’s, arguing that they would better reflect the statutory criteria than the draft recommendations.

50 Councillor Illes (Acle division and Reedham ward) argued that the consultation process undertaken by both the LGCE and Broadland District Council was insufficient and failed to ensure that all local interested parties were sufficiently aware of the review. He argued that the draft recommendations were contrary to the advice laid out in the *Guidance (Fourth Edition)* and did not link villages that share common identities and interests. He noted in particular that the sugar beet factory located in Cantley parish has an impact on surrounding rural parishes in terms of noise and pollution and that these communities should be combined in a single district ward. Councillor Illes also argued that Brundall and Blofield parishes should be combined for the purposes of district warding and proposed a new three-member ward comprising the parishes of Blofield, Brundall, Hemblington and Postwick with Witton. He also proposed a single-member ward comprising the parishes of Cantley, Halvergate, Reedham and Strumpshaw, and suggested that Acle parish be warded, with the Damgate area of the parish combined with Beighton and Freethorpe parishes in a new two-member ward. As detailed below, he proposed that the remainder of Acle parish be combined in a single-member ward with parishes to its north. Councillor Illes argued that the warding of Acle parish would reflect community identities as the northern and southern parts of the parish identify with adjoining parishes.

51 As detailed below, Blofield Parish Council supported the draft recommendations and strongly opposed the proposals of Strumpshaw Parish Council to combine it in a three-member ward with Brundall parish. It argued that those proposed warding arrangements would “not advance democracy” or take account of the new role that councillors will have under the new Cabinet System.

52 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three and note that the draft recommendations for this area have met with some local opposition. We acknowledge that all of the alternative warding arrangements put forward at Stage Three would secure good electoral equality for a majority of the proposed wards. However, we note that Lingwood with Burlingham and Strumpshaw parish councils and Councillor Peters proposed retaining the existing Burlingham ward. We consider that the existing Burlingham ward would not provide the best reflection of the statutory criteria in that it would perpetuate the existing high level of electoral inequality in this area. We note that by 2006, the existing ward is projected to have 22% more electors per councillor than the district average under our proposed council size of 47. We have therefore not been persuaded to retain the existing Burlingham ward as part of our final recommendations.

53 We acknowledge that Cantley Parish Council's proposed Marshes ward would secure reasonable electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests. However, we note that in order to facilitate its warding arrangements in this area, it proposed that Beighton parish be incorporated in a revised single-member Burlingham ward. We consider that the proposed ward would not secure good electoral equality and note that it would have an electoral variance of 15% more by 2006. We must adopt a district-wide approach when formulating our final recommendations and have concluded that Cantley Parish Council's proposals would not provide the best balance achievable between the statutory criteria for the south-east of the district.

54 We recognise that the alternative proposals put forward by Councillor Illes would secure good electoral equality. However, as stated below, we are not persuaded that the warding of Acle parish would reflect the statutory criteria. In particular, we consider that the Damgate area of the parish shares more convenient communication links with the rest of Acle parish than with communities to its south and concur with the LGCE that the existing Acle ward secures an effective balance between the statutory criteria. We have therefore not been persuaded to adopt Councillor Illes's proposals for this area as part of our final recommendations. We have concluded that the draft recommendations provide an effective balance between the statutory criteria. We note in particular that the draft recommendations are supported by the District Council and secure better overall electoral quality than any of the alternative proposals put forward at Stage Three. We have therefore decided to confirm the draft recommendations for this area, without amendment, as part of our final recommendations.

55 Under our final recommendations, Brundall and Marshes wards would have 14% more and 9% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (10% more and 11% more than the average by 2006). Burlingham ward would have an equal number of electors per councillor to the district average initially and 2% fewer than the average by 2006. Our final recommendations for this area are illustrated on Map 2.

Acle, Blofield and South Walsham wards

56 The existing wards of Acle, Blofield and South Walsham are situated in the east of the district. Acle ward is currently served by a single councillor and is coterminous with the parish of the same name. Blofield ward is represented by two councillors and comprises the parishes of Blofield and Hemblington. South Walsham ward comprises the parishes of South Walsham, Upton with Fishley and Woodbastwick and is a single-member ward. Under the existing arrangements Acle, Blofield and South Walsham wards have 14% more, 25% fewer and 25% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (14% more, 28% fewer and 27% fewer than the average by 2006).

57 At Stage One the District Council proposed a new two-member Blofield & South Walsham ward comprising the existing South Walsham ward and the existing Blofield ward. The District Council considered that its proposed ward reflected the preferences of local interested parties and would ensure good electoral equality. The District Council proposed retaining the existing

single-member Acle ward, stating that the parish contained sufficient electors to justify its retention.

58 In its draft recommendations report the LGCE noted that the District Council's proposals would secure much-improved electoral equality, both now and in five years' time. It also noted that the District Council proposed retaining the existing Acle ward. While the electoral variance would be somewhat high, the LGCE accepted that the existing ward contains a relatively large and cohesive community and a sufficient number of electors to sustain a coterminous single-member ward. The LGCE therefore decided to adopt the District Council's proposed Acle and Blofield & South Walsham wards as part of its draft recommendations.

59 At Stage Three the District Council supported the draft recommendations for this area. Blofield Parish Council supported the proposed Blofield & South Walsham ward and noted that the proposed ward would secure much-improved electoral equality. It stated that, in agreement with South Walsham Parish Council, it endorsed the proposed ward name of Blofield & South Walsham. As stated earlier, the Parish Council strongly opposed the alternative warding arrangements put forward by Strumpshaw Parish Council at Stage Three on the grounds that they would not secure effective and convenient local government.

60 As discussed in detail earlier, a number of alternative warding proposals were submitted at Stage Three. Strumpshaw Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations in its area. To facilitate its proposed warding arrangements in the Strumpshaw area, it proposed a revised two-member Acle ward comprising the parishes of Acle, Beighton, Halvergate, South Walsham, Upton with Fishley and Woodbastwick. It also proposed that Blofield and Hemblington parishes be combined with Brundall and Postwick & Witton parishes in a revised three-member Brundall ward. Councillor Illes opposed the draft recommendations for this area. He noted that the electorate of this area had grown "dramatically" over the course of recent years yet under the draft recommendations it would be represented by fewer councillors than under the existing arrangements. He noted in particular that Acle parish has close associations with surrounding parishes, and concluded that it "requires to be linked with adjoining villages" due to population growth over recent years. He therefore proposed a single-member ward comprising the remainder of Acle parish and South Walsham, Upton with Fishley and Woodbastwick parishes. As stated earlier, he proposed that the Damgate area of Acle parish be combined with Freethorpe and Beighton parishes in a new single-member ward. As detailed earlier, Councillor Peters proposed that Blofield parish be combined with Brundall parish for the purposes of district warding. Councillor Peters also put forward a revised two-member Acle ward that was identical to the proposal of Strumpshaw Parish Council. She stated that having spoken to the district councillor for this area, local residents of adjoining parishes would favour being warded with Acle parish rather than Blofield.

61 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three and recognise that the draft recommendations for this area have proved somewhat contentious. As stated above, we have not been persuaded to adopt the alternative warding arrangements put forward for this area at Stage Three. In particular, we are not persuaded that the proposal of Councillor Illes to divide Acle parish between district wards has sufficient regard for the statutory criteria. In particular, we consider that the existing ward would secure good long-term levels of electoral equality. Furthermore, we concur with the LGCE that the existing ward comprises a cohesive community and contains sufficient electors to sustain the existing single-member ward.

62 Having examined the proposals of Strumpshaw Parish Council and Councillor Peters, we are not persuaded that their proposed two-member Acle ward has sufficient regard for the statutory criteria. We consider that it would contain a number of discrete communities and would cover a relatively large geographical area. In formulating our draft recommendations we must adopt a district-wide approach and have regard for the impact on adjoining district wards. As stated earlier, we have not been persuaded that the retention of the existing Burlingham ward, comprising the parishes of Lingwood & Burlingham and Strumpshaw, would address the high

electoral variance in this area. Our ability to consider alternative warding arrangements in this area that meet the objectives of this review are somewhat limited due to the relatively isolated nature of communities in this area and their proximity to the district boundary. However, we are persuaded that the draft recommendations will secure an effective balance between the statutory criteria. In particular, we note the support of the District Council and recognise that it conducted a consultation process with local interested parties before submitting its proposed warding arrangements at Stage One. We have therefore decided to confirm the draft recommendations for this area as final.

63 Under our final recommendations Acle and Blofield & South Walsham wards would have 9% more and 8% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (9% more and 4% more than the average by 2006). Our final recommendations for this area are illustrated on Map 2 towards the back of the report.

Plumstead, Rackheath and Wroxham wards

64 The existing wards of Plumstead, Rackheath and Wroxham are situated in the central part of the district and are all single-member wards. Plumstead ward is coterminous with Great & Little Plumstead parish while Rackheath ward comprises the parishes of Rackheath and Salhouse. Wroxham ward comprises the parishes of Belaugh and Wroxham. Under the existing arrangements Plumstead, Rackheath and Wroxham wards have 3% more, 26% more and 32% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (13% more, 33% more and 34% fewer than the average by 2006).

65 At Stage One the District Council proposed retaining the existing single-member Plumstead ward, arguing that the existing ward provides good electoral equality and has regard for community identities. It proposed a revised two-member Wroxham ward comprising Wroxham parish and the existing Rackheath ward. (As detailed later, it proposed that Belaugh parish be transferred to a revised single-member Coltishall ward.) The District Council argued that its proposals for this area reflected the preferences of local interested parties. While noting the support of Rackheath Parish Council for a coterminous single-member Rackheath ward, it argued that this proposal would not be viable, subsequent to the implementation of the Broadland (Parishes) Order 2001.

66 Rackheath Parish Council considered that the District Council had underestimated the five-year electorate projection for the parish. In the light of this it argued that the parish would contain sufficient electors to form a coterminous single-member district ward. It argued that adjoining parishes were too large for Rackheath parish to be effectively represented should they be combined in the same district ward.

67 In its draft recommendations report the LGCE considered that the District Council's proposals would provide an effective balance between the statutory criteria. While acknowledging the concerns of Rackheath Parish Council, it was not persuaded that a single-member Rackheath ward would provide good long-term levels of electoral equality, particularly after the implementation of revised parish boundaries in this area. The LGCE concluded that the District Council's proposals would ensure the effective and convenient representation of local communities in this area while ensuring much-improved electoral equality, and therefore adopted the District Council's proposed Plumstead and Wroxham wards as part of its draft recommendations.

68 Under the draft recommendations (and having regard to the Broadland (Parishes) Order 2001), Plumstead and Wroxham wards would have 2% fewer and 9% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (7% more and 6% fewer than the average by 2006).

69 At Stage Three the District Council and Wroxham Parish Council supported the draft recommendations for this area. Belaugh Parish Meeting opposed the draft recommendations and expressed a preference to remain warded with Wroxham parish. It stated that developments in Wroxham have a consequential effect on Belaugh and argued that the parish would be more effectively represented within the proposed Wroxham ward. It also argued that the parish shares numerous retail, educational, ecclesiastical and transportation links with Wroxham and noted that both parishes share economic interests, particularly the boating industry.

70 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three and note a degree of consensus in support of the draft recommendations in this area. We have given particular consideration to the proposal of Belaugh Parish Meeting to be included in the proposed Wroxham ward. We acknowledge that Belaugh parish shares community identities and interests with Wroxham and note that its inclusion in the proposed ward would not have a detrimental effect on electoral equality either in the proposed Wroxham ward or in adjoining district wards. We therefore propose departing from the draft recommendations and propose that Belaugh parish be included in the proposed Wroxham ward.

71 Under our final recommendations (and having regard to the Broadland (Parishes) Order 2001), Plumstead and Wroxham wards would have 2% fewer and 7% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (7% more and 4% fewer than the average by 2006). Our final recommendations for this area are illustrated on Map 2, towards the back of the report.

Horsford, St Faith's and Spixworth wards

72 The existing wards of Horsford, St Faith's and Spixworth are situated in the south and central part of the district and are each represented by a single councillor. Horsford ward is coterminous with the parish of the same name while St Faith's ward is coterminous with the parish of Horsham St Faith & Newton St Faith. Spixworth ward comprises the parishes of Spixworth and Beeston St Andrew. Under the existing arrangements, Horsford, Spixworth and St Faith's wards have 55% more, 54% more and 28% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (62% more, 48% more and 30% fewer than the average by 2006).

73 At Stage One the District Council proposed a new two-member Spixworth ward comprising the existing St Faith's ward, together with Spixworth and Beeston St Andrew parishes from the existing Spixworth ward. It acknowledged that Horsham St Faith's & Newton St Faith's Parish Council was opposed to its proposed Spixworth ward but argued that the Parish Council's preferred warding arrangements would not secure good electoral equality. The District Council proposed a new two-member Horsford & Felthorpe ward comprising the existing Horsford ward and Felthorpe parish from the existing Cawston ward. The District Council noted that the councillor for the existing Horsford ward and Horsford Parish Council had expressed support for its proposals during the District Council's local consultation exercise. It considered that this area would be more effectively represented in a single two-member ward, as opposed to two single-member wards.

74 Horsham St Faith's & Newton St Faith's Parish Council argued that the District Council's proposals would have an adverse effect on the independence and identity of the community. It stated that the adjoining parish of Spixworth was more urban in character and therefore subject to different local issues. The Parish Council argued that the parish would be more effectively represented if combined with more rural parishes to its north. However, it proposed that if it was to be combined in a ward with Spixworth, then Spixworth should be warded along Crostwick Lane and one third of the parish should be combined with Horsham St Faith's & Newton St Faith's parish for district warding purposes.

75 In its draft recommendations the LGCE noted that the District Council's proposals would ensure improvements in electoral equality, while providing a fair reflection of the views expressed during its consultation exercise with local interested parties. While it noted the alternative proposals of Horsham St Faith's & Newton St Faith's Parish Council, the LGCE was not persuaded that they would provide an effective balance between the statutory criteria. The LGCE emphasised the need to adopt a district-wide approach in formulating its draft recommendations, and the need to have regard to the impact on adjoining wards when considering its proposals. It noted that the District Council's proposed Spixworth ward would secure good electoral equality and not result in the division of communities in this area, and therefore adopted the District Council's proposed Horsford & Felthorpe and Spixworth wards as part of its draft recommendations.

76 At Stage Three the District Council supported the draft recommendations for this area. Horsford Parish Council supported the proposed two-member Horsford & Felthorpe ward. Both Spixworth Parish Council and Councillor Davie (Spixworth ward) supported the proposed Spixworth ward. However, both proposed that it be renamed Spixworth with St Faith's in order to more accurately recognise the constituent communities of the proposed ward.

77 Horsham St Faith's & Newton St Faith's Parish Council strongly objected to its inclusion in the proposed Spixworth ward and reiterated the views expressed in its Stage One submission. The Parish Council considered that its inclusion in the proposed Spixworth ward would have a detrimental effect on the identity and independence of the parish and reiterated its preference that it be combined in a district ward with more rural parishes to its north. It proposed that if significant change to the existing ward structure was considered necessary, it be warded only with the Crostwick Lane area of Spixworth, which constitutes approximately one third of the electorate of Spixworth.

78 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three and note the degree of consensus in support of the draft recommendations. We acknowledge the concerns of Horsham St Faith's & Newton St Faith's Parish Council in respect of its inclusion in the proposed Spixworth ward. However, we must adopt a district-wide approach when formulating our final recommendations and concur with the LGCE that the Parish Council's alternative proposal would have insufficient regard for the statutory criteria and effectively divide communities in the adjoining parish of Spixworth. We have concluded that the draft recommendations for this area would secure an effective balance between the statutory criteria and have therefore decided to confirm them as final, subject to one amendment. We note that both Spixworth Parish Council and Councillor Davie proposed that Spixworth ward be renamed Spixworth with St Faith's. We have concluded that this name would better reflect the constituent communities of the proposed ward and have therefore decided to adopt it as part of our final recommendations.

79 Under our final recommendations (and having regard for the Broadland (Parishes) Order 2001), Horsford & Felthorpe and Spixworth with St Faith's wards would have 12% fewer and 8% more electors per councillors than the district average respectively (9% fewer and 4% more than the average by 2006). Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 towards the back of the report.

Aylsham, Buxton, Coltishall, Hainford and Hevingham wards

80 The existing wards of Aylsham, Buxton and Hevingham are situated in the north of the district. Aylsham ward comprises the parishes of Aylsham, Blickling and Oulton and is a three-member ward, while Buxton ward comprises the parishes of Brampton, Burgh & Tuttington and Buxton with Lammam and is a single-member ward. Hevingham ward is represented by a single councillor and comprises the parishes of Hevingham, Marsham and Stratton Strawless. The wards of Coltishall and Hainford are situated towards the centre of the district and are both single-member wards. Coltishall ward comprises the parishes of Coltishall and Horstead with

Stanninghall, and Hainford ward comprises the parishes of Crostwick, Frettenham and Hainford. Under the existing arrangements Aylsham, Buxton and Hevingham wards have 17%, 17% and 5% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (16%, 18% and 5% fewer than the average by 2006). Coltishall and Hainford wards have 1% more and 28% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (1% fewer and 28% fewer than the average by 2006).

81 At Stage One the District Council proposed a revised three-member Aylsham ward comprising the existing ward, Burgh & Tuttington parish from the existing Buxton ward and Marsham parish from the existing Hevingham ward. It proposed that the remainder of the existing Hevingham ward be combined with Hainford parish in a revised single-member Hevingham ward and proposed that the remainder of Buxton ward be combined with Frettenham parish in a revised single-member Buxton ward. The District Council considered that its proposed warding arrangements in this area would provide good electoral equality and noted that no objections to its proposals had been received during its local consultation exercise. The District Council also proposed a revised single-member Coltishall ward comprising the existing ward, Belaugh parish from the existing Wroxham ward and Crostwick parish from the existing Hainford ward. Oulton Parish Council made a submission with regard to parish council electoral arrangements in its area, which is discussed in detail below.

82 In its draft recommendations the LGCE recognised that the District Council's proposals would ensure much-improved electoral equality and have regard for community identities and interests. It therefore adopted the District Council's proposed three-member Aylsham and single-member Hevingham wards as part of its draft recommendations. The LGCE noted that the District Council's proposed single-member Buxton and Coltishall wards would ensure improved electoral equality and maintain a pattern of single-member wards in this area. However, it concluded that the proposed Buxton ward would not utilise sufficiently clear and distinct ward boundaries and was not persuaded that Frettenham parish shares sufficiently clear communication links with the rest of the proposed Buxton ward. In order to provide a more clearly identifiable ward boundary and ensure the effective and convenient representation of communities in this area, the LGCE proposed combining the District Council's proposed single-member Buxton and single-member Coltishall wards in a new two-member Buxton & Coltishall ward. The LGCE concluded that its draft recommendations would provide a better balance between the statutory criteria and would ensure the effective and convenient representation of these communities.

83 Under the draft recommendations (and having regard to the 2001 Broadland Parishes Order), Hevingham, Aylsham and Buxton & Coltishall wards would have 2% more, 8% fewer and 1% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3% more, 6% fewer and 1% fewer than the average by 2006).

84 At Stage Three the District Council supported the proposed Aylsham and Hevingham wards but opposed the proposed two-member Buxton & Coltishall ward. It argued that its proposed single-member Buxton ward and single-member Coltishall ward would secure good electoral equality and reflect community identities. It also argued that the LGCE's proposed two-member ward would combine communities that share few ties and emphasised the "considerable" local opposition to the draft recommendations.

85 Buxton with Lammas Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations, arguing that the "characters of the Buxton and Coltishall communities are distinct" and that neither parish shares a "natural affinity with one another". Coltishall Parish Council noted that the District Council's proposals for two single-member wards had been supported locally and argued that the LGCE was incorrect in its conclusion that Frettenham and Buxton with Lammas parishes did not share clear and identifiable communication links. Having noted that the District Council's proposals would secure much-improved electoral equality, it proposed that the District Council's Stage One proposals be adopted for the purposes of district warding. Frettenham Parish Council

stated that while it had reservations in respect of the District Council's proposed warding arrangements, it considered that the draft recommendations would not reflect the statutory criteria. Horstead & Stanninghall Parish Council also expressed opposition to the draft recommendations and argued that the parish did not share any "social or commercial links with Frettenham or Buxton". Crostwick Parish Meeting also opposed the draft recommendations and supported the District Council's proposals.

86 Oulton Parish Council supported the proposed three-member Aylsham ward. As detailed earlier, Belaugh Parish Meeting expressed a preference to remain warded with Wroxham parish. It stated that developments in Wroxham have a consequential effect on Belaugh and argued that the parish would be more effectively represented within the proposed Wroxham ward. Brampton Parish Council proposed that it be combined in the proposed Aylsham ward. It argued that the parish shares community identities and interests with Aylsham and is subject to similar local issues to the communities of Aylsham ward. Furthermore, it argued that the recently established Aylsham Forum had reinforced links between Aylsham and surrounding parishes.

87 Councillor Mallett (Coltishall ward) also opposed the draft recommendations and favoured two single-member wards in this area. He argued that the LGCE had placed too great an emphasis on electoral equality and asserted that the LGCE had indicated a preference for single-member wards "wherever practicable". In respect of this area, Councillor Mallett supported the District Council's Stage One proposals for this area. In particular, he refuted the claim that Frettenham shared poor communication links with Buxton, arguing that he had no difficulty in identifying the ward boundary. A further seven local residents opposed the draft recommendations and favoured two single-member wards as proposed by the District Council.

88 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three and note that the draft recommendations for the Buxton and Coltishall area have been particularly contentious. We note the support of the District Council for the proposed Hevingham ward. We consider that the proposed ward reflects an appropriate balance between the statutory criteria and have therefore decided to adopt it as part of our final recommendations. In respect of the proposed two-member Buxton & Coltishall ward, we acknowledge the near unanimous support for the District Council's Stage One proposals for two single-member wards. We have noted the comments of Councillor Mallett in respect of the LGCE's and The Boundary Committee for England's views on single-member wards. We do not have a preference for single-member wards and do not subscribe to the view that they necessarily facilitate more effective and convenient local government than a multi-member warding configuration. However, we recognise that the District Council's Stage One proposals for two single-member wards would secure good electoral equality and reflect local preferences. We therefore propose departing from the draft recommendations and have decided to base our final recommendations on the Stage One proposals of the District Council, subject to one amendment.

89 We recognise that incorporating Belaugh parish in the proposed Wroxham ward would reflect community identities and would not have a detrimental effect on electoral equality. As stated earlier, we therefore propose that Belaugh parish be incorporated in the proposed single-member Wroxham ward. While we note the proposal of Brampton Parish Council that it be warded with Aylsham parish to its north, we are not persuaded that we have received sufficient evidence in support of this proposal given that it would have a detrimental effect on electoral equality in the proposed Buxton ward. We therefore propose a revised single-member Buxton ward comprising the parishes of Brampton, Buxton with Lammas and Frettenham and a revised single-member Coltishall ward comprising the parishes of Coltishall, Crostwick and Horstead with Stanninghall as part of our final recommendations.

90 Under our final recommendations (and having regard to the 2001 Broadland Parishes Order), Hevingham, Aylsham, Buxton and Coltishall wards would have 2% more, 8% fewer, 2% fewer and 1% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3% more, 6%

fewer, 5% fewer and 1% fewer than the average by 2006). Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 towards the back of the report.

Cawston, Foulsham, Great Witchingham and Reepham wards

91 The existing wards of Cawston, Foulsham, Great Witchingham and Reepham are situated in the north and west of the district and are all single-member wards. Cawston ward comprises the parishes of Brandiston, Cawston, Felthorpe and Haveringland, while Foulsham ward comprises the parishes of Foulsham, Guestwick, Heydon, Salle, Themelthorpe and Wood Dalling. Great Witchingham ward comprises the parishes of Alderford, Attlebridge, Great Witchingham, Honingham, Little Witchingham, Morton on the Hill, Ringland, Swannington and Weston Longville, while Reepham ward comprises the parishes of Reepham and Booton. Under the existing arrangements Cawston and Foulsham wards have 5% fewer and 40% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (5% fewer and 41% fewer than the average by 2006). Great Witchingham and Reepham wards have 16% fewer and 6% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (18% fewer and 5% more than the average by 2006).

92 At Stage One the District Council proposed a new single-member Eynesford ward comprising the existing Foulsham ward and the parish of Cawston. It acknowledged that the rural nature of this area presented a “difficult challenge in striking a balance between electoral equality and community identity”. However, it argued that the proposed ward took account of the views expressed by local interested parties during its consultation exercise. The District Council proposed a revised single-member Reepham ward whose boundaries would be coterminous with Reepham parish. It stated that Reepham, being one of the district’s historic market towns, was of sufficient size to warrant “a ward in its own right”. The District Council proposed combining the existing Great Witchingham ward with the parishes of Brandiston and Haveringland from the existing Cawston ward and Booton parish from the existing Reepham ward in a revised single-member Great Witchingham ward. It argued that the expansion of Great Witchingham ward was necessary to facilitate improved electoral equality. As stated earlier, the District Council proposed transferring the parish of Felthorpe to a new two-member Horsford & Felthorpe ward.

93 Great Witchingham Parish Council supported retaining the existing warding arrangements in its area. It argued that the constituent communities of the existing Great Witchingham ward had different “requirements” to those communities situated on the “Norwich fringe”. As detailed earlier, Western Longville Parish Council argued for an increase in council size. It considered that this would secure the effective representation of urban areas while ensuring the maintenance of geographically compact single-member rural wards. It argued that increasing the size of district wards would have an adverse effect on the representation of rural communities in the district.

94 In its draft recommendations the LGCE recognised that the District Council’s proposals would improve electoral equality for these wards and was not persuaded to retain the existing Great Witchingham ward, as proposed by Great Witchingham Parish Council. Under the proposed council size of 47 the existing ward would have 20% fewer electors per councillor than the district average, with no improvement forecast over the course of the next five years. The LGCE considered that the District Council’s proposed Great Witchingham ward would ensure much-improved electoral equality while not resulting in a significant change to the boundaries of the existing ward.

95 The LGCE noted the views of Western Longville Parish Council. While acknowledging that the establishment of more multi-member wards in the rural areas of the district would result in wards of larger geographical size, it was not persuaded that this would necessarily have a detrimental effect on the effective and convenient representation of rural electors. The LGCE considered that its proposed council size of 47 would ensure effective and convenient local

government, while facilitating an equitable distribution of councillors between the primary areas of the district. The LGCE concluded that the District Council's proposals would provide the best balance between the statutory criteria, and considered that they had sufficient regard for the views expressed during the District Council's consultation exercise with local interested parties. In particular, it noted the opposition to the Council's consultation proposal to combine Themelthorpe and Salle parishes with the more urban Reepham parish in a district ward and considered that the District Council's submitted proposals reflected local opinion in this area. The LGCE therefore adopted the District Council's proposed Eynesford, Great Witchingham and Reepham wards as part of its draft recommendations.

96 At Stage Three the District Council supported the draft recommendations in respect of this area. Foulsham Parish Council expressed concern that the proposed Eynesford ward would cover a relatively large geographical area and stated that the draft "would not be of benefit and will only create more problems".

97 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three and note the support of the District Council for the draft recommendations in this area. We note the concerns of Foulsham Parish Council but are unable to have regard for rural sparsity when formulating our recommendations. There is minimal scope for considering alternative warding arrangements in this area due to its relatively isolated nature and proximity to the district boundary. We have concluded that the draft recommendations for this area secure an effective balance between the statutory criteria and have therefore decided to confirm them as final.

98 Under our final recommendations (and having regard to the 2001 Broadland Parishes Order), Eynesford, Great Witchingham and Reepham wards would have 11% more, 5% fewer and 3% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (9% more, 7% fewer and 3% fewer than the average by 2006). Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 towards the back of the report.

Broadland Urban

Drayton and Taverham wards

99 The existing wards of Drayton and Taverham are situated in the south-west of the district and abut the boundary with the district of South Norfolk. Each ward is coterminous with the parish of the same name and has been the subject of significant residential development in recent years. Drayton ward is currently represented by a single councillor, while Taverham is a two-member ward. Under the existing arrangements Drayton and Taverham wards have 95% more and 110% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (95% more and 104% more than the average by 2006).

100 At Stage One the District Council proposed dividing the existing Taverham ward into two two-member wards. It proposed a new two-member Taverham North ward comprising the part of the existing ward that lies broadly to the north of Fakenham Road and proposed that the remainder of the existing ward, to the south of Fakenham Road, form a new two-member Taverham South ward. The District Council stated that its proposals utilised the existing parish wards of Taverham for the purposes of district warding and noted that its proposals had the support of Taverham Parish Council. The District Council proposed a new single-member Drayton North ward comprising the part of the existing ward lying broadly to the north of Hall Lane and School Road and including the part of the Thorpe Marriott area that lies in Drayton parish. It proposed that the remainder of the existing Drayton ward form a new single-member Drayton South ward. The District Council argued that its proposals reflected the views of Drayton Parish Council and would resolve the issue of electoral inequality in the area.

101 Drayton Parish Council argued that the current district warding arrangements were inequitable and outlined near identical proposals to those put forward by the District Council. It

argued that these proposals would ensure clearly defined boundaries and secure much-improved electoral equality. Taverham Parish Council made two submissions during Stage One. It noted that the existing two-member Taverham ward is significantly under-represented and supported the warding of Taverham into a Taverham North ward and a Taverham South ward. It was opposed to the warding of the parish into more than two district wards. The Parish Council also stressed the importance of revised electoral arrangements reflecting the amendment to the parish boundary between Taverham and Drayton parishes.

102 In its draft recommendations the LGCE acknowledged that the District Council's proposals would secure improved electoral equality and have a degree of local support. However, it noted that the District Council's proposals did not take account of the Broadland (Parishes) Order 2001 which would have a significant effect in the Drayton and Taverham area, resulting in the transfer of some 280 electors in the Thorpe Marriott area from the District Council's proposed Taverham North ward to the proposed Drayton North ward. The LGCE noted that the electoral variance in Taverham North ward would therefore be 12%, which it considered too high for an urban district ward. Notwithstanding the revised parish boundary, the LGCE considered that the whole of the Thorpe Marriott area shares community identities and interests and considered that it should not be divided for the purposes of district warding. Moreover, it noted that the southern boundary between the two parishes has become defaced over recent years and considered that it needed to be rationalised for the purposes of district warding. The LGCE therefore concluded that the District Council's proposed warding arrangements would not secure the best balance achievable between the statutory criteria and was therefore not persuaded to adopt them as part of its draft recommendations.

103 The LGCE put forward its own proposals for Drayton and Taverham. A number of considerations emerged which informed it in the formulation of an appropriate warding scheme for this area. Firstly, as was emphasised by both Drayton and Taverham parish councils, due to recent housing development their respective areas have become severely under-represented. At present these two areas are represented by three district councillors. However, under the proposed council size of 47 they would be entitled to six district councillors. Furthermore, as stated above, the LGCE considered that the Thorpe Marriott area should not be divided for the purposes of district warding. The LGCE therefore proposed a new two-member Drayton ward comprising the part of the existing Drayton ward that lies to the north of Fakenham Road and Drayton High Road up to the rear of properties on the west side of Fairview Close and Lodge Breck, and the part of the Thorpe Marriott area that lies in the existing Taverham ward. The LGCE proposed that the remainder of the existing Drayton ward be combined with the part of the existing Taverham ward to the south of Fakenham Road and to the rear of properties on the south side of Lloyd Road and Maple Drive, and to the rear of properties on the west side of Beech Avenue, in a new two-member Taverham South ward. The LGCE proposed that the remainder of the existing Taverham ward form a new two-member Taverham North ward.

104 Under the draft recommendations Drayton, Taverham North and Taverham South wards would have 2% more, 7% fewer and 1% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (2% more, 9% fewer and 3% fewer than the average by 2006).

105 At Stage Three the District Council reiterated its Stage One proposals for this area. While recognising that its proposed Taverham North ward would contain a relatively high electoral variance by 2006, it argued that any further housing development in this area was likely to occur in Taverham North ward and therefore electoral equality could further improve in the long term. The District Council argued that combining the Thorpe Marriott area in a single district ward would not reflect the fact that revised parish boundaries had recently been agreed in this area (as part of the Broadland (Parishes) Order 2001), which maintained the division of the Thorpe Marriott development between the parishes of Drayton and Taverham. Furthermore, it argued that the proposals would also divide established communities in the south of Drayton parish.

106 Drayton Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations and argued that there was no evidence to support the existence of community identities and interests in the Thorpe Marriott area. Furthermore it argued that in order to facilitate the proposed warding arrangements in the Thorpe Marriott area, the draft recommendations would result in the division of south Drayton between district wards, which it argued was an established community with long-standing identities and interests. The Parish Council argued that the establishment of district wards that breach existing parish boundaries would not secure effective and convenient local government and concluded that the draft recommendations would not secure the best balance between the statutory criteria. It proposed that the revised parish boundary in the Thorpe Marriott area be utilised as a district ward boundary and suggested that the Thorpe Marriott area of Drayton parish could form a separate district ward.

107 Taverham Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations for its area. In particular, it argued that the proposed warding arrangements would cause confusion among the electorate in that some electors would be located in Taverham parish but be represented at district level by a Drayton councillor. The Parish Council stated that it had consistently worked to integrate new and more established communities of the parish and argued that the draft recommendations would “undermine” this achievement. The Parish Council argued that the proposed warding of Taverham parish would not utilise clear and distinct ward boundaries and would divide communities to the south of Fakenham Road. It also noted that the District Council’s Stage One proposals had been supported by both Taverham and Drayton parish councils, and urged a more “pragmatic approach” when considering revised warding arrangements in this area. Norwich North & Broadland Conservative Association concurred with these views and argued that the draft recommendations would not reflect community identities and interests.

108 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three and recognise that the draft recommendations for this area have met with significant opposition among respondents. We acknowledge the support for preserving district wards that adhere to existing parish boundaries. Moreover, we accept that parish boundaries in this area have been the subject of recent consultation and note that it was proposed that the Thorpe Marriott development remain divided between Drayton and Taverham parishes. While we have some reservations as to the effectiveness of this boundary in facilitating effective and convenient local government, we accept that the draft recommendations would necessitate the division of established communities in the south of Drayton parish in order to facilitate the proposals in the Thorpe Marriott area. We consider that we have received sufficient evidence at Stage Three to move away from the draft recommendations and have concluded that the District Council’s Stage One proposals would provide a better reflection of the statutory criteria.

109 We therefore propose moving away from the draft recommendations for this area and propose basing our final recommendations on the Stage One proposals of the District Council. However, we concur with the LGCE that further improvement in electoral equality is achievable, particularly in respect of the proposed Taverham North ward. We therefore propose that the boundary between the District Council’s proposed Taverham North and Taverham South wards be amended to follow the rear of properties on the south side of Fakenham Road up to and including number 225. We also propose that Taverham North ward include Highland Close and Cypress Close, which access onto the south side of Fakenham Road and do not share a direct communication link with adjoining roads to the south.

110 We consider that our final recommendations for this area reflect an effective balance between the need to achieve electoral equality and the views expressed by local interested parties at Stage Three. Under our final recommendations Drayton North and Drayton South wards would have 3% more and 3% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively, both now and by 2006. Taverham North and Taverham South wards would have 2% fewer and 4% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (5% fewer and 7% fewer than the average by 2006). Our final recommendations are illustrated on Maps A2 and A3 in Appendix A.

Hellesdon North, Hellesdon South East and Hellesdon West wards

111 The existing wards of Hellesdon North, Hellesdon South East and Hellesdon West comprise the town of Hellesdon, a town of some 9,000 electors that abuts the district boundary with the City of Norwich. Each ward is currently represented by two councillors. Under existing arrangements, Hellesdon North, Hellesdon South East and Hellesdon West wards have 26%, 26% and 11% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (29%, 29% and 14% fewer than the average by 2006).

112 At Stage One the District Council proposed a revised single-member Hellesdon North ward comprising the part of the existing ward that lies to the north of Middleton Lane and east of Reepham Road. It proposed that the remainder of the existing Hellesdon North ward be combined with the part of Hellesdon South East ward lying broadly to the north of Brabazon Avenue, Bramble Avenue, Harlington Avenue and Sutherland Avenue and the part of Hellesdon West ward to the south of Middleton Avenue in a new single-member Hellesdon Central ward. The District Council proposed that the remainder of Hellesdon South East and Hellesdon West wards should each form a revised single-member ward. The District Council stated that its proposals for this area were based on those of a district councillor for Hellesdon and emphasised that the District Council fully supported the proposals.

113 In its draft recommendations report, the LGCE recognised that the District Council's proposals would result in some improvement in electoral equality in the Hellesdon area. However, it was not persuaded that the District Council's proposed single-member wards would sufficiently address the issue of electoral equality. While not opposed in principle to single-member wards in urban areas, the LGCE considered that electoral equality would be more achievable under a multi-member ward configuration. It also considered that the District Council's proposals would divide communities and not secure the effective and convenient representation of electors in Hellesdon.

114 The LGCE therefore put forward its own proposals in Hellesdon. It acknowledged that the District Council's proposals would provide the best electoral equality achievable under a single-member ward pattern and considered that by combining the District Council's proposed four single-member wards into two two-member wards the electoral variance in the Hellesdon area would be kept to a minimum. The LGCE therefore proposed combining the District Council's proposed single-member Hellesdon South East and Hellesdon Central wards in a revised two-member Hellesdon South East ward. It also proposed a new two-member Hellesdon North West ward comprising the District Council's proposed single-member Hellesdon North and Hellesdon West wards. The LGCE concluded that its proposals would reflect community identities and interests while ensuring that electoral equality would be the best achievable under its proposed council size of 47.

115 At Stage Three the District Council opposed the draft recommendations for this area and reiterated its Stage One proposals. It argued that four single-member wards in Hellesdon would provide similar improvements in electoral equality compared to the draft recommendations, and stated that its Stage One proposals had been formulated by local councillors with a particular knowledge of the Hellesdon area. The District Council concluded that four single-member wards would secure the best reflection of the statutory criteria. As stated earlier, the District Council argued that single-member wards were supported by all political groups on the District Council. Furthermore, it argued that its proposed single-member wards would enhance the accountability of councillors to their electorate and that two- and three-member wards would be to the disadvantage of independent candidates whom it considered enhanced local democracy.

116 Hellesdon Parish Council also opposed the draft recommendations and noted that councillors favoured four single-member wards for the parish. It argued that the District Council's proposals would result in the creation of a "more manageable territory" for district councillors to represent effectively. Councillor Toye (Hellesdon South East ward) concurred with

the views of the District Council and argued that accountability was more achievable under a single-member ward pattern. She also stressed that the District Council's proposals had been the subject of consultation with local interested parties at Stage One. Councillor Mallet (Coltishall ward) also opposed the proposals in this area which he considered would not improve electoral equality any more than the District Council's Stage One proposals.

117 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three and note the degree of opposition to the draft recommendations. We acknowledge that the District Council's Stage One proposals would provide similar improvements in electoral equality to the draft recommendations. We also note that the Council's proposals were formulated by local councillors and were the subject of consultation with local interested parties. However, we concur with the LGCE that the proposed single-member warding pattern in the Hellesdon area would create wards that effectively divide established communities. In respect of the relative merits of single-member and multi-member wards in reflecting the statutory criteria, we do not subscribe to the view that single-member wards more readily secure effective and convenient local government. As stated in the *Guidance (Fourth Edition)*, we agree that we should not adopt a prescriptive approach as to which warding pattern is better. However, we are not persuaded that the District Council's proposed single-member wards would secure greater accountability of district councillors to their electorate than under a multi-member warding pattern.

118 We note that the LGCE utilised the District Council's proposed wards as a basis for its draft recommendations and consider that the proposed wards adhere to clear ground detail and will not result in the division of established communities. Furthermore, we concur with the LGCE that its proposed wards would secure the best electoral equality obtainable in this area under our proposed council size of 47. We have therefore concluded that the draft recommendations for Hellesdon secure an effective balance between the statutory criteria and have decided to confirm them as final.

119 Under our final recommendations, (and having regard to the Broadland (Parishes) Order 2001), Hellesdon North West and Hellesdon South East wards would have 13% more and 14% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively. Both wards would have 9% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2006. Our final recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Catton and Sprowston West wards

120 The existing two-member ward of Catton is coterminous with the parish of Old Catton which abuts the district boundary with the City of Norwich. Sprowston West ward is situated in the west of the town of Sprowston and is currently represented by a single councillor. Under the existing arrangements Catton and Sprowston West wards have 22% more and 27% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (23% more and 5% fewer than the average by 2006).

121 At Stage One the District Council proposed retaining the existing Catton ward but proposed that it be renamed Old Catton to reflect the parish of the same name. While acknowledging that the existing ward contained a high electoral variance, it argued that Old Catton is a distinct community and that any parish warding would "attract opposition from local residents". As stated below, the District Council proposed combining the existing Sprowston West ward with the Wilk's Farm Drive area from the existing Sprowston Central ward in a new single-member Sprowston North West ward. Under the District Council's proposals Old Catton and Sprowston North West wards would have 17% more and 13% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (18% more and 5% fewer than the average by 2006).

122 In its draft recommendations, the LGCE recognised that the existing Catton ward would utilise a clear boundary that reflects the boundary of Old Catton parish. However, it noted that

the proposed ward would have an electoral variance of 18% by 2006 which it considered to be unacceptably high. The LGCE concluded that there was scope for improving electoral equality, particularly in an urban area such as Old Catton, and was therefore not persuaded to adopt the District Council's proposed Old Catton ward as part of the draft recommendations.

123 The LGCE decided to put forward its own warding arrangements for this area. A number of considerations emerged that informed the LGCE in devising appropriate warding arrangements for this area. It noted that the District Council had not considered the warding of either Old Catton or Sprowston parish in order to secure improved electoral equality. The LGCE accepted that combining parts of more rural parishes to the north of Old Catton would be inappropriate as this would combine distinct areas that do not share particularly strong community identities or interests. The LGCE acknowledged that its ability to consider alternative warding arrangements in this area were limited due to the proximity of Old Catton to the district boundary. However, it noted that by combining the existing single-member Sprowston West ward with the existing two-member Catton ward, electoral equality would be significantly improved while avoiding the division of established communities. The LGCE therefore proposed a new three-member Old Catton & Sprowston West ward comprising the existing Catton and Sprowston West wards. In order to secure improved electoral equality, it proposed that properties on the west side of North Walsham Road that are currently situated in Sprowston West ward be transferred to the proposed two-member Sprowston Central ward (as discussed in detail below). The LGCE concluded that its draft recommendations for this area would provide the best balance between the statutory criteria. However, it emphasised that its proposed warding arrangements did not indicate a preference on its part as to the future boundaries of parishes in this area.

124 At Stage Three the District Council opposed the draft recommendations for this area and reiterated its Stage One proposals. It argued that Old Catton is a distinct settlement that shares few community ties with Sprowston to its east. It also argued that the proposed Old Catton & Sprowston West ward would divide communities that straddle North Walsham Road and stated that it was "unreasonable" to propose such a change when similar proposals were rejected during the recent parish review in Broadland.

125 Sprowston Parish Council concurred with the District Council and favoured warding arrangements in this area that adhered to "the existing and settled parish and district ward boundaries". It also considered that single-member wards would "create greater interest" in local government and opposed the draft recommendations for the Sprowston area. Old Catton Parish Council also opposed the draft recommendations. It argued that the creation of a cross-parish district ward would cause confusion among local residents and would be a disincentive to participate in local elections. It also considered that the proposed Old Catton & Sprowston West ward would not facilitate effective and convenient local government and would dilute the accountability of councillors to their electorate. The Parish Council concluded that the draft recommendations placed too great an emphasis on "numerical conformity" at the expense of community identities and interests.

126 Sprowston and Old Catton Labour Party stated that Old Catton is a "very distinct village community" that shares few links with Sprowston. It also noted that similar proposals for revised parish boundaries had been rejected during the recent review of parish boundaries in Broadland and stated that the draft recommendations in this area had no local support. Councillor Mallett (Coltishall ward) asserted that combining parts of adjoining parishes in a single district ward was "what the District Council was expressly told not to do". He argued that the proposed ward would not facilitate effective and convenient local government.

127 Two further representations were received from local residents. Both argued that Old Catton has closer ties with the village of Spixworth to the north than it does with Sprowston, in that they share local amenities and facilities as well as being subject to issues arising out of their proximity to Norwich Airport.

128 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three and acknowledge that the draft recommendations for this area have met with significant opposition among respondents. We recognise that Old Catton forms a distinct community and that the current boundaries of the parish have only recently been the subject of review. However, we concur with the LGCE that the current and projected electoral variance in the existing Catton ward is unacceptable, particularly for an urban area. We note the views of Councillor Mallet in respect of our policy towards parish warding. While we seek to ensure that parishes remain the building blocks of district wards as far as is reasonably possible under the statutory criteria, we are not opposed in principle to dividing parishes between district wards if we consider it necessary to formulate a good electoral scheme. We consider that each elector should have a vote of broadly equal weight across the district and concur with the LGCE that the current high electoral variance in the existing Catton ward needs to be addressed as part of this review. We have therefore not been persuaded that we have received sufficient evidence to move away from the draft recommendations and retain the existing Catton ward, and consider that an element of parish warding in this area is necessary in order to secure good electoral equality.

129 We note that two respondents favoured combining part of Spixworth parish with Old Catton parish for the purposes of district warding. While we acknowledge that they share a number of local concerns, including issues arising out of their proximity to Norwich Airport, we have not been persuaded that such a proposal has sufficient regard for the statutory criteria. In particular, we consider that Spixworth is more rural in nature than Old Catton parish and that these areas are located some distance apart. We have concluded that combining part of Sprowston with Old Catton parish would be the most logical alliance for district warding purposes. We consider that Old Catton and Sprowston parishes have a number of shared characteristics and are similar urban settlements that abut the district boundary with Norwich. We have therefore decided to confirm the draft recommendations for this area as final.

130 Under our final recommendations Old Catton & Sprowston West ward would have an equal ratio of electors per councillor to the district average initially and 8% fewer than the average by 2006. Our proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Sprowston Central, Sprowston East and Sprowston South wards

131 The existing wards of Sprowston Central, Sprowston East and Sprowston South comprise the central and eastern part of Sprowston, a settlement of some 12,000 electors that abuts the district boundary with the City of Norwich. All three wards are currently represented by two councillors each. Under the existing arrangements Sprowston Central, Sprowston East and Sprowston South wards have 8% more, 9% fewer and 39% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (4% more, 5% fewer and 41% fewer than the average by 2006).

132 At Stage One the District Council put forward an entirely single-member ward pattern in the Sprowston area. It proposed a revised single-member Sprowston East ward comprising the part of the existing ward that lies to the south of Linacre Avenue, and including Falcon Avenue East from the existing Sprowston South ward. It proposed a new single-member Sprowston North East ward comprising the part of the existing Sprowston East ward lying broadly to the north of Linacre Avenue, and including Falcon Road West from the existing Sprowston South ward. It proposed that the remainder of Sprowston South ward form a revised single-member ward. The District Council proposed a new single-member Sprowston West ward comprising the part of the existing Sprowston Central ward to the south of Edwards Road and Cozens Hardy Road. It proposed that the remainder of the existing Sprowston Central ward, less the area to the north of Barkers Lane, form a new single-member Sprowston North ward. As stated above, the District Council proposed that the Wilk's Farm Drive area be transferred to a new single-member Sprowston North West ward. The District Council noted that its proposals would improve electoral equality in the area and that they were based on the proposals of interested parties received during its local consultation process.

133 In its draft recommendations the LGCE recognised that the District Council's proposed warding arrangements would secure improved electoral equality while utilising reasonably clear ward boundaries. However, it considered that in attempting to establish a wholly single-member ward pattern in Sprowston the District Council's proposals would result in the division of established communities. As stated earlier, while not opposed to single-member wards in urban areas, the LGCE considered that multi-member wards would ensure further improvements in electoral equality while ensuring the effective and convenient representation of local electors.

134 Accordingly, the LGCE put forward its own warding arrangements for this area. It recognised that the District Council's proposed wards would utilise reasonably clear ward boundaries and noted that, by combining its proposed wards within a multi-member ward structure, electoral equality could be further improved. The LGCE therefore proposed combining the District Council's proposed single-member Sprowston North East, Sprowston East and Sprowston South wards in a revised three-member Sprowston East ward. In respect of the central part of Sprowston, the LGCE noted that the existing Sprowston Central ward would provide good electoral equality while adhering to clear and well-defined ward boundaries. As stated earlier, it proposed combining the existing two-member Catton ward and single-member Sprowston West ward in a new three-member Old Catton & Sprowston West ward. However, to improve electoral equality it proposed amending its eastern boundary to follow the rear of properties on the west side of North Walsham Road. The LGCE therefore proposed a revised two-member Sprowston Central ward comprising the existing ward and properties on the west side of North Walsham Road that currently lie in the existing Sprowston West ward.

135 The LGCE considered that its draft recommendations would ensure improved electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests in this area. As stated earlier, the LGCE's draft recommendations in the west of Sprowston did not reflect a view as to revised parish boundaries in this area. It is for the District Council to conduct a review of parish boundaries, and no amendments can be made without consultation with local interested parties.

136 At Stage Three the District Council opposed the draft recommendations for this area and reiterated its Stage One proposals for a broadly single-member warding pattern. It argued that its proposals would utilise clearly defined boundaries and would not divide established communities in Sprowston.

137 Sprowston Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations in its area and stressed its unanimous support for the District Council's Stage One proposals. In particular, it argued that single-member wards in urban areas were more likely to "create greater interest in the work of local district representatives" than the draft recommendations. Councillor Mallet (Coltishall ward) also opposed the draft recommendations in this area which he argued would have only a minor impact on electoral equality when compared to the District Council's Stage One proposals. Sprowston and Old Catton Labour Party opposed the draft recommendations for these wards. It expressed general support for the District Council's Stage One proposals and argued that single-member wards would enhance the accountability of councillors to their electorate and therefore secure more effective and convenient local government. It argued that multi-member wards could increase the workload of councillors and not secure a direct line of communication between electors and their representatives.

138 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three and note the substantial degree of opposition to the draft recommendations in this area. We acknowledge the broad degree of support for the District Council's Stage One proposals and recognise that they would secure some improvement in electoral equality. However, we concur with the LGCE that in attempting to establish a wholly single-member ward pattern in the Sprowston area the District Council's proposals would not utilise sufficiently clear and distinct ward boundaries. As stated in the *Guidance*, while not opposed to single-member wards in principle, we are not persuaded by the argument that single-member wards ensure more effective and convenient local government than multi-member wards. We regularly find that a multi-member warding

pattern in urban areas such as Sprowston secures a better reflection of the statutory criteria and utilises clearly defined ward boundaries that do not result in the division of established communities.

139 We acknowledge that the arguments are finely balanced as to the most appropriate warding arrangements in this area. However, we have not been persuaded that we have received sufficient substantive evidence to depart from the draft recommendations. We have concluded that the draft recommendations for this area provide an accurate reflection of the statutory criteria and note in particular that they are based on the District Council's proposed single-member wards. We have therefore decided to confirm the draft recommendations for this area as final.

140 Under our final recommendations Sprowston Central and Sprowston East wards would have 6% more and 2% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (2% more and 1% fewer than the average by 2006). Our final recommendations are illustrated the large map at the back of the report.

Thorpe St Andrew North East, Thorpe St Andrew North West and Thorpe St Andrew South wards

141 The existing wards of Thorpe St Andrew North East, Thorpe St Andrew North West and Thorpe St Andrew South together comprise Thorpe St Andrew, a settlement of some 11,000 electors that abuts the district boundary with the City of Norwich. Thorpe St Andrew North East and Thorpe St Andrew North West are two-member wards while Thorpe St Andrew South is a single-member ward. Under the existing arrangements Thorpe St Andrew North East, Thorpe St Andrew North West and Thorpe St Andrew South wards have 44% more, 18% fewer and 9% more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (52% more, 21% fewer and 12% more than the average by 2006).

142 At Stage One the District Council proposed a revised single-member Thorpe St Andrew South ward comprising the part of the existing ward that lies broadly to the south of Hilly Plantation along with some minor amendments to the existing ward boundary to ensure that the north boundary of the proposed ward adhered to clear ground detail. It proposed that the remainder of the existing Thorpe St Andrew South ward be combined with Thorpe St Andrew North West ward and the Beechwood Drive area from the existing Thorpe St Andrew North East ward in a revised two-member Thorpe St Andrew North West ward. The District Council proposed a new two-member Thorpe St Andrews East ward comprising the part of the existing Thorpe St Andrew North East ward lying broadly to the east of Pound Lane, south of Laundry Lane and to the east of Birkbeck Way and Thomas Vere Road. The District Council proposed that the remainder of the existing Thorpe St Andrew North East ward, less the Dussindale housing estate, form a new single-member Thorpe St Andrew Central ward. The District Council stated that its proposed warding arrangements in this area were based on proposals put forward by the parish council and a district councillor, subject to some minor modifications.

143 In its draft recommendations the LGCE noted that the District Council's proposals would secure some improvement in electoral equality for this area. However, it considered that there was scope for further improvement in electoral equality and noted in particular that the District Council's proposed Thorpe St Andrew East and Thorpe St Andrew North West wards were both projected to have 12% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2006. Furthermore, it was not persuaded that the Council's proposed Thorpe St Andrew North West ward would adhere to a sufficiently clear and distinct ward boundary, particularly in the north of the proposed ward. The LGCE was therefore not persuaded to adopt the District Council's proposed warding arrangements as part of its draft recommendations and put forward its own proposals for this area.

144 The LGCE noted that further improvement in electoral equality could be achieved by combining the District Council's proposed Thorpe St Andrew South and Thorpe St Andrew East ward, and its proposed Thorpe St Andrew North West and Thorpe St Andrew Central wards, in two three-member wards. Furthermore, it considered that this warding configuration would ensure clear and distinct ward boundaries and reflect community identities and interests. The LGCE therefore proposed a new three-member Thorpe St Andrew South East ward comprising the District Council's proposed two-member Thorpe St Andrew East ward and single-member Thorpe St Andrew South ward. It also proposed a revised three-member Thorpe St Andrew North West ward comprising the District Council's proposed two-member Thorpe St Andrew North West and single-member Thorpe St Andrew Central wards. The LGCE noted that its proposed Thorpe St Andrew South East ward comprised more recent housing development in the town, including the Dussindale Drive area, while its proposed Thorpe St Andrew North West ward would encompass the more established community of the parish.

145 At Stage Three the District Council opposed the draft recommendations for this area and reiterated its Stage One proposals for two two-member and two single-member wards in Thorpe St Andrew. The Council argued that its proposals would ensure greater accountability of councillors to their electorate and facilitate effective and convenient local government. In particular, the Council argued that the proposed three-member Thorpe St Andrews South East ward would "destroy" the sense of community identity in both the south of the parish and the Dussindale estate to the east. It concluded that its original proposals utilised clearly defined ward boundaries that local residents would recognise and considered that the electoral variance in its proposed wards would "remain within acceptable limits".

146 Norfolk County Council Labour Group expressed "grave concerns" about the draft recommendations for this area. It argued that three-member wards would "decrease access to members of the public" due to lack of accountability. Thorpe St Andrew Parish Council also opposed the draft recommendations. The Parish Council argued that the proposed three-member wards would not secure effective and convenient local government and could result in the uneven distribution of work between councillors. The Parish Council outlined alternative warding arrangements for the Thorpe St Andrew area that were identical to the District Council's Stage One proposals.

147 The Thorpe St Andrew Branch of Norwich North and Broadland Conservative Association stated that the draft recommendations were "contrary" to the statutory criteria and argued that the two-member wards proposed in the draft recommendations would not secure effective and convenient local government, noting that such wards can result in an uneven distribution of workload between councillors. Councillor Harwood (Thorpe St Andrew North East ward) also opposed the draft recommendations and argued that three-member wards have a detrimental effect on the accessibility of members of the public to their elected representatives. He also considered that the draft recommendations would result in the uneven distribution of workload between councillors. Councillor Harwood further argued that the District Council's Stage One proposals would reflect established communities in the Thorpe St Andrew area and expressed concern that the proposed district ward boundaries would not reflect existing county divisions in this area.

148 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three and recognise the degree of opposition in this area to the draft recommendations. We have revisited the District Council's Stage One proposals and acknowledge that they provide some improvement in electoral equality and reflect local preferences. However, we concur with the LGCE that electoral equality in the Thorpe St Andrew area can be further improved and are not persuaded we have received sufficient substantive evidence at Stage Three to justify the projected electoral variance of 12% in both the District Council's proposed Thorpe St Andrew East and Thorpe St Andrews North West wards. Moreover, we are not persuaded that the northern boundary of the proposed Thorpe St Andrews North West ward would be identifiable or reflect community identities. We note the concern of Councillor Harwood as to the lack of

coterminosity between our proposed district ward boundaries and existing county divisions in Broadland. However as part of the review of district wards we do not have regard for county division boundaries. We are scheduled to commence the review of Norfolk County Council's electoral arrangements later in the year.

149 As stated earlier, we do not necessarily agree with the view that smaller wards, necessarily secure more effective and convenient local government than larger multi-member wards, and have concluded that the LGCE's proposed three-member Thorpe St Andrew North West ward and three-member Thorpe St Andrew South East ward provide an accurate reflection of the statutory criteria. In particular, we consider that the proposed wards adhere to clearly defined ward boundaries and would ensure the best electoral equality obtainable under our proposed council size of 47. We also consider that the draft recommendations would not divide communities within the area and have therefore decided to confirm the draft recommendations for these wards as final.

150 Under our final recommendations Thorpe St Andrew North West and Thorpe St Andrew South East wards would have 3% fewer and 18% fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (7% fewer and 9% fewer than the average by 2006). Our final recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report

Electoral Cycle

151 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

152 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:

- we propose revised single-member Buxton and Coltishall wards, as proposed by the District Council at Stage One;
- we propose basing our final recommendations in the Taverham and Drayton area on the District Council's proposals subject to an amendment between the proposed Taverham North and Taverham South wards to secure further improvements in electoral equality;
- we propose that Spixworth ward be renamed Spixworth with St Faith's.

153 We conclude that, in Broadland:

- there should be a reduction in council size from 49 to 47;
- there should be 27 wards, eight fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 33 of the existing wards should be modified.

154 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	49	47	49	47
Number of wards	35	27	35	27
Average number of electors per councillor	1,949	2,032	2,036	2,123
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	26	6	28	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	20	0	20	0

155 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 26 to six, with no wards varying by more than 20% from the district average. This level of electoral equality would improve further in 2006, with only one ward varying by more than 10% from the average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the statutory criteria.

Final recommendation

Broadland District Council should comprise 47 councillors serving 27 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A including the large map at the back of the report.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

156 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 district wards, it should also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. In its draft recommendations report the LGCE proposed consequential changes to the warding arrangements for the parishes of Drayton, Hellesdon, Sprowston, Taverham and Thorpe St Andrew to reflect its proposed district wards

157 The parish of Drayton is currently served by 13 councillors and is not warded. At Stage One Drayton Parish Council put forward near identical district warding arrangements to the District Council's for the Drayton area. As part of its draft recommendations the LGCE proposed substantial amendments to the district warding arrangements for the parish. It proposed a new two-member Drayton ward, and a new Taverham South ward which would contain part of Drayton parish. The LGCE therefore proposed a consequential re-warding of the parish and proposed a new Drayton North parish ward, represented by 11 councillors, with boundaries reflecting the part of Drayton parish contained within its proposed Drayton district ward. It also proposed a new Drayton South parish ward, represented by a two councillors, with boundaries reflecting the part of Drayton parish contained with its proposed Taverham South ward.

158 As detailed earlier, there was a significant degree of opposition to the draft recommendations at Stage Three. In particular, Drayton Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations and considered that having electors in Drayton parish represented by a Taverham district councillor would cause confusion and not secure effective and convenient

local government. It supported a new Drayton North parish ward, (represented by six parish councillors) and a new Drayton South parish ward (represented by seven parish councillors), will boundaries coterminous with the revised parish boundaries as detailed in the Broadland (Parishes) Order 2001.

159 As part of our final recommendations we have moved away from the LGCE's proposals and have adopted the District Council's Stage One district warding proposals. As a consequence of this we propose departing from the draft recommendations for parish council electoral arrangements and propose a new Drayton North parish ward represented by six parish councillors and a Drayton South parish ward represented by seven parish councillors, as proposed by Drayton Parish Council. The boundaries of the two parish wards would reflect our proposed district warding arrangements.

Final recommendation

Drayton Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Drayton North (returning six councillors) and Drayton South (returning seven councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A3 in Appendix A.

160 The parish of Hellesdon is currently served by 15 councillors representing three wards: Hellesdon North ward, Hellesdon South East ward and Hellesdon West ward, each returning five councillors. As part of its draft recommendations the LGCE proposed a new Hellesdon South East ward and a new Hellesdon North West ward. The LGCE stated its intention that parish ward boundaries should reflect its proposed district ward boundaries in the Hellesdon area and therefore proposed a consequential re-warding of the parish. It proposed a new Hellesdon North West parish ward (returning eight councillors) and a new Hellesdon South East parish ward (returning eight councillors).

161 As detailed earlier, the draft recommendations for the Hellesdon area met with opposition among respondents at Stage Three. Hellesdon Parish Council supported the LGCE's proposal to increase the size of the parish council by one councillor. However, it opposed the proposed warding arrangements for the parish and favoured four parish wards, returning four councillors each, whose boundaries would reflect the District Council's Stage One proposals.

162 As stated above, we are confirming the draft recommendations for district warding arrangements in this area as final. Notwithstanding the opposition to the proposed district warding arrangements in this area, we consider that parish ward boundaries should reflect our proposed district ward boundaries in order to secure effective and convenient local government. We are consequently confirming the draft recommendations for parish council electoral arrangements in the Hellesdon area as final.

Final recommendation

Hellesdon Parish Council should comprise 16 councillors, one more than at present, representing two wards: Hellesdon North West ward and Hellesdon South East ward, each 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.

163 The parish of Sprowston is currently served by 15 councillors representing four wards: Sprowston Central ward and Sprowston East ward (returning five councillors each), Sprowston South ward (returning three councillors) and Sprowston West ward (returning two councillors).

164 As part of its draft recommendations the LGCE proposed a revised three-member Sprowston East district ward, a revised two-member Sprowston Central district ward and a new three-member Old Catton & Sprowston West district ward. The LGCE stated its intention that parish ward boundaries should reflect its proposed district ward boundaries in the Sprowston area and therefore proposed a consequential re-warding of the parish. It proposed a revised Sprowston East parish ward (returning eight councillors) and a revised Sprowston Central parish ward (returning five councillors). It also proposed a revised Sprowston West parish ward (returning two councillors) comprising the part of Sprowston parish contained within its proposed Old Catton & Sprowston West district ward.

165 As detailed earlier, the draft recommendations for the Sprowston area met with opposition among respondents at Stage Three. In particular, Sprowston Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations and supported an increase in the size of the parish council to 18 and the establishment of six three-member parish wards that would reflect the District Council's Stage One district warding proposals. It argued that the anticipated residential growth in the parish justified an increase in council size.

166 As stated above, we are proposing to confirm the draft recommendations for district warding arrangements in this area as final. We intend that parish wards in Sprowston should reflect our proposed district warding arrangements in order to secure effective and convenient local government. While we have given careful consideration to the proposal of Sprowston Parish Council to increase the number of parish councillors by three to 18, we are not persuaded that future growth in the electorate in Sprowston itself constitutes sufficient evidence to support such a change. We have therefore decided to confirm the draft recommendations for parish council electoral arrangements in the Sprowston area as final.

Final recommendation

Sprowston Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Sprowston East ward (returning eight councillors), Sprowston Central ward (returning five councillors) and Sprowston West ward (returning two councillors). The boundary between the three parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

167 The parish of Taverham is currently served by 15 councillors and is divided into two wards: Taverham North ward (returning seven councillors) and Taverham South ward (returning eight councillors). At Stage One Taverham Parish Council stressed the importance of revised district and parish council electoral arrangements that reflect the changes to parish boundaries in the Taverham area contained in the Broadland (Parishes) Order 2001. It also favoured the retention of two parish wards. As part of its draft recommendations, the LGCE put forward its own district warding arrangements in the Taverham area. It proposed a new two-member Taverham North ward and a new two-member Taverham South ward. It also proposed a new two-member Drayton ward containing the part of the Thorpe Marriott area situated in Taverham parish.

168 The LGCE stated its intention that parish ward boundaries should reflect its proposed district ward boundaries in the Taverham area to secure effective and convenient representation of local electors at both district and parish level. It therefore proposed a consequential re-warding of the parish. It proposed a revised Taverham North parish ward (returning seven councillors) with boundaries coterminous with the proposed district ward of the same name, and a revised Taverham South parish ward (returning seven councillors) comprising the part of the parish contained within the proposed Taverham South district ward. The LGCE also proposed a new Thorpe Marriott parish ward (returning a single councillor) comprising the part of Taverham parish contained within the proposed Drayton district ward.

169 As detailed earlier, the draft recommendations for the Taverham area met with opposition among respondents at Stage Three. In particular, Taverham Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations and considered that revised district ward boundaries in this area should reflect the existing parish wards of Taverham North and Taverham South. It also argued that district wards that breach existing parish boundaries would be confusing to local electors and would not secure effective and convenient local government. In particular, it argued that the parish warding arrangements in the Thorpe Marriott area effectively divide the most southerly part of this community from the rest of Thorpe Marriott. As part of our final recommendations we have moved away from the LGCE's proposals and have adopted the District Council's Stage One district warding proposals, subject to a minor realignment of the boundary between the proposed Taverham North and Taverham South wards to secure further improvements in electoral equality.

170 As a consequence of our proposed district warding arrangements in the Taverham area, we propose departing from the draft recommendations for parish council electoral arrangements. We propose a revised Taverham North parish ward represented by eight parish councillors and a revised Taverham South parish ward represented by seven parish councillors. The boundaries of the two parish wards would reflect our proposed district warding arrangements. We have proposed a slight redistribution of parish councillors to better reflect the current and projected electorates in the proposed wards.

Final recommendation

Taverham Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Taverham North ward (returning eight councillors) and Taverham South ward (returning seven 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.

171 The parish of Thorpe St Andrew is currently served by 15 councillors representing three wards: Thorpe St Andrew North East ward (returning seven councillors), Thorpe St Andrew North West ward (returning five councillors) and Thorpe St Andrew South ward (returning three councillors). As part of its draft recommendations the LGCE proposed a revised Thorpe St Andrew North West district ward and a new Thorpe St Andrew South East district ward. The LGCE stated its intention that parish ward boundaries should reflect its proposed district ward boundaries in the Thorpe St Andrew area and therefore proposed a consequential re-warding of the parish. It proposed a new Thorpe St Andrew North West parish ward and a new Thorpe St Andrew South East parish ward (returning eight councillors each).

172 As detailed earlier, the draft recommendations for the Thorpe St Andrew area met with opposition among respondents at Stage Three. In particular Thorpe St Andrew Parish Council argued that the proposed parish wards encompassed too large a geographical area and would not ensure effective and convenient local government. It proposed four parish wards that would be coterminous with district ward boundaries. It proposed a Thorpe St Andrew North ward (returning three parish councillors), a Thorpe St Andrew East ward (returning five parish councillors), a Thorpe St Andrew South ward (returning three parish councillors) and a Thorpe St Andrew West ward (returning five parish councillors). The ward boundaries outlined by the parish council were identical to those put forward by the District Council at Stage One.

173 As stated above, we are confirming the draft recommendations for district warding arrangements in this area as final. Notwithstanding the opposition to the proposed district warding arrangements in this area, we consider that parish ward boundaries should reflect our proposed district ward boundaries in order to secure effective and convenient local government. We are consequently confirming the draft recommendations for parish council electoral arrangements in the Thorpe St Andrew area as final.

Final recommendation

Thorpe St Andrew Parish Council should comprise 16 councillors, one more than at present, representing two wards: Thorpe St Andrews North West ward and Thorpe St Andrews South East ward (returning eight councillors each). 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.

174 The parish of Oulton is currently served by seven councillors and is not warded. At Stage One Oulton Parish Council expressed concern at the possibility of a reduction in its size to five parish councillors and strongly supported retaining seven parish councillors. The District Council itself did not put forward any proposals for the electoral arrangements of Oulton parish. In the light of this, the LGCE proposed no change to the number of parish councillors representing Oulton parish.

175 At Stage Three Oulton Parish Council fully supported the LGCE's proposal that there should be no change to the number of parish councillors. We therefore do not propose any change to the number of parish councillors representing Oulton parish.

176 The parish of Freethorpe is served by seven councillors and is not warded. At Stage One, Freethorpe Parish Council supported an increase in the size of the parish council to reflect the substantial increase in electorate over recent years. However, it did not specify by how much.

177 In the draft recommendations report the LGCE noted that the current electorate of Freethorpe parish is 706 and is not forecast to significantly rise over the next five years. It was not persuaded that sufficient evidence had been received to recommend an increase in the size of the Parish Council. It concluded that a parish council of seven members was an appropriate level of representation, but welcomed further evidence at Stage Three. No further evidence was received at Stage Three and we therefore propose no change to the electoral arrangements of Freethorpe Parish Council.

Map 2: Final Recommendations for Broadland

6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

178 Having completed the review of electoral arrangements in Broadland 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).

179 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.

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

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

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for Broadland: Detailed Mapping

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

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the district and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail on Maps A2 and A3 and the large map at the back of the report.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Taverham parish.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed warding of Drayton parish.

The **large map** inserted at the back of this report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Hellesdon, Old Catton, Sprowston and Thorpe St Andrew.

Map A1: Final Recommendations for Broadland: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed warding of Taverham parish

Map A3: Proposed warding of Drayton parish