

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Forest Heath in Suffolk

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

June 2001

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

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Local Government Commission for England

26 June 2001

Dear Secretary of State

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

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although some modifications have been made (see paragraph 92) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Forest Heath.

We recommend that Forest Heath District Council should be served by 27 councillors representing 14 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that the Council should continue to hold elections for the whole council every four years.

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

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

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

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

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

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

- **in seven of the 15 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district, and five wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2005 this unequal representation is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in eight wards and by more than 20 per cent in five wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs (92 – 93) are that:

- **Forest Heath District Council should have 27 councillors, two more than at present;**
- **there should be 14 wards, a reduction of one;**
- **the boundaries of 10 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of one, and five wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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

- **In nine of the proposed 14 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2005.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Brandon, Mildenhall, Newmarket and Red Lodge.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an Order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 7 August 2001:

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

Figure 1: The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1 All Saints	2	Granby ward (Granby parish ward of Newmarket parish)	Map 2 and large map
2 Brandon East	3	Brandon East ward (Brandon East parish ward of Brandon parish and Santon Downham parish); Brandon West ward (part – part of Brandon West parish ward of Brandon parish); Icení ward (part – Elveden parish)	Map 2 and large map
3 Brandon West	2	Brandon West ward (part – Wangford parish and part of Brandon West parish ward of Brandon parish)	Map 2 and large map
4 Eriswell & The Rows	2	Great Heath ward (part – part of Great Heath parish ward of Mildenhall parish); Icení ward (part – Eriswell parish); The Rows ward (part – Beck Row, Holywell Row & Kenny Hill parish and part of West Row parish ward of Mildenhall parish)	Map 2
5 Exning	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Exning parish)	Map 2
6 Great Heath	2	Great Heath ward (part – part of Great Heath parish ward of Mildenhall parish); Market ward (part – part of Market parish ward of Mildenhall parish); The Rows ward (part – part of West Row parish ward of Mildenhall parish)	Map 2 and large map
7 Icení	1	Icení ward (part – Cavenham, Icklingham and Tuddenham parishes); Mill ward (part – Gazeley and Higham parishes)	Map 2
8 Lakenheath	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Lakenheath parish)	Map 2
9 Manor	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Barton Mills, Freckenham and Worlington parishes)	Map 2
10 Market	2	Great Heath ward (part – part of Great Heath parish ward of Mildenhall parish); Market ward (part – part of Market parish ward of Mildenhall parish)	Map 2 and large map
11 Red Lodge	2	Mill ward (part – Herringswell and Red Lodge parishes)	Map 2
12 St Mary's	3	St Mary's ward (part – part of St Mary's parish ward of Newmarket parish); Severals ward (part – part of Severals parish ward of Newmarket parish); Studlands Park ward (part – part of Studlands Park parish ward of Newmarket parish)	Map 2 and large map

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
13	Severals	3	St Mary's ward (part – part of St Mary's parish ward of Newmarket parish); Severals ward (part – part of Severals parish ward of Newmarket parish); Studlands Park ward (part – part of Studlands Park parish ward of Newmarket parish)	Map 2 and large map
14	South	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Dalham, Kentford and Moulton parishes)	Map 2

Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.

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

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Forest Heath

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 All Saints	2	2,510	1,255	0	2,665	1,333	-4
2 Brandon East	3	3,569	1,190	-5	3,906	1,302	-6
3 Brandon West	2	2,496	1,248	0	2,698	1,349	-2
4 Eriswell & The Rows	2	2,682	1,341	7	2,930	1,465	6
5 Exning	1	1,505	1,505	20	1,522	1,522	10
6 Great Heath	2	2,767	1,384	11	2,913	1,457	5
7 Icení	1	1,327	1,327	6	1,368	1,368	-1
8 Lakenheath	2	2,764	1,382	11	2,819	1,410	2
9 Manor	1	1,204	1,204	-4	1,244	1,244	-10
10 Market	2	2,491	1,246	0	2,866	1,433	4
11 Red Lodge	2	1,148	574	-54	2,572	1,286	-7
12 St Mary's	3	4,308	1,436	15	4,469	1,490	8
13 Severals	3	3,712	1,237	-1	4,020	1,340	-3
14 South	1	1,242	1,242	-1	1,326	1,326	-4
Totals	27	33,725	-	-	37,318	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,249	-	-	1,382	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on Forest Heath District Council's submission.

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Forest Heath in Suffolk. We have now reviewed the seven districts in Suffolk as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Forest Heath. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in November 1978 (Report No. 291). The electoral arrangements of Suffolk County Council were last reviewed in 1982 (Report No. 429). We expect to review the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

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

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

5 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (fourth edition published in December 2000), which sets out our approach to the reviews.

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

7 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the district as a whole. Having regard to the statutory criteria, our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable. We will require particular justification for schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

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

9 In July 1998, the Government published a White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, i.e. in year one, half of the district council would be elected, in year two, half the county council would be elected, and so on. In unitary authorities the White Paper proposed elections by thirds. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas and three-member wards in unitary authority areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral wards in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities. The proposals have been taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, provides that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities' electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Orders under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation and our current *Guidance*.

10 Stage One began on 27 June 2000, when we wrote to Forest Heath District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Police Authority, the local authority associations, Suffolk Association of Local Councils, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district, the Members of the European Parliament for the Eastern Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 2 October 2000. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

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

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

12 Situated in the west of the county of Suffolk, the district of Forest Heath covers the towns of Newmarket, Mildenhall and Brandon, as well as a large rural area including Thetford Forest. It has the smallest population of any of the Suffolk districts. The area is also home to a large number of United States Air Force service personnel.

13 The district contains 23 parishes covering the whole of the district. Newmarket town is covered by four district wards and comprises around 29 per cent of the district's total electorate. The district's three towns experienced significant population growth in the 1960s and 1970s and further growth is forecast over the coming five-year period.

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

15 The electorate of the district is 33,725 (February 2000). The Council presently has 25 members who are elected from 15 wards, eight of which cover the relatively urban areas of Newmarket, Mildenhall and Brandon, while the remainder are predominantly rural. Two of the wards are each represented by three councillors, six are each represented by two councillors and seven are single-member wards. The whole council is elected together every four years.

16 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Forest Heath district, with around 29 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Brandon East and Great Heath wards.

17 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,349 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,493 by the year 2005 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in seven of the 15 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, in five wards by more than 20 per cent and in four wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Great Heath ward where the councillor represents 72 per cent more electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Forest Heath

Figure 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Brandon East	2	3,287	1,664	22	3,624	1,812	21
2 Brandon West	2	2,583	1,292	-4	2,785	1,393	-7
3 Exning	1	1,505	1,505	12	1,522	1,522	2
4 Granby	2	2,510	1,255	-7	2,665	1,333	-11
5 Great Heath	1	2,327	2,327	72	2,588	2,588	73
6 Icení	1	1,063	1,063	5	1,088	1,088	5
7 Lakenheath	2	2,764	1,382	2	2,819	1,410	-6
8 Manor	1	1,204	1,204	-11	1,244	1,244	-17
9 Market	2	2,931	1,466	9	3,191	1,596	7
10 Mill	1	1,786	1,786	32	3,226	3,226	116
11 Severals	3	4,324	1,441	7	4,520	1,507	1
12 South	1	1,242	1,242	-8	1,326	1,326	-11
13 St Mary's	3	2,787	929	-31	2,955	985	-34
14 Studlands Park	1	909	909	-33	1,014	1,014	-32
15 The Rows	2	2,503	1,252	-7	2,751	1,376	-8
Totals	25	33,725	-	-	37,318	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,349	-	-	1,493	-

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2000, electors in Studlands Park ward were relatively over-represented by 33 per cent, while electors in Great Heath ward were relatively under-represented by 72 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

18 During Stage One we received seven representations, including a district-wide scheme from Forest Heath District Council. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Forest Heath in Suffolk*.

19 Our draft recommendations were based on the District Council's Stage One proposals. However, we put forward our own proposals in Newmarket town and for a new Eriswell & The Rows ward; we also made minor modifications to the District Council's proposals in the towns of Brandon and Mildenhall. We proposed that:

- Forest Heath District Council should be served by 27 councillors, two more than at present, representing 14 wards, one fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 10 of the existing wards should be modified, while five wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- elections should continue to take place every four years;
- there should be new warding arrangements for the parishes of Brandon, Mildenhall, Freckenham and Newmarket.

Draft Recommendation

Forest Heath District Council should comprise 27 councillors, serving 14 wards. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

20 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 10 of the 14 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the district average in 2005.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

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

Forest Heath District Council

22 Forest Heath District Council stated that it supported our draft recommendations subject to a number of modifications. It proposed a modification to the boundary between Newmarket East and Newmarket West wards and that these wards be renamed Severals and St Marys respectively. As part of its submission the Council enclosed a copy of a letter from Newmarket Town Council which outlined modifications to our proposals for Newmarket.

23 The Council also put forward a modification to the boundary between our proposed wards of Eriswell & The Rows and Great Heath, as well as stating concern over our proposed ward name of Eriswell & The Rows. It also strongly opposed our proposed electoral arrangements for the parish of Freckenham.

Suffolk County Council

24 Suffolk County Council made comments on our draft recommendations in the areas covered by our proposed wards of Brandon East and Brandon West, Eriswell & The Rows, Exning, Lakenheath, Newmarket East and Newmarket West. The County Council also queried the District Council's proposed electorate forecast for the parish of Red Lodge.

Parish Councils

25 Eriswell Parish Council stated that it is "content for the parish to be transferred into a new Eriswell & The Rows ward". Mildenhall Parish Council stated that it wished to see the creation of a single-member West Row ward "to represent West Row specifically". Red Lodge Parish Council put forward proposals for new electoral arrangements at parish level in its area.

Other Representations

26 One further representation was received in response to our draft recommendations from Suffolk Constabulary. It made general comments on the Commission's proposals for Suffolk as a whole.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

27 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Forest Heath is, so far as reasonably practicable and consistent with the statutory criteria, to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the identities and interests of local communities – and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

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

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

30 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, such an objective should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of absolute electoral equality and only then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity and interests. Regard must be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates, and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

Electorate Forecasts

31 At Stage One the District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 11 per cent from 33,725 to 37,318 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expected most of the growth to be in Mill ward, particularly in Red Lodge parish. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the District Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries was obtained. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that forecasting electorates is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the Council’s figures, we were content that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

32 During Stage Three Suffolk County Council “queried the high level of growth that Forest Heath District Council anticipates as a result of major housing development in Red Lodge

parish”. It stated that it “believes that the increase in electors in Red Lodge parish will be substantially less than the increase the LGC has incorporated into its recommendations”.

33 In the light of these comments, before formulating our final recommendations we asked Forest Heath District Council to re-examine its original electorate forecast for Red Lodge parish. The District Council informed us that “Red Lodge has been identified as the major growth centre within the district and ... that the information provided [at Stage One] is the best estimate based on the developers’ expectations and all other known factors”.

34 We have carefully considered the representations received during Stage Three regarding electorate forecasts. While we note the disagreement between the District Council and the County Council regarding the forecast for Red Lodge parish, we believe that the former, as local planning authority, is best placed to make a judgement on its future electorate. Therefore we remain satisfied that the District Council’s electorate projections represent the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council Size

35 The Commission’s starting point in a PER is to assume that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case.

36 Forest Heath District Council presently has 25 members. During Stage One we received one submission concerning council size, from the District Council. It stated that it had first looked at producing a scheme based on the existing council size. However, in order to provide good levels of electoral equality under a 25-member scheme the Council would have to put forward “a number of ward boundaries [which] are rather contrived and communities of interest [would be] disregarded to an extent that major objections were likely to be forthcoming from a number of Parish Councils”. The Council therefore considered a change to the existing council size, and concluded that a council size of 27 would provide improved levels of electoral equality and strong boundaries while having regard to community identity.

37 When formulating our draft recommendations we concurred with the view that the existing council size of 25 does not facilitate a convenient distribution of councillors between the separate areas of the district. In such circumstances the Commission would suggest that a small change in council size is considered locally. An increase in council size to 27, as proposed by the District Council, would provide improved levels of electoral equality across the district as a whole, while facilitating coterminosity between district wards and parishes and a good reflection of community identities. Additionally, the Commission was pleased to note that widespread consultation was conducted on a 27-member scheme and that the proposals put forward by the Council commanded cross-party consensus. Under our draft recommendations we concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 27 members.

38 We received no further representations on council size during Stage Three and, having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received during Stage One, we have concluded that the

achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 27 members, as proposed in our draft recommendations.

Electoral Arrangements

39 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received during Stage One, including the district-wide scheme put forward by Forest Heath District Council.

40 When formulating our draft recommendations we examined alternative configurations of parishes to those put forward by the District Council, in order to assess whether further improvements to electoral equality could be obtained. However, we concluded that further improvements to electoral equality in the majority of the district’s more rural wards would be at the expense of the statutory criteria, namely the need to reflect community identities and secure effective and convenient local government. We also noted that, as the number of electors represented by each councillor is relatively low, a small change in electorate can have a proportionately greater effect on the degree of electoral imbalance.

41 In view of the degree of consensus behind large elements of the Council’s proposals, and the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, we concluded that we should base our draft recommendations on the District Council’s Stage One proposals. However, to improve electoral equality further, and having regard to local community identities and interests, we decided to move away from the District Council’s proposals for the town of Newmarket and Eriswell parish. We also put forward minor modifications to its proposals for the towns of Brandon and Mildenhall.

42 During Stage Three, we received only six submissions, five of which put forward modifications to specific wards and are outlined later in the chapter. Suffolk Constabulary had no specific comments to make on our draft recommendations for Forest Heath; however, it did state that “large multi-member wards present problems for the approach [it has] adopted to police by whole wards”. We have noted that our draft recommendations have not significantly changed the number of multi-member wards in Forest Heath, which are predominantly situated in the more urban areas under both the existing arrangements and our recommendations.

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

- (a) Granby, St Mary’s, Severals and Studlands Park wards (Newmarket) and Exning ward;
- (b) Great Heath and Market wards (Mildenhall);
- (c) Brandon East and Brandon West wards;
- (d) Icen, Manor, Mill and South wards;
- (e) Lakenheath and The Rows wards.

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

Granby, St Mary's, Severals and Studlands Park wards (Newmarket) and Exning ward

45 These five wards lie in the south-west of the district and cover the parishes of Exning and Newmarket. The wards of Severals and St Mary's currently return three councillors, Granby ward returns two councillors and Exning and Studlands Park are single-member wards. Under the existing arrangements the wards of Exning and Severals are under-represented by 12 per cent and 7 per cent respectively (2 per cent and 1 per cent by 2005). The wards of Granby, St Mary's and Studlands Park are over-represented by 7 per cent, 31 per cent and 33 per cent respectively (11 per cent, 34 per cent and 32 per cent by 2005).

46 During Stage One the District Council's scheme retained the existing electoral arrangements for the wards of Exning and Studlands Park. The Council also proposed that Granby ward should retain its existing boundaries and level of representation, but that it be renamed All Saints ward. The Council proposed a boundary realignment between the wards of St Mary's and Severals. It also proposed that St Mary's ward should return two councillors, a reduction of one. The Council noted the high levels of electoral inequality which would result from its proposal to retain the existing Studlands Park ward, but stated that "Studlands Park is a separate community with its own identity and characteristics". Under these proposals All Saints ward would have a councillor:elector ratio equal to the district average (4 per cent below by 2005). The wards of Exning, St Mary's and Severals would have councillor:elector ratios 20 per cent, 15 per cent and 13 per cent above the district average respectively (10 per cent, 8 per cent and 9 per cent by 2005). Studlands Park would have a councillor:elector ratio 27 per cent below the district average both initially and in 2005.

47 We received three further submissions at Stage One concerning these wards. Exning Parish Council stated that it supported the District Council's proposal to retain the existing Exning ward. Mildenhall Parish Council stated that St Mary's and Studlands Park wards did not merit four members. A resident of Brandon stated that "Newmarket has had a disproportionate number of members" and he hoped that this imbalance would be addressed under our recommendations.

48 When formulating our draft recommendations we carefully considered all representations received at Stage One. We adopted the proposal put forward by the District Council, supported by Exning Parish Council, to retain the existing Exning ward. We concluded that the existing arrangements provide a clear, cohesive ward, with strong community identity, and therefore considered that a projected electoral variance of 10 per cent in 2005 was justifiable. We also endorsed the District Council's proposal to retain the existing boundaries and level of representation of Granby ward, given that it would provide strong, clear boundaries and excellent levels of electoral equality. We also supported the District Council's proposal to rename Granby ward All Saints.

49 However, we put forward our own warding arrangements for the existing wards of St Mary's, Severals and Studlands Park. We concurred with the District Council's proposal to reduce the representation of these three wards from seven councillors to six, which the wards are entitled to given their total electorate. However, we considered that the electoral equality provided under the District Council's scheme could be improved upon, particularly the electoral variance of 27 per

cent in its proposed Studlands Park ward. We therefore looked at alternative electoral arrangements for Studlands Park ward and consequently the surrounding wards of St Mary's and Severals. We concluded that the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria would be met by two three-member wards, both comprising parts of the existing wards of St Mary's, Severals and Studlands Park. We proposed that the boundary between these two wards run along the middle of Exning Road and Mill Hill, from the A14 to St Mary's Square. The boundary would then follow Rowley Drive, to the rear of the properties of Lowther Street and Fitzroy Street, following Black Bear Lane in a southerly direction to the High Street. We put forward the ward names of Newmarket East and Newmarket West for these two new wards.

50 Our draft recommendations provided greatly improved electoral equality. All Saints ward would have a councillor:elector ratio equal to the district average (4 per cent below by 2005), while the wards of Exning, Newmarket East and Newmarket West would have councillor:elector ratios of 20 per cent, 4 per cent and 10 per cent above the district average respectively (10 per cent, 2 per cent and 2 per cent by 2005).

51 At Stage Three we received two submissions concerning our draft recommendations in this area. Forest Heath District Council proposed modifying the boundary between Newmarket East and Newmarket West wards, stating that the boundary should continue "from St Mary's Square along Wellington Street to the junction with the High Street in order to provide a more easily identifiable boundary and improved community identity". The District Council stated that our proposed boundary "appeared contrived and separated streets with a common sense of identity and a shared community of interest". It also put forward "the retention of the historical names of Severals and St Mary's" to replace our proposed ward names of Newmarket East and Newmarket West respectively. It stated that the existing ward names "would assist in electors identifying with the wards in which they lived". Under the District Council's Stage Three proposals the levels of electoral equality in All Saints and Exning wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. However, its proposed St Mary's and Severals wards would provide electoral variances of 15 per cent and 1 per cent respectively (8 per cent and 3 per cent by 2005).

52 As part of its Stage Three submission Forest Heath District Council included a letter it had received from Newmarket Town Council, commenting on our draft recommendations for Newmarket. It stated that "the proposed Newmarket West ward should be known as St Mary's and that the proposed Newmarket East ward should be known as Severals & Studlands Park". It also put forward a boundary modification between these two wards, stating that it should "continue down to the High Street in as straight a fashion as possible to ensure St Mary's church is included in the 'west' ward".

53 Suffolk County Council commented on our proposals in this area. It noted that our proposals "reinforced the physical separation" between Exning and Newmarket and that Studlands Park "has a special identity in population terms from the rest of Newmarket East ward [which] will be retained at parish level but not, unfortunately, at ward level".

54 We have carefully considered the representations received concerning these five wards. We have noted the support expressed for our proposed wards of All Saints and Exning and consequently we endorse our draft recommendations for both these wards as final.

55 We have reconsidered our draft recommendations for Newmarket East and Newmarket West wards in the light of Forest Heath District Council's proposals. We have noted that the District Council's proposal would provide higher electoral variances in both wards; however, we have been convinced that its proposed boundary would provide a stronger and more easily identifiable boundary between these two wards. Consequently we propose adopting its boundary modification as part of our draft recommendations. We also propose adopting the District Council's proposed ward names of St Mary's and Severals to replace our proposed names of Newmarket West and Newmarket East respectively.

56 Our final recommendations for All Saints and Exning wards would provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations for both wards. Under our final recommendations St Mary's ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 15 per cent above the district average (8 per cent by 2005). Severals ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 1 per cent below the district average (3 per cent by 2005). Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Great Heath and Market wards (Mildenhall)

57 These two wards cover the town of Mildenhall, which is situated in the centre of the district. Currently Great Heath ward is represented by a single member, while Market ward is represented by two councillors. Under the existing arrangements both wards are under-represented, by 72 per cent and 9 per cent respectively (73 per cent and 7 per cent by 2005).

58 During Stage One Forest Heath District Council proposed an amended boundary between these two wards, transferring 457 electors from Market ward into Great Heath ward. It also proposed that Great Heath should become a two-member ward. Under the District Council's Stage One proposals the wards of Great Heath and Market would have had councillor:elector ratios of 11 per cent and 5 per cent above the district average respectively (6 per cent and 5 per cent by 2005).

59 Mildenhall Parish Council stated that Great Heath ward should have "more representation", proposing that Great Heath and Market wards should each return two councillors.

60 When formulating our draft recommendations we carefully considered the representations received for these two wards, and concurred with the District Council's and Mildenhall Parish Council's proposal to increase the number of councillors representing Great Heath ward from one to two. We proposed adopting the District Council's boundary between Great Heath and Market wards, with minor modifications. We supported the Council's proposal to unite the whole of Charles Melrose Close and Granville Gardens in Great Heath ward; however, we proposed running the boundary along the rear of these properties and the edge of Nuttree Farm and Queensway Farm. We considered that our proposed boundary provided effective and convenient local government by retaining all the electors of Queensway in the same ward, while improving electoral equality in both wards. We also proposed transferring that part of Churchill Drive which is currently situated in Market ward into Great Heath ward, as we considered this would reflect community identity and provide effective and convenient local government for the electors of Churchill Drive. To maintain a high level of electoral equality following this modification we proposed that the electors of North Terrace (excluding numbers 37 to 41) and North Place should

be united by transferring these electors from Great Heath ward into Market ward. We also put forward a minor boundary realignment between our proposed wards of Great Heath and Eriswell & The Rows to ensure that the ward boundary adheres to ground detail. We concluded that our proposals provided clear boundaries while providing effective and convenient local government and improved electoral equality in these two wards.

61 Under our draft recommendations Market ward would have a councillor:elector ratio equal to the district average (4 per cent above by 2005), while Great Heath ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 11 per cent above the district average (5 per cent by 2005).

62 At Stage Three Forest Heath District Council put forward a minor modification to the boundary between Eriswell & The Rows and Great Heath wards, to tie it to the perimeter of the air base. The District Council also expressed general support for our proposed Market ward.

63 We propose adopting the District Council's modification to the boundary between Eriswell & The Rows and Great Heath wards, as it would not affect any electors or change the levels of electoral equality.

64 We received no further comments concerning these two wards and have therefore decided to endorse our draft recommendations as final. Consequently our final recommendations would provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations for these wards. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Brandon East and Brandon West wards

65 These two wards lie in the north-east of the district. Brandon East ward covers the parish of Santon Downham and Brandon East parish ward of Brandon parish, while Brandon West ward covers the parish of Wangford and Brandon West parish ward of Brandon parish. Each of these wards currently returns two councillors. Brandon East ward is currently under-represented by 22 per cent (21 per cent by 2005), while Brandon West ward is over-represented by 4 per cent (7 per cent by 2005).

66 At Stage One Forest Heath District Council proposed no change to the existing Brandon West ward. However, it proposed revising the existing Brandon East ward to include the parish of Elveden, currently in Icení ward, and that the level of representation be increased to three councillors. Under these proposals Brandon East ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 7 per cent below the district average (8 per cent by 2005). Brandon West ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 3 per cent above the district average (1 per cent by 2005).

67 Eriswell Parish Council stated that "any new arrangements should acknowledge the fact that Eriswell, Elveden and Icklingham form one Estate" and should therefore be retained in a single district ward.

68 When formulating our draft recommendations we carefully considered the representations received concerning these two wards. We adopted the District Council's proposals, with one minor modification to the boundary between Brandon East and Brandon West wards. We proposed that the boundary should remain mostly unchanged, but proposed that at the northern

end of Rattler's Road it should run along Church Road as far as the Bowling Green before running in a northerly direction and joining the district boundary. We considered that this minor modification provided a stronger boundary, while improving electoral equality in both wards. Under our draft recommendations Brandon West ward would have a councillor:elector ratio equal to the district average (2 per cent below by 2005) and Brandon East ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 5 per cent below the district average (6 per cent by 2005).

69 At Stage Three Suffolk County Council stated that "in the case of Brandon, the ward boundaries are still not coterminous with the town boundary with one ward now including another parish". However, it did not put forward any alternative warding arrangements for Brandon.

70 During Stage Three we received the general support of Forest Heath District Council for our draft recommendations for the wards of Brandon East and Brandon West. We received no further comments concerning these two wards and have decided to endorse our draft recommendations as final. Consequently, our final recommendations would provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations for these wards. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Iceni, Manor, Mill and South wards

71 These four wards are situated in the south and east of the district and are all single-member wards. Iceni ward comprises the parishes of Cavenham, Elveden, Eriswell, Icklingham and Tuddenham; Manor ward comprises the parishes of Barton Mills, Freckenham and Worlington; Mill ward comprises the parishes of Gazeley, Herringswell, Higham and Red Lodge; and South ward comprises the parishes of Dalham, Kentford and Moulton. Under the existing arrangements the wards of Iceni and Mill are under-represented by 5 per cent and 32 per cent respectively (5 per cent and 116 per cent by 2005). Manor and South wards are over-represented by 11 per cent and 8 per cent respectively (17 per cent and 11 per cent by 2005).

72 During Stage One Forest Heath District Council proposed that the wards of Manor and South should remain unchanged. It put forward a significant regrouping of parishes to create two new wards from the existing wards of Iceni and Mill. It noted that the parish of Red Lodge is "the major centre for development within the district" and consequently proposed that the parishes of Herringswell and Red Lodge, currently in Mill ward, should comprise a new two-member Red Lodge ward. It also proposed that the parishes of Gazeley and Higham form a revised single-member Mill ward with the parishes of Cavenham, Icklingham and Tuddenham, currently in Iceni ward. The remaining parishes of Iceni ward, Elveden and Eriswell, would be included in Brandon East and Lakenheath wards respectively. Under these proposals the wards of Manor, Red Lodge and South would have councillor:elector ratios 4 per cent, 54 per cent and 1 per cent below the district average respectively (10 per cent, 7 per cent and 4 per cent by 2005). Mill ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 6 per cent above the district average (1 per cent below by 2005).

73 We received four further representations at Stage One concerning these wards. Eriswell Parish Council stated that it wished to remain in a district ward with the parishes of Elveden and Icklingham. Tuddenham St Mary Parish Council stated that the ward name Iceni should be retained. Mildenhall Parish Council stated that there be an increase in "the number of District

Council seats in the [proposed] Red Lodge ward by two ... because of the confirmed development” in the area.

74 When formulating draft recommendations we carefully considered all the representations received. We noted Eriswell Parish Council’s desire to remain in a ward with the parishes of Elveden and Icklingham. However, this proposal would have resulted in considerably higher levels of electoral inequality in Manor and Mill wards. We concluded that the District Council’s proposals for these four wards generally provided the best levels of electoral equality currently available, while having regard to the statutory criteria for the area as a whole. We adopted the District Council’s proposal to transfer Elveden parish into Brandon East ward, and put forward our own proposal to transfer Eriswell parish into a new Eriswell & The Rows ward (as discussed later in the chapter). We considered our own alternative warding patterns for this area; however, with the exception of including Eriswell parish in The Rows ward instead of Lakenheath ward, we were unable to find an alternative pattern of grouping whole parishes in district wards which would provide similar levels of electoral equality in the rural area as a whole. We therefore adopted the Council’s proposals for these four wards, with one modification. We adopted the locally generated proposal that the Council’s proposed Mill ward should be named Icení. We noted that the proposed Red Lodge ward would initially have an electoral variance of 54 per cent; however, due to a major housing development in Red Lodge parish there would be a marked improvement in the electoral variance to 7 per cent, by 2005.

75 Under our draft recommendations Icení ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 6 per cent above the district average (1 per cent below by 2005). Manor, Red Lodge and South wards would have councillor:elector ratios 4 per cent, 54 per cent and 1 per cent below the district average respectively (10 per cent, 7 per cent and 4 per cent by 2005).

76 At Stage Three we received one submission concerning these four wards. As outlined earlier in the chapter, Suffolk County Council challenged our electorate forecasts for the parish of Red Lodge; however, following confirmation from the District Council we are content that the original electorate forecasts are the best estimates that can be made at this time.

77 During Stage Three we received the general support of Forest Heath District Council for our draft recommendations for the wards of Icení, Manor, Red Lodge and South. We received no further comments concerning these four wards and have therefore decided to fully endorse our draft recommendations as final. Consequently our final recommendations would provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations for these wards. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

Lakenheath and The Rows wards

78 These two wards cover the north-west of the district, and currently return two councillors each. Lakenheath ward is coterminous with the parish of the same name; The Rows ward contains Beck Row, Holywell Row & Kenny Hill parish and West Row parish ward of Mildenhall parish. Under the existing arrangements Lakenheath ward is under-represented by 2 per cent (over-represented by 6 per cent by 2005) and The Rows ward is over-represented by 7 per cent (8 per cent by 2005).

79 During Stage One Forest Heath District Council stated that there should be no change to the existing electoral arrangements of The Rows ward. It proposed that the existing Lakenheath ward should be included in a ward with the parish of Eriswell, currently in Icení ward, to form a modified two-member Lakenheath ward. Under these proposals The Rows ward would have a councillor:elector ratio equal to the district average both now and in 2005. Lakenheath ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 18 per cent above the district average (8 per cent by 2005).

80 Eriswell Parish Council stated that it wished to remain in a district ward with the parishes of Elveden and Icklingham. The District Council also forwarded a representation that it had received from Eriswell Parish Council at Stage One, objecting to the proposal to link Eriswell parish with Lakenheath parish as it is “unhappy at [becoming] an appendage to such a large community as Lakenheath”. Mildenhall Parish Council stated that a West Row ward should be created, returning one councillor.

81 When formulating our draft recommendations we carefully considered all the representations received for these two wards. We considered Mildenhall Parish Council’s proposal for a single-member West Row ward, to be coterminous with the parish ward of the same name. However, we did not adopt this proposal due to the high levels of electoral inequality it would provide in both a single-member West Row ward and neighbouring wards.

82 We concurred with the District Council’s proposal to transfer Eriswell parish out of Icení ward, as the retention of the existing Icení ward would result in high levels of electoral inequality in the area as a whole. However, we noted Eriswell Parish Council’s opposition to the proposal to transfer it into a ward with the “large community” of Lakenheath. We therefore proposed that the parish of Eriswell be transferred into a new Eriswell & The Rows ward. This proposal would improve electoral equality in the area and would include Eriswell in a ward with a number of smaller communities – Beck Row, Holywell Row, Kenny Hill and West Row. We also proposed a minor boundary realignment between our proposed wards of Great Heath and Eriswell & The Rows, to ensure that the ward boundary adheres to ground detail. Under our proposals the wards of Eriswell & The Rows and Lakenheath would have councillor:elector ratios above the district average by 7 per cent and 11 per cent respectively (6 per cent and 2 per cent by 2005).

83 At Stage Three we received four submissions concerning these two wards. Forest Heath District Council proposed a minor boundary modification between the wards of Eriswell & The Rows and Great Heath. This modification would result in Mildenhall Airfield being wholly contained in Eriswell & The Rows ward. The District Council also expressed concern “that the Parish Council of Beck Row, Holywell Row and Kenny Hill were not aggrieved by the proposed naming” of Eriswell & The Rows ward.

84 Suffolk County Council proposed a modification to our proposed boundary between Eriswell & The Rows and Lakenheath wards. This boundary modification would see the electors attached to Lakenheath air base, situated in Eriswell & The Rows ward under our proposals, transferred into Lakenheath ward. This proposal would involve new warding arrangements for the parish of Eriswell with the creation of two parish wards, one parish ward covering the part of RAF Lakenheath that is situated in Eriswell parish and the remainder of the parish being covered by a second parish ward.

85 Eriswell Parish Council were “very pleased that [we] noted its opposition to the proposals to transfer it into a ward with Lakenheath and [that we] came up with an alternative proposal”. It was content “for the parish to be transferred into a new Eriswell & The Rows ward”. Mildenhall Parish Council requested that the Commission reconsider its position and “agree to having one district councillor to represent West Row specifically”.

86 When formulating our final recommendations we carefully considered the boundary proposal put forward by Suffolk County Council; however, we have noted that neither Forest Heath District Council nor the parish councils of Eriswell or Lakenheath have supported this proposal and on a local level appear to be content with the existing boundary between the two wards. We have also noted, as did Suffolk County Council, that this proposal would require the warding of Eriswell parish. Consequently we do not propose adopting Suffolk County Council’s proposed boundary modifications between our proposed wards of Eriswell & The Rows and Lakenheath.

87 We have considered the proposal to create a single-member West Row ward, as put forward by Mildenhall Parish Council. However, as outlined in our draft recommendations report, this proposal would provide electoral variances of 20 per cent in both a new West Row ward and a modified The Rows ward (24 per cent in both by 2005). We consider that these high levels of electoral inequality cannot be justified, particularly as we have not been provided with any supporting evidence as to why a single-member West Row ward would fulfil the statutory criteria better than our draft recommendations.

88 We have adopted the District Council’s minor modification between Eriswell & The Rows and Great Heath wards, but this modification does not affect any electors and consequently provides the same levels of electoral equality as under our draft recommendations. We have noted the District Council’s concern over our proposed ward name of Eriswell & The Rows; however, during Stage Three we received no alternative proposals for a new ward name.

89 We have carefully considered each of the representations received during Stage Three concerning these two wards. We propose adopting the District Council’s minor boundary modification between Eriswell & The Rows and Great Heath wards. Elsewhere, having considered the evidence we have received during Stages One and Three of this review, we have concluded that our draft recommendations offer the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and we are endorsing them as final. Our final recommendations would provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations for these two wards. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

Electoral Cycle

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

91 At Stage Three no further comments were received, and we confirm our draft recommendation as final.

Conclusions

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

- we are adopting the District Council’s proposed boundary between Newmarket East and Newmarket West and we propose renaming these wards Severals and St Mary’s respectively.
- we have adopted the District Council’s modification to the boundary between our proposed Eriswell & The Rows and Great Heath wards; this modification would affect no electors.

93 We conclude that, in Forest Heath:

- the council should return 27 members, an increase of two;
- there should be 14 wards, a decrease of one;
- the boundaries of 10 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net decrease of one ward;
- elections should continue to be held for the whole council every four years.

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

Figure 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	25	27	25	27
Number of wards	15	14	15	14
Average number of electors per councillor	1,349	1,249	1,493	1,382
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	7	5	8	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	5	1	5	0

95 As Figure 4 shows, our final recommendations for Forest Heath District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the district average from seven to five. By 2005 no ward is forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district.

Final Recommendation

Forest Heath District Council should comprise 27 councillors serving 14 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover. The Council should hold whole-council elections every four years.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

96 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Local Government Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Brandon, Mildenhall and Newmarket to reflect the proposed district wards.

97 The parish of Newmarket is currently served by 18 councillors serving four wards. The parish wards of Granby, St Mary's, Severals and Studlands Park currently return four, five, seven and two parish councillors respectively.

98 During Stage One we put forward our own district warding pattern for the town of Newmarket, as outlined earlier in the chapter, and we therefore put forward our own parish warding arrangements for Newmarket parish. We concluded that a Studlands Park district ward with an electoral variance of 27 per cent should not be adopted in our draft recommendations; however, we noted the community identity arguments put forward and consequently proposed a Studlands Park parish ward (returning two councillors). We proposed a Newmarket East parish ward (returning five councillors) comprising the remainder of the proposed Newmarket East district ward and that the boundaries of All Saints and Newmarket West parish wards (returning four and seven councillors respectively) should be coterminous with the proposed district wards of the same names, outlined earlier in the chapter.

99 During Stage Three Forest Heath District Council proposed a modification to our proposed district wards of Newmarket East and Newmarket West, as outlined earlier in the chapter; it also proposed renaming these district wards Severals and St Mary's respectively. This proposal was broadly supported by Newmarket Town Council. We propose adopting the District Council's proposed boundary modification between the district wards of Newmarket East and Newmarket West; therefore as part of our final recommendations we are also putting forward a consequential modification to the boundary between the proposed parish wards of the same names. We are adopting the District Council's proposed district ward names of St Mary's and Severals to replace our proposed names of Newmarket West and Newmarket East. Consequently we propose

renaming the parish wards of Newmarket East and Newmarket West as Severals and St Mary’s respectively.

Final Recommendation
Newmarket Town Council should comprise 18 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: All Saints ward (returning four councillors), St Mary’s ward (returning seven councillors), Severals ward (returning five councillors) and Studlands Park ward (returning two councillors). The parish ward boundaries are illustrated on the large map inserted in the back of the report.

100 The parish of Mildenhall is currently served by 15 councillors serving three wards. The parish wards of Great Heath and Market currently return six councillors each, and West Row parish ward returns three councillors.

101 During Stage One Forest Heath District Council put forward two boundary modifications between the district wards of Great Heath and Market, as outlined earlier in the chapter. Mildenhall Parish Council stated that it should retain a council size of 15, with each parish ward returning the existing number of councillors. When formulating our draft recommendations we proposed broadly adopting the District Council’s proposals for boundary modifications between the district wards of Great Heath and Market; however, we put forward a number of minor modifications to the District Council’s proposed boundaries. We proposed that the parish ward boundaries for Mildenhall be coterminous with our proposed district ward boundaries for the same area, outlined earlier in the chapter.

102 At Stage Three Forest Heath District Council proposed a minor boundary modification between the district wards of Eriswell & The Rows and Great Heath, as outlined earlier in the chapter. We propose adopting this boundary modification as part of our final recommendations, and we are putting forward a consequential modification to the boundary between the proposed parish wards of Great Heath and West Row.

Final Recommendation
Mildenhall Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Great Heath ward and Market ward (each returning six councillors) and West Row ward (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map 2 and the large map inserted in the back of the report.

103 The parish of Brandon is currently served by 14 councillors serving two wards, the parish wards of Brandon East and Brandon West, returning seven councillors each.

104 During Stage One Forest Heath District Council proposed no change to the existing boundary between the district wards of Brandon East and Brandon West; consequently it proposed no change to the electoral arrangements of Brandon parish. However, we proposed a minor boundary modification between Brandon East and Brandon West district wards, and therefore proposed a consequential modification to the parish ward boundaries for Brandon. Having made this boundary modification we considered that the level of representation should be changed between the parish wards, to provide greater electoral equality.

105 During Stage Three we received general support from Forest Heath District Council, with no further comments being submitted concerning the electoral arrangements of Brandon parish. In the light of the support for our proposed district wards in the area, we are confirming our draft recommendation for the electoral arrangements of Brandon parish as final.

Final Recommendation
Brandon Parish Council should comprise 14 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Brandon East (returning eight councillors) and Brandon West (returning six councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map 2 and the large map inserted in the back of the report.

106 The parish of Freckenham is currently served by five councillors and is not warded. At Stage One Freckenham Parish Council proposed that the parish should be divided into five single-member wards, stating that “this arrangement will help electors to identify with their parish councillors and help councillors to focus on a given area”. We received no further representations concerning Freckenham parish, consequently we adopted its proposals as part of our draft recommendations. However, we proposed a boundary modification between the Parish Council’s proposed Central and East parish wards.

107 During Stage Three Forest Heath District Council opposed our draft recommendation to divide Freckenham parish into five wards as it “would make the electoral process complicated, confusing and inconvenient”. We understand that Freckenham Parish Council has reconsidered its original position and would support the District Council’s proposal not to ward Freckenham parish. We have considered carefully the evidence put forward by the District Council and noted that the Parish Council is prepared to support this modification. Consequently, we propose endorsing the existing electoral arrangements of Freckenham parish as part of our final recommendations.

Final Recommendation
Freckenham Parish Council should comprise five councillors, as at present, representing the parish as a whole, as outlined on Map 2.

108 The parish of Red Lodge is currently served by seven councillors representing the parish as a whole. During Stage Three the Parish Council stated that it wanted to “increase the number of parish councillors from seven to either nine or 11”. It stated that the parish needed to increase the number of councillors due to the major housing development in the parish and the subsequent increase in its electorate. We have carefully considered this proposal and recommend an increase in council size for Red Lodge Parish Council. However, we consider that a council size as near to the existing council size as possible should be adopted, and consequently we are proposing a council size of nine.

Final Recommendation
Red Lodge Parish Council should comprise nine councillors, an increase of two, representing the parish as a whole, as outlined on Map 2.

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

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

Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Forest Heath

6 NEXT STEPS

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

111 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 7 August 2001.

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

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

APPENDIX A

Draft Recommendations for Forest Heath

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of only two wards, where our draft proposals are set out below. The only other change from draft to final recommendations, which is not included in Figures A1 and A2, is that we propose a minor modification between Eriswell & The Rows and Great Heath wards, which does not affect any electors.

Figure A1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Newmarket East	St Mary's ward (part – part of St Mary's parish ward of Newmarket parish); Severals ward (part – part of Severals parish ward of Newmarket parish); Studlands Park ward (part – part of Studlands Park parish ward of Newmarket parish)
Newmarket West	St Mary's ward (part – part of St Mary's parish ward of Newmarket parish); Severals ward (part – part of Severals parish ward of Newmarket parish); Studlands Park ward (part – part of Studlands Park parish ward of Newmarket parish)

Figure A2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Newmarket East	3	3,892	1,297	4	4,248	1,416	2
Newmarket West	3	4,128	1,376	10	4,241	1,414	2

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Forest Heath 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. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

APPENDIX B

Code of Practice on Written Consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm, requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Non-Departmental Public Bodies, such as the Local Government Commission, are encouraged to follow the Code. The Code of Practice applies to consultation documents published after 1 January 2001, which should reproduce the criteria, give explanations of any departures, and confirm that the criteria have otherwise been followed.

Figure B1: Commission compliance with Code criteria

Criteria	Compliance/departure
Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process for a policy (including legislation) or service from the start, so that it has the best prospect of improving the proposals concerned, and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage	The Commission complies with this requirement
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose	The Commission complies with this requirement
A consultation document should be as simple and concise as possible. It should include a summary, in two pages at most, of the main questions it seeks views on. It should make it as easy as possible for readers to respond, make contact or complain	The Commission complies with this requirement
Documents should be made widely available, with the fullest use of electronic means (though not to the exclusion of others), and effectively drawn to the attention of all interested groups and individuals	The Commission complies with this requirement
Sufficient time should be allowed for considered responses from all groups with an interest. Twelve weeks should be the standard minimum period for a consultation	The Commission consults on draft recommendations for a minimum of eight weeks, but may extend the period if consultations take place over holiday periods
Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed, and reasons for decisions finally taken	The Commission complies with this requirement
Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated	The Commission complies with this requirement