

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Chelmsford in Essex

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

November 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

Members of the Commission are:

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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Chelmsford town and the parishes of Great Baddow and Springfield is inserted inside the back cover of the report.



Local Government Commission for England

28 November 2000

Dear Secretary of State

On 30 November 1999 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Chelmsford under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in May 2000 and undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have confirmed our draft recommendations in their entirety. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Chelmsford (see paragraph 87)

We recommend that Chelmsford Borough Council should be served by 57 councillors representing 24 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 the Borough Council and other local people who have contributed to the review. Their co-operation and assistance have been very much appreciated by Commissioners and staff.

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Chelmsford on 30 November 1999. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 16 May 2000, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

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

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

- **in six of the 27 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough, and one ward varies by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2004 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 one ward.**

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

- **Chelmsford Borough Council should have 57 councillors, one more than at present;**
- **there should be 24 wards, instead of 27 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 19 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of three, and eight 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 borough councillor is as nearly as possible the same, having regard to local circumstances.

- **In only one of the proposed 24 wards would the number of electors per councillor vary by more than 10 per cent from the borough 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 borough in 2004.**

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 Great Baddow and Springfield;**
- **an increase in the number of councillors serving South Hanningfield Parish Council, a reduction in the number of councillors serving South Woodham Ferrers Town Council and a redistribution of councillors serving Writtle Parish Council.**

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 8 January 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	Bicknacre & East & West Hanningfield	2	East & West Hanningfield ward; Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre ward	Map 2
2	Boreham & The Leighs	2	Boreham ward; Great & Little Leighs & Little Waltham ward (part – Great Leighs parish)	Map 2
3	Broomfield & The Walthams	3	Broomfield, Pleshey & Great Waltham ward (part – the parishes of Broomfield and Great Waltham); Great & Little Leighs & Little Waltham ward (part – Little Waltham parish)	Map 2
4	Chelmer Village & Beaulieu Park	3	Springfield North ward (part – part of Springfield North parish ward of Springfield parish); Springfield South ward (Springfield South parish ward of Springfield parish)	Map 2 and Large map
5	Chelmsford Rural West	1	Chignall, Good Easter, Mashbury, Highwood & Roxwell ward; Broomfield, Pleshey & Great Waltham ward (part – Pleshey parish)	Map 2
6	Galleywood	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Galleywood parish)	Map 2
7	Goat Hall (Chelmsford town)	2	Goat Hall ward; Waterhouse Farm ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
8	Great Baddow East	3	Baddow Road & Great Baddow Village ward (Baddow Road parish ward and Village parish ward of Great Baddow parish); Rothmans ward (part – part of Rothmans parish ward of Great Baddow parish)	Map 2 and Large map
9	Great Baddow West	2	Rothmans ward (part – part of Rothmans parish ward of Great Baddow parish)	Map 2 and Large map
10	Little Baddow, Danbury & Sandon	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Danbury, Little Baddow and Sandon parishes)	Map 2
11	Marconi (Chelmsford town)	2	All Saints ward (part); Waterhouse Farm ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
12	Moulsham & Central (Chelmsford town)	3	Cathedral ward (part); Old Moulsham ward	Map 2 and Large map
13	Moulsham Lodge (Chelmsford town)	2	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2 and Large map
14	Patching Hall (Chelmsford town)	3	All Saints ward (part); Patching Hall ward	Map 2 and Large map
15	Rettendon & Runwell	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Rettendon and Runwell parishes)	Map 2

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
16	St Andrews (Chelmsford town)	3	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2 and Large map
17	South Hanningfield, Stock & Margaretting	2	Margaretting & Stock ward (Margaretting and Stock parishes); South Hanningfield ward (South Hanningfield parish)	Map 2
18	South Woodham – Chetwood & Collingwood	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Chetwood and Collingwood parish wards of South Woodham Ferrers parish)	Map 2
19	South Woodham – Elmwood & Woodville	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Elmwood and Woodville parish wards of South Woodham Ferrers parish)	Map 2
20	Springfield North	3	Springfield North ward (part – part of Springfield North parish ward of Springfield parish)	Map 2 and Large map
21	The Lawns (Chelmsford town)	2	The Lawns ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
22	Trinity (Chelmsford town)	2	Cathedral ward (part); The Lawns ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
23	Waterhouse Farm (Chelmsford town)	2	Waterhouse Farm ward (part)	Map 2 and Large map
24	Writtle	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Writtle parish)	Map 2

Notes: 1 Chelmsford town is the only unparished part of the borough and comprises nine wards.

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 existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors.

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Chelmsford

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Bicknacre & East & West Hanningfield	2	4,188	2,094	-1	4,212	2,106	-5
2	Boreham & The Leighs	2	3,994	1,997	-6	4,534	2,267	3
3	Broomfield & The Walthams	3	5,945	1,982	-7	6,118	2,039	-8
4	Chelmer Village & Beaulieu Park	3	5,398	1,799	-15	6,814	2,271	3
5	Chelmsford Rural West	1	2,155	2,155	1	2,162	2,162	-2
6	Galleywood	2	4,684	2,342	10	4,690	2,345	6
7	Goat Hall (Chelmsford town)	2	4,526	2,263	7	4,642	2,321	5
8	Great Baddow East	3	6,295	2,098	-1	6,418	2,139	-3
9	Great Baddow West	2	4,130	2,065	-3	4,175	2,088	-5
10	Little Baddow, Danbury & Sandon	3	6,533	2,178	3	6,574	2,191	-1
11	Marconi (Chelmsford town)	2	4,390	2,193	3	4,694	2,347	6
12	Moulsham & Central (Chelmsford town)	3	6,662	2,221	5	6,729	2,243	2
13	Moulsham Lodge (Chelmsford town)	2	3,962	1,981	-7	4,294	2,147	-3
14	Patching Hall (Chelmsford town)	3	6,648	2,216	4	6,963	2,321	5
15	Rettendon & Runwell	2	4,069	2,035	-4	4,470	2,235	1
16	St Andrews (Chelmsford town)	3	6,812	2,271	7	6,905	2,302	4
17	South Hanningfield, Stock & Margaretting	2	4,237	2,119	0	4,361	2,181	-1

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
18 South Woodham – Chetwood & Collingwood	3	6,214	2,071	-2	6,222	2,074	-6
19 South Woodham – Elmwood & Woodville	3	6,189	2,063	-3	6,213	2,071	-6
20 Springfield North	3	6,728	2,243	6	6,734	2,245	2
21 The Lawns (Chelmsford town)	2	4,360	2,180	3	4,422	2,211	0
22 Trinity (Chelmsford town)	2	4,387	2,194	3	4,417	2,209	0
23 Waterhouse Farm (Chelmsford town)	2	3,999	2,000	-6	4,494	2,247	2
24 Writtle	2	4,544	2,272	7	4,553	2,277	3
Totals	57	121,049	–	–	125,810	–	–
Averages	–	–	2,124	–	–	2,207	–

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

1 INTRODUCTION

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

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Chelmsford. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in December 1986 (Report No. 529). The electoral arrangements for Essex County Council were last reviewed in November 1980 (Report No. 401). We completed a directed electoral review of Thurrock in 1996 and a periodic electoral review of Southend-on-Sea in 1999. We expect to undertake a periodic electoral review of Thurrock in 2000 and a review of the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

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

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the Borough Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. 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* (third edition published in October 1999), which sets out our approach to the reviews.

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

7 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the 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, ie in year one half of the district council would be elected, in year two half the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities.

10 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/00 PER programme, including the Essex districts, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the October 1999 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State's intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas. 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, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in the two-tier district areas, and our current *Guidance*.

11 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 30 November 1999, when we wrote to Chelmsford Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Essex County Council, Essex Police Authority, the local authority associations, Essex Local Councils Association, parish and town councils in the borough, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district, the Members of the European Parliament for the South East Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 28 February 2000. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

12 Stage Three began on 16 May 2000 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Chelmsford in Essex*, and ended on 10 July 2000. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

13 The borough of Chelmsford is situated in mid-Essex and includes Chelmsford, the county town of Essex, South Woodham Ferrers town and 24 villages. It is one of the largest shire districts in England. The borough has excellent communication links, with good rail and road access to London and six international airports.

14 The borough contains 27 parishes, but Chelmsford town itself is unparished. Chelmsford town comprises 38 per cent of the borough's total electorate.

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

16 The electorate of the borough is 121,049 (February 1999). The Council presently has 56 members who are elected from 27 wards, 15 of which are relatively urban in Chelmsford, Great Baddow, South Woodham Ferrers and Springfield, with the remainder being predominantly rural. Nine of the wards are each represented by three councillors, 11 are each represented by two councillors and seven are single-member wards. The whole Council is elected every four years.

17 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Chelmsford borough, with around 7 per cent more electors than in 1986 as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in the South Woodham and Springfield wards.

18 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,162 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,247 by the year 2004 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes since the last review in 1986, the number of electors per councillor in six of the 27 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average and in one ward by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Boreham ward where the councillor represents 27 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Chelmsford

Figure 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 All Saints (Chelmsford town)	2	4,444	2,222	3	4,750	2,375	6
2 Baddow Road & Great Baddow Village	3	6,008	2,003	-7	6,132	2,044	-9
3 Boreham	1	2,737	2,737	27	2,885	2,885	28
4 Broomfield, Pleshey & Great Waltham	2	5,170	2,585	20	5,309	2,655	18
5 Cathedral (Chelmsford town)	2	4,491	2,246	4	4,519	2,260	1
6 Chignall, Good Easter, Mashbury, Highwood & Roxwell	1	1,915	1,915	-11	1,922	1,922	-14
7 East & West Hanningfield	1	1,805	1,805	-16	1,817	1,817	-19
8 Galleywood	2	4,684	2,342	8	4,690	2,345	4
9 Goat Hall (Chelmsford town)	2	4,526	2,263	5	4,642	2,321	3
10 Great & Little Leighs & Little Waltham	1	2,272	2,272	5	2,700	2,700	20
11 Little Baddow, Danbury & Sandon	3	6,533	2,178	1	6,574	2,191	-2
12 Margaretting & Stock	1	2,373	2,373	10	2,468	2,468	10
13 Moulsham Lodge (Chelmsford town)	2	3,962	1,981	-8	4,294	2,147	-4
14 Old Moulsham (Chelmsford town)	3	6,160	2,053	-5	6,229	2,076	-8
15 Patching Hall (Chelmsford town)	3	5,911	1,970	-9	6,227	2,076	-8
16 Rettendon & Runwell	2	4,069	2,035	-6	4,470	2,235	-1
17 Rothmans	2	4,417	2,209	2	4,461	2,231	-1

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
18 St Andrews (Chelmsford town)	3	6,812	2,271	5	6,905	2,302	2
19 South Hanningfield	1	1,864	1,864	-14	1,893	1,893	-16
20 South Woodham – Collingwood East & West	3	6,214	2,071	-4	6,222	2,074	-8
21 South Woodham – Elmwood & Woodville	3	6,189	2,063	-5	6,213	2,071	-8
22 Springfield North	3	6,728	2,243	4	7,488	2,496	11
23 Springfield South	3	5,398	1,799	-17	6,060	2,020	-10
24 The Lawns (Chelmsford town)	2	4,755	2,378	10	4,818	2,409	7
25 Waterhouse Farm (Chelmsford town)	2	4,685	2,343	8	5,174	2,587	15
26 Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre	1	2,383	2,383	10	2,395	2,395	7
27 Writtle	2	4,544	2,272	5	4,553	2,277	1
Totals	56	121,049	–	–	125,810	–	–
Averages	–	–	2,162	–	–	2,247	–

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1999, electors in Springfield South ward were relatively over-represented by 17 per cent, while electors in Boreham ward were relatively under-represented by 27 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

19 During Stage One we received ten representations, including a borough-wide scheme from Chelmsford Borough 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 Chelmsford in Essex*.

20 Our draft recommendations adopted the Borough Council's proposals in the parished area of the borough, however we made modifications to its proposals in the Chelmsford town area. We proposed that:

- Chelmsford Borough Council should be served by 57 councillors, compared with the current 56, representing 24 wards, three fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 19 of the existing wards should be modified, while eight wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- there should be new warding arrangements for the parishes of Great Baddow and Springfield, and changes to the number of councillors on the parish councils of South Hanningfield and South Woodham Ferrers;
- elections should continue to take place every four years.

Draft Recommendation

Chelmsford Borough Council should comprise 57 councillors, serving 24 wards. The whole council should continue to be elected every four years.

21 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from six to one. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2004.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

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

Chelmsford Borough Council

23 The Borough Council stated that it supported our draft recommendations in full as they are predominantly based on its Stage One submission. It also stated that our detailed amendments to its proposed boundaries in Chelmsford town “are acceptable to the Council”.

Parish Councils

24 Great & Little Leighs Parish Council opposed our draft recommendations for the proposed wards of Boreham & The Leighs and Broomfield & The Walthams on community identity grounds. Little Waltham Parish Council opposed our draft recommendation to include the parishes of Broomfield, Great Waltham and Little Waltham in a borough ward together. It stated that the urban area of Broomfield has little in common with the rural area covering the remainder of the proposed ward.

25 East Hanningfield Parish Council stated that “although [it] would prefer to continue with a single-councillor ward, it understood that it would be impossible to do so and have equality of representation within the borough. [It] therefore raised no objection to the proposed new ward”. Great Baddow Parish Council stated its support for our draft recommendations. Writtle Parish Council put forward new parish warding arrangements for its parish.

Other Representations

26 One further representation was received in response to our draft recommendations from a local councillor. Councillor Willsher, member for Great & Little Leighs & Little Waltham ward opposed our proposed ward of Boreham & The Leighs, stating that the two parishes within the proposed ward are “very different in nature” and therefore should not be included in a borough ward together.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

27 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Chelmsford 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 also must 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 also be had to five-year forecasts of change in electorates.

Electorate Forecasts

31 At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 4 per cent from 121,049 to 125,810 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expects most of the growth to be in Springfield, although a significant amount is also expected in the wards of Great & Little Leighs & Little Waltham, Rettendon & Runwell and Waterhouse Farm. The Council has estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

32 We received no comments on the Council’s electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates presently available.

Council Size

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

34 Chelmsford Borough Council is at present served by 56 councillors. At Stage One we received one representation regarding council size from the Borough Council. It proposed a council size of 57 members, since it “felt that it would be undesirable for the existing electoral quota of 2,162 to rise significantly ... the quota under [its] proposals would be contained to 2,207, an increase of only 2 per cent overall”. The Borough Council argued that its scheme would be better facilitated by a council size of 57, which would help to attain high levels of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. The Commission was pleased to note that widespread consultation was conducted on a 57-member scheme and that the proposals put forward by the Council enjoyed cross-party support. We therefore adopted this proposal as part of our draft recommendations.

35 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 57 members, as proposed in our draft recommendations.

Electoral Arrangements

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

37 When formulating our draft recommendations we noted the degree of consensus behind the Council’s proposals, and the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, and therefore concluded that we should base our recommendations on the Borough Council’s scheme. We considered that this scheme provided a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements. However, to improve electoral equality further and having regard to local community identities and interests, we decided to propose a number of modifications to the Borough Council’s proposals in the Chelmsford town area in our draft recommendations.

38 At Stage Three we received support for our draft recommendations from Chelmsford Borough Council. A number of other representations were received in response to our draft recommendations, particularly regarding our proposed wards of Boreham & The Leighs and Broomfield & The Walthams. We have reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three.

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

- (a) Cathedral, Goat Hall, Moulsham Lodge, Old Moulsham and The Lawns wards (Chelmsford town);
- (b) All Saints, Patching Hall, St Andrews and Waterhouse Farm wards (Chelmsford town);
- (c) Baddow Road & Great Baddow Village, Rothmans, Springfield North and Springfield South wards;
- (d) Margaretting & Stock, Rettendon & Runwell, South Hanningfield, South Woodham – Collingwood East & West and South Woodham – Elmwood & Woodville wards;
- (e) East & West Hanningfield; Galleywood; Little Baddow, Danbury & Sandon and Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre wards;
- (f) Boreham; Broomfield, Pleshey & Great Waltham; Chignall, Good Easter, Mashbury, Highwood & Roxwell; Great & Little Leighs & Little Waltham and Writtle wards.

40 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.

Cathedral, Goat Hall, Moulsham Lodge, Old Moulsham and The Lawns wards

41 These five wards are situated in the south and east of Chelmsford town, which lies in the centre of the borough. Old Moulsham ward is currently represented by three councillors while the other four wards return two councillors each. The wards of Moulsham Lodge and Old Moulsham are currently over-represented by 8 per cent and 5 per cent respectively (4 per cent and 8 per cent by 2004). Cathedral, Goat Hall and The Lawns wards are all under-represented, by 4 per cent, 5 per cent and 10 per cent respectively (1 per cent, 3 per cent and 7 per cent by 2004).

42 During Stage One the Borough Council proposed minor boundary alterations to these five wards to improve electoral equality. It proposed transferring the 225 electors of Hill View Road, currently in The Lawns ward, into Cathedral ward, while transferring 269 electors west of Springfield Road and south of Meadowside (including the electors of Meadowside), currently in Cathedral ward, into Old Moulsham ward. The Council proposed new ward names for Cathedral ward and Old Moulsham ward, putting forward the names of Trinity and Moulsham & Central respectively. It also proposed transferring the 182 electors of Dove Lane, Falcon Way, Petrel Way and Sandpiper Walk, currently in Goat Hall ward, into Moulsham Lodge ward. The Council proposed that the wards of Goat Hall, Moulsham Lodge, The Lawns and Trinity should each be represented by two councillors, with Moulsham & Central ward returning three councillors.

43 Under the Borough Council's Stage One proposals the number of electors per councillor in Moulsham Lodge ward would be 2 per cent below the borough average (1 per cent above by 2004). The wards of Goat Hall, Moulsham & Central, The Lawns and Trinity would be above the borough average, by 2 per cent, 1 per cent, 7 per cent and 5 per cent respectively (1 per cent above, 2 per cent below, 4 per cent above and 1 per cent above by 2004). During Stage One we received no further representations concerning these wards.

44 We carefully considered the Borough Council's scheme and based our draft recommendations on its proposals; however, we made modifications to a number of the boundaries it put forward. We adopted the Borough Council's proposed distribution of councillors in these five wards. We proposed transferring the electors of Hill View Road from The Lawns ward to Trinity ward, as put forward by the Borough Council, however, having visited the area we considered that the electors of Chichester Drive have strong community links with the electors of Hill View Road, and consequently that both streets should be included in the same ward. We therefore also proposed transferring the 167 electors of Chichester Drive from The Lawns ward into Trinity ward. This proposal would increase electoral inequality in Trinity ward and we therefore proposed transferring into Moulsham & Central ward the 222 electors of Balmoral Court, Boswells Drive, Sandringham Place, Weight Road and ten electors from Springfield Road from Trinity ward, in addition to the 269 already proposed by the Borough Council. We considered that our draft recommendations would provide clear boundaries while improving electoral equality in the wards of Moulsham & Central, The Lawns and Trinity.

45 The Borough Council's proposals to include Dove Lane, Falcon Way, Petrel Way and Sandpiper Walk in Moulsham Lodge ward instead of Goat Hall ward would leave these electors with no direct access to the ward of Moulsham Lodge in which they would vote. We considered that this would not offer convenient and effective local government for these electors and we therefore proposed retaining the existing boundary between Goat Hall ward and Moulsham Lodge ward. Our proposal provided marginally worse levels of electoral equality in these two wards, however we considered that it offered clearer boundaries while having regard to community interests.

46 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Moulsham Lodge ward would be 7 per cent below the borough average (3 per cent by 2004). The wards of Goat Hall, Moulsham & Central, The Lawns and Trinity would be above the borough average by 7 per cent, 5 per cent, 3 per cent and 3 per cent respectively (5 per cent above in Goat Hall ward, 2 per cent above in Moulsham & Central ward, and equal to the borough average in The Lawns ward and Trinity ward by 2004).

47 During Stage Three we received general support from Chelmsford Borough Council for our draft recommendations for the wards of Goat Hall, Moulsham & Central, Moulsham Lodge, The Lawns and Trinity. We received no further comments, and we have therefore decided to fully endorse our draft recommendations for these wards. Consequently our final recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendation. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover.

All Saints, Patching Hall, St Andrews and Waterhouse Farm wards

48 These four wards are situated in the north and west of Chelmsford town. All Saints and Waterhouse Farm wards are currently represented by two councillors each while the wards of Patching Hall and St Andrews return three councillors each. The ward of Patching Hall is currently over-represented by 9 per cent (8 per cent by 2004). All Saints, St Andrews and Waterhouse Farm wards are all under-represented, by 3 per cent, 5 per cent and 8 per cent respectively (6 per cent, 2 per cent and 15 per cent by 2004).

49 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that no alterations should be made to the electoral arrangements of St Andrews ward. It proposed boundary modifications to the wards of All Saints, Patching Hall and Waterhouse Farm to improve electoral equality. It proposed transferring the two properties, currently in Waterhouse Farm ward, south of the A414 into Goat Hall ward, as the seven electors are currently separated from the rest of Waterhouse Farm ward by Widford Industrial Estate. In the north of Waterhouse Farm ward the Council proposed transferring the 597 electors situated to the west of Rainsford Road and to the north of Andrews Place and Nelson Grove into All Saints ward. The Council further suggested a transfer of 683 electors from All Saints ward into Patching Hall ward. It proposed transferring the electors of Corporation Road, the eastern half of Kings Road, Browning Avenue and all the electors to the east of these roads into Patching Hall ward. It proposed that the whole of the Keene Homes development (mainly an elderly persons' dwelling), which is currently divided between All Saints ward and Patching Hall ward, should be included in Patching Hall ward. It also proposed that All Saints ward should be renamed Marconi to reflect "a very long and well-known association with Chelmsford". The Council suggested that the wards of Marconi and Waterhouse Farm should be represented by two councillors each and Patching Hall and St Andrews wards by three councillors each.

50 Under the Borough Council's Stage One proposals the number of electors per councillor in Waterhouse Farm ward would be 4 per cent below the borough average (4 per cent above by 2004). The wards of Marconi, Patching Hall and St Andrews would be above the borough average, by 3 per cent, 4 per cent and 7 per cent by 2004 respectively (6 per cent, 4 per cent and 4 per cent by 2004). During Stage One we received no further representations concerning these wards.

51 We carefully considered the Borough Council's scheme and based our draft recommendations on its proposals; however, we made minor modifications to the boundary between Waterhouse Farm ward and Marconi ward, and between Marconi ward and Patching Hall ward. Under the Borough Council's proposals for Marconi ward and Waterhouse Farm ward, the electors of Nelson Grove would have no direct access to the ward of Waterhouse Farm in which they would vote. We considered that this would not offer convenient and effective local government for these electors and therefore proposed transferring the 83 electors of Nelson Grove into Marconi ward in addition to the transfer proposed by the Borough Council. A similar situation arose from the Borough Council's proposal for the boundary between Marconi ward and Patching Hall ward which would leave the 53 electors of Milton Place with no direct access to Marconi ward in which they would vote. We considered that this would not offer convenient and effective local government for the electors of Milton Place. We therefore proposed transferring the 53 electors of Milton Place into Patching Hall ward, in addition to the transfer proposed by the Borough Council. We adopted the Borough Council's proposal to include the Keene Homes development in Patching Hall ward, its proposal for the transfer of electors from Waterhouse Farm ward into Goat Hall ward and to retain the existing electoral arrangements in St Andrews ward. We considered that our draft recommendations provided clear boundaries while providing convenient and effective local government and marginally improved electoral equality.

52 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Waterhouse Farm ward would be 6 per cent below the borough average (2 per cent above by 2004). The wards of Marconi, Patching Hall and St Andrews would all be above the borough average, by 3 per cent, 4 per cent and 7 per cent respectively (6 per cent, 5 per cent and 4 per cent by 2004).

53 During Stage Three we received general support from Chelmsford Borough Council for our draft recommendations for the wards of Marconi, Patching Hall, St Andrews and Waterhouse Farm. We received no further comments, and we have therefore decided to fully endorse our draft recommendations for these wards. Consequently our final recommendations would provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendation. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover.

Baddow Road & Great Baddow Village, Rothmans, Springfield North and Springfield South wards

54 The parish of Great Baddow is divided into two borough wards, Baddow Road & Great Baddow Village and Rothmans. The parish of Springfield is covered by the borough wards of Springfield North and Springfield South. These four wards lie directly to the north and east of Chelmsford town and are predominantly urban. Rothmans ward is represented by two councillors, while Baddow Road & Great Baddow Village, Springfield North and Springfield South wards are each represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements Baddow Road & Great Baddow Village ward and Springfield South ward are over-represented, by 7 per cent and 17 per cent respectively (9 per cent and 10 per cent by 2004). Rothmans and Springfield North wards are under-represented, by 2 per cent and 4 per cent respectively (1 per cent over-represented and 11 per cent under-represented by 2004).

55 During Stage One the Borough Council proposed that there should be minor boundary amendments between these wards to improve electoral equality. It proposed that the 287 electors of Foxholes Road, Reynards Court, Snelling Grove and The Dell, which are currently in Rothmans ward, should be transferred into Baddow Road & Great Baddow Village ward. It put forward new ward names: Baddow Road & Great Baddow Village ward should be renamed Great Baddow East, and Rothmans ward should be renamed Great Baddow West. It proposed that Great Baddow East ward should return three councillors and that Great Baddow West ward should return two councillors. Great Baddow Parish Council supported the Borough Council's proposals, while it also put forward proposals for changes to its parishing arrangements, which are outlined later in the chapter.

56 The Council also proposed that the Beaulieu Park area, currently in Springfield North ward, should be included in Springfield South ward. Beaulieu Park is a new housing development currently under construction which will have a projected electorate of 756 by 2004. It proposed that the ward of Springfield South should be renamed Chelmer Village & Beaulieu Park and that both these wards should continue to be represented by three councillors each. Springfield Parish Council supported the Borough Council's proposals and outlined the subsequent parish warding which would take place, detailed later in the chapter.

57 Under the Borough Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in Chelmer Village & Beaulieu Park ward, Great Baddow East ward and Great Baddow West ward would be below the borough average, varying by 15 per cent, 1 per cent and 3 per cent respectively (3 per cent above, 3 per cent below and 5 per cent below the borough average by 2004). Springfield North would be 6 per cent above the borough average (2 per cent by 2004).

58 We carefully considered all representations received, and concluded that the Borough Council's proposals for these wards would provide the best levels of electoral equality while

having regard to the statutory criteria. We therefore adopted the Borough Council's proposals without modification and consequently our draft recommendations provided the same levels of electoral equality as the Borough Council's proposals. We also made minor modifications to the boundary between Great Baddow East ward and Great Baddow West ward to improve the boundary by following ground features.

59 During Stage Three we received general support from Chelmsford Borough Council for our draft recommendations for the wards of Chelmer Village & Beaulieu Park, Great Baddow East, Great Baddow West and Springfield North. We received support from Great Baddow Parish Council for our draft recommendations. We received no further comments, and we have therefore decided to fully endorse our draft recommendations for these wards. Consequently our final recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendation. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover.

Margaretting & Stock, Rettendon & Runwell, South Hanningfield, South Woodham – Collingwood East & West and South Woodham – Elmwood & Woodville wards

60 These five wards lie in the south of the borough and include the town of South Woodham Ferrers, which is covered by the wards of South Woodham – Collingwood East & West and South Woodham – Elmwood & Woodville, which each return three councillors. The wards of Margaretting & Stock and South Hanningfield are represented by one councillor each, while Rettendon & Runwell ward returns two councillors. Under the existing arrangements the ward of Margaretting & Stock is under-represented by 10 per cent (remaining at 10 per cent by 2004). Rettendon & Runwell, South Hanningfield, South Woodham – Collingwood East & West and South Woodham – Elmwood & Woodville wards are all over-represented, by 6 per cent, 14 per cent, 4 per cent and 5 per cent respectively (1 per cent, 16 per cent, 8 per cent and 8 per cent by 2004).

61 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed no modifications to the electoral arrangements of the wards of Rettendon & Runwell and South Woodham – Elmwood & Woodville. It proposed that the boundaries of and number of councillors representing South Woodham – Collingwood East & West ward should remain unaltered; however, it proposed the new ward name of South Woodham – Chetwood & Collingwood. It also proposed that the existing wards of Margaretting & Stock and South Hanningfield should be combined in a new two-member South Hanningfield, Stock & Margaretting ward.

62 Under the Borough Council's proposals the ward of South Hanningfield, Stock & Margaretting would have the same number of electors per councillor as the borough average (1 per cent below by 2004). The number of electors per councillor in the wards of Rettendon & Runwell, South Woodham – Chetwood & Collingwood and South Woodham – Elmwood & Woodville would be below the borough average, by 4 per cent, 2 per cent and 3 per cent respectively (1 per cent above, 6 per cent below and 6 per cent below by 2004).

63 During Stage One we received representations from South Hanningfield Parish Council, South Woodham Ferrers Town Council and Stock Parish Council. Stock Parish Council stated that they had no further comments to add to the Borough Council's proposed warding arrangements, and all three councils put forward proposals for their own parishes' electoral arrangements, which are outlined later in the chapter.

64 We carefully considered all representations received, and concluded that the Borough Council's proposals for these wards would provide the best electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. We therefore adopted the Borough Council's proposals without modification and consequently our draft recommendations provided the same levels of electoral equality as the Borough Council's proposals.

65 During Stage Three we received general support from Chelmsford Borough Council for our draft recommendations for the wards of Rettendon & Runwell, South Hanningfield, Stock & Margaretting, South Woodham – Chetwood & Collingwood and South Woodham – Elmwood & Woodville. We received no further comments, and we have therefore decided to fully endorse our draft recommendations for these wards. Consequently our final recommendations would provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendation. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

East & West Hanningfield; Galleywood; Little Baddow, Danbury & Sandon and Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre wards

66 These four wards lie to the east of the borough. The wards of East & West Hanningfield and Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre are currently represented by one councillor each, Galleywood ward returns two councillors and Little Baddow, Danbury & Sandon ward returns three councillors. Under the existing arrangements East & West Hanningfield ward is over-represented by 16 per cent (19 per cent by 2004). The wards of Galleywood, Little Baddow, Danbury & Sandon and Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre are under-represented, by 8 per cent, 1 per cent and 10 per cent respectively (under-represented by 4 per cent, over-represented by 2 per cent and under-represented by 7 per cent by 2004).

67 The Borough Council proposed no modifications to the electoral arrangements in the wards of Galleywood and Little Baddow, Danbury & Sandon. It also proposed that the wards of East & West Hanningfield and Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre should be combined in a new two-member Bicknacre & East & West Hanningfield ward.

68 Under the Borough Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in Galleywood and Little Baddow, Danbury & Sandon wards would be above the borough average by 10 per cent and 3 per cent respectively (6 per cent above and 1 per cent below by 2004). The proposed ward of Bicknacre & East & West Hanningfield would be 1 per cent below the borough average (5 per cent by 2004).

69 Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre Parish Council opposed the Borough Council's proposals. It stated that the electoral arrangements for the ward of Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre should remain unchanged.

70 We carefully considered all representations received, and concluded that the Borough Council's proposals for these wards provided the best electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. The proposal from Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre Parish Council, would provide a poorer electoral variance of 12 per cent (9 per cent by 2004) in its own ward, and would result in even poorer electoral equality in the neighbouring ward of East & West Hanningfield, which would have an electoral variance of 15 per cent (18 per cent by 2004). We therefore

adopted the Borough Council's proposals without modification and consequently our draft recommendations provided the same levels of electoral equality as the Borough Council's proposals.

71 During Stage Three we received general support from Chelmsford Borough Council for our draft recommendations for the wards of Bicknacre & East & West Hanningfield, Galleywood and Little Baddow, Danbury & Sandon. East Hanningfield Parish Council made no objection to our proposals for Bicknacre & East & West Hanningfield ward. We received no further comments and have therefore decided to fully endorse our draft recommendations for these wards. Consequently our final recommendations would provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendation. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

Boreham; Broomfield, Pleshey & Great Waltham; Chignall, Good Easter, Mashbury, Highwood & Roxwell; Great & Little Leighs & Little Waltham and Writtle wards

72 These five wards are situated in the north and west of the borough. Boreham ward, Chignall, Good Easter, Mashbury, Highwood & Roxwell ward and Great & Little Leighs & Little Waltham ward are each currently represented by one councillor. Broomfield, Pleshey & Great Waltham ward and Writtle ward are each represented by two councillors. Under the existing arrangements Boreham ward, Broomfield, Pleshey & Great Waltham ward, Great & Little Leighs & Little Waltham ward and Writtle ward are all under-represented, by 27 per cent, 20 per cent, 5 per cent and 5 per cent respectively (28 per cent, 18 per cent, 20 per cent and 1 per cent by 2004). Chignall, Good Easter, Mashbury, Highwood & Roxwell ward is currently over-represented by 11 per cent (14 per cent by 2004).

73 During Stage One the Borough Council proposed no modifications to the electoral arrangements of Writtle ward. Writtle Parish Council supported the Borough Council's proposal for Writtle ward. The Borough Council proposed that the parish of Pleshey should be transferred from Broomfield, Pleshey & Great Waltham ward into Chignall, Good Easter, Mashbury, Highwood & Roxwell ward and that this latter ward should be renamed Chelmsford Rural West, returning one councillor.

74 The Council also proposed that the parish of Little Waltham, currently in Great & Little Leighs & Little Waltham ward, should be included in a ward with the parishes of Broomfield and Great Waltham. It proposed that this modified ward should be renamed Broomfield & The Walthams and should return three councillors. Finally the Borough Council proposed the creation of a new two-member Boreham & The Leighs ward, comprising the parishes of Boreham and Great & Little Leighs.

75 Under the Borough Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in Boreham & The Leighs and Broomfield & The Walthams wards would be below the borough average by 6 per cent and 7 per cent respectively (3 per cent above and 8 per cent below by 2004). The wards of Chelmsford Rural West and Writtle would be above the borough average by 1 per cent and 7 per cent respectively (2 per cent below and 3 per cent above by 2004). During Stage One we received no other representations concerning these wards.

76 We carefully considered the Borough Council’s representation and concluded that its proposals for these wards provided the best levels of electoral equality currently available while having regard to the statutory criteria. We therefore adopted the Borough Council’s proposals without modification and consequently our draft recommendations provided the same levels of electoral equality as the Borough Council’s proposals.

77 At Stage Three we received general support from Chelmsford Borough Council for our draft recommendations for the wards of Boreham & The Leighs, Broomfield & The Walthams, Chelmsford Rural West and Writtle. However we received representations from Great & Little Leighs Parish Council, Little Waltham Parish Council and Councillor Willsher, member for Great & Little Leighs & Little Waltham ward, all objecting to our proposals for the wards of Boreham & The Leighs and Broomfield & The Walthams.

78 Great & Little Leighs Parish Council stated its opposition to our proposed wards of Boreham & The Leighs and Broomfield & The Walthams. It stated that the parishes of Boreham and Broomfield were both “wholly urban in character” whereas The Leighs and The Walthams remain “predominantly rural”. It also commented that our proposals did not have regard to “the close links between the Leighs and the Walthams” and that “the proposal to link Leighs and Boreham can in no way be said to reflect the identities and interests of the two communities”. Little Waltham Parish Council stated its opposition to our proposals for the ward of Broomfield & The Walthams. It commented that the proposed ward name would result in “a loss of identity”, and that Broomfield is “an urban parish whereas [Little Waltham has] strong rural traditions” and that it would be difficult for any councillor to represent “the views and aspirations of Parishes with little commonality”. Councillor Willsher submitted that Great & Little Leighs and Little Waltham parishes “still have a very rural way of life” while Boreham and Broomfield parishes “have an urban environment”. He stated that Boreham & The Leighs “have a small joint boundary” and there is a “long distance between village centres [which] will prohibit the growth of community ties”; he also expressed concern that Boreham has twice the number of electors that The Leighs have. He stated that all these factors “will ensure that there is a real danger of creating a ward within a ward”.

79 During Stage Three we also received a representation from Writtle Parish Council proposing modifications to the electoral arrangements for the parish, outlined later in the chapter. The Parish Council made no comments on our proposals for Writtle borough ward.

80 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period. We have re-examined our draft recommendations for the proposed wards of Boreham & The Leighs and Broomfield & The Walthams in order to try and improve community identity in our proposed wards. As described earlier, our prime objective is, so far as reasonably practicable and consistent with the statutory criteria, to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we also have regard to the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the identities and interests of local communities. We attempt to adopt proposals which provide an appropriate balance between these competing factors. The Borough Council’s proposals provided significantly better electoral equality in the area than the existing arrangements and had been consulted on locally. In the light of these factors and in the absence of any apparent opposition to these proposals we adopted them as part of our draft recommendations.

81 During Stage Three we have received submissions stating that our draft recommendations for the wards of Boreham & The Leighs and Broomfield & The Walthams would not reflect community identity. We have therefore looked at alternative electoral arrangements for this area.

82 We considered including The Leighs and The Walthams together in a two-member ward, which would provide good levels of electoral equality, whilst addressing the community identity issues raised in Stage Three. This warding arrangement for The Leighs and The Walthams would result in an electoral variance below the borough average by 5 per cent (2 per cent above in 2004). However, this would require alternative warding arrangements for Boreham and Broomfield. Creating borough wards which were coterminous with the parish boundaries would result in a single-member Boreham ward having an electoral variance of 29 per cent (31 per cent by 2004), while the electoral variance in a two-member Broomfield ward would be 26 per cent (remaining at 26 per cent in 2004). We consider that these high levels of electoral inequality are unacceptable given that there is an alternative warding arrangement which would give significantly better electoral equality. We have received no alternative suggestions for warding in this area.

83 We have therefore concluded that our draft recommendations, while not reflecting exactly the community arguments put forward during Stage Three, provide the best balance between electoral equality and community identity currently available. Our proposals have avoided any parish being divided between district wards, form part of a borough-wide scheme which has been consulted on locally and would provide electoral variances of 6 per cent and 7 per cent respectively (3 per cent and 8 per cent by 2004) in the wards of Boreham & The Leighs and Broomfield & The Walthams.

84 We have therefore decided to fully endorse our draft recommendations for the wards of Boreham & The Leighs, Broomfield & The Walthams, Chelmsford Rural West and Writtle. Consequently our final recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

Electoral Cycle

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

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

Conclusions

87 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided to fully endorse our draft recommendations. We therefore conclude that, in Chelmsford:

- there should be an increase in council size from 56 to 57;
- there should be 24 wards;
- the boundaries of 19 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of three wards;
- elections should continue to be held for the whole council.

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

Figure 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	1999 electorate		2004 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	56	57	56	57
Number of wards	27	24	27	24
Average number of electors per councillor	2,162	2,124	2,247	2,207
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	6	1	8	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	1	0	1	0

89 As Figure 4 shows, our recommendations for Chelmsford Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from six to one. By 2004 no wards are forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation
 Chelmsford Borough Council should comprise 57 councillors serving 24 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover. Elections should continue to be held for the whole council.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

90 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different borough wards, it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. Accordingly, in our draft recommendations report we proposed consequential changes to the warding arrangements for Great Baddow and Springfield parishes to reflect the proposed borough wards.

91 The parish of Great Baddow is currently served by 12 councillors representing three wards: Baddow Road, Village and Rothmans. During Stage One Great Baddow Parish Council submitted a proposal for an increase in its council size of one councillor. The Borough Council proposed the transfer of electors from the proposed Great Baddow West borough ward into the proposed Great Baddow East borough ward, which would result in a need to modify the parish wards such that they are coterminous with the borough wards. This was supported by Great Baddow Parish Council. We concurred with this proposal and adopted it in our draft recommendations.

92 At Stage Three we received support from the Borough Council and the Parish Council. Having considered all the evidence received, and in the light of the confirmation of our proposed borough wards in the area, we are confirming our draft recommendation for the warding of Great Baddow parish as final.

Final Recommendation
Great Baddow Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, one more than at present, representing three wards: Baddow Road ward (returning three councillors), Rothmans ward (returning five councillors) and Village ward (returning five councillors). The boundary between the parish ward of Rothmans and the remaining two parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated on Map 2 and the Large Map.

93 The parish of South Hanningfield is currently served by 11 councillors representing three wards: Downham, Ramsden Heath and South Hanningfield. At Stage One we received a submission from South Hanningfield Parish Council, stating that due to housing development in recent years it would be desirable to increase the number of councillors representing Ramsden Heath. It suggested an increase of one or two councillors, stating that any greater increase would “swamp the two small villages”. We concurred with this proposal and adopted it in our draft recommendations, increasing by one the number of councillors representing South Hanningfield Parish Council.

94 At Stage Three we received general support from the Borough Council and no further comments from the Parish Council. Having considered all the evidence received, and in the light of the confirmation of our proposed borough wards in the area, we are confirming our draft recommendation for the electoral arrangements of South Hanningfield parish as final.

Final Recommendation

South Hanningfield Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, one more than at present, representing three wards: Downham ward (returning three councillors), Ramsden Heath ward (returning seven councillors) and South Hanningfield ward (returning two councillors). There should be no change to the existing ward boundaries.

95 The parish of South Woodham Ferrers is currently served by 26 councillors representing four wards: Chetwood, Collingwood, Elmwood and Woodville. During Stage One South Woodham Ferrers Town Council submitted a proposal for a decrease in council size of six members to 20 councillors. We concurred with this proposal and adopted it in our draft recommendations.

96 At Stage Three we received general support from the Borough Council and no further comments from the Parish Council. Having considered all the evidence received, and in the light of the confirmation of our proposed borough wards in the area, we are confirming our draft recommendation for the electoral arrangements of South Woodham Ferrers parish as final.

Final Recommendation

South Woodham Ferrers Town Council should comprise 20 councillors, six fewer than at present, representing four wards: Chetwood ward, Collingwood ward, Elmwood ward and Woodville ward (each ward returning five councillors). There should be no change to the existing ward boundaries.

97 The parish of Springfield is currently served by 15 councillors representing two wards: Springfield North and Springfield South. During Stage One Springfield Parish Council supported the Borough Council's proposal that the Beaulieu Park area, currently in Springfield North ward, should be included in Chelmer Village & Beaulieu Park ward and that the parish warding arrangements should be modified accordingly. We concurred with this proposal and adopted it in our draft recommendations.

98 At Stage Three we received general support from the Borough Council and no further comments from the Parish Council. Having considered all the evidence received, and in the light of the confirmation of our proposed borough wards in the area, we are confirming our draft recommendation for the warding of Springfield parish as final.

Final Recommendation

Springfield Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Chelmer Village & Beaulieu Park ward (returning seven councillors) and Springfield North ward (returning eight councillors). The parish ward of Springfield South should be renamed Chelmer Village & Beaulieu Park ward and should include the Beaulieu Park area, currently in Springfield North ward. The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundary, as illustrated on Map 2 and the Large Map.

99 The parish of Writtle is currently served by 15 councillors representing two wards: North ward which returns seven parish councillors and South ward which returns eight parish councillors. During Stage Three the Parish Council stated that there is “at present an imbalance in [its] elector/councillor ratio for [its] two wards”. It proposed that North ward should return eight parish councillors and South ward should return seven parish councillors, in order to address the existing imbalance. We concur with this proposal.

Final Recommendation

Writtle Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: North ward (returning eight councillors) and South ward (returning seven councillors). There should be no change to the existing ward boundaries.

100 In our draft recommendations report we proposed that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the borough, and are confirming this as final.

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 Borough Council.

Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Chelmsford

6 NEXT STEPS

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

102 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 8 January 2001.

103 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

