

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Colchester in Essex

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

November 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

Members of the Commission are:

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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Colchester 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 Colchester 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 substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although some modifications have been made (see paragraphs 136–137) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Colchester.

We recommend that Colchester Borough Council should be served by 60 councillors representing 27 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 Borough Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Malcolm Grant'.

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Colchester 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 Colchester:

- **in 11 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 six wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2004 electoral equality 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 12 wards and by more than 20 per cent in seven wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 136–137) are that:

- **Colchester Borough Council should have 60 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 27 wards, as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 22 of the existing wards should be modified and five wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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 19 of the proposed 27 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This level of electoral equality is forecast to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in only one ward, Dedham & Langham, expected to vary by 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 parish of Tiptree;**
- **new warding arrangements for the parishes of Myland, Stanway and Wivenhoe.**

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	Berechurch (Colchester town)	3	Berechurch ward; New Town ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
2	Birch & Winstree	2	Birch, Messing & Copford ward (part – the parishes of Birch, Layer Marney, Layer Breton and Messing cum Inworth); Tiptree ward (part – the proposed Grove parish ward of Tiptree parish); Winstree ward (the parishes of Great and Little Wigborough, Layer de la Haye, Salcott and Virley)	Map 2
3	Castle (Colchester town)	3	Castle ward; St Mary's ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
4	Christ Church (Colchester town)	2	St Mary's ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
5	Copford & West Stanway	1	Birch, Messing & Copford ward (part – the parishes of Copford and Easthorpe); Stanway ward (part – the proposed Copford & West Stanway parish ward of Stanway parish)	Map 2
6	Dedham & Langham	1	Boxted & Langham ward (part – the parishes of Dedham and Langham)	Map 2
7	East Donyland	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parish of East Donyland	Map 2
8	Fordham & Stour	2	Boxted & Langham ward (part – the parish of Boxted); Fordham ward (part – the parishes of Fordham and Wormingford); Great & Little Horkelesley ward (the parishes of Great Horkelesley and Little Horkelesley)	Map 2
9	Great Tey	1	Great Tey ward (the parishes of Chappel, Great Tey, Mount Bures and Wakes Colne); Fordham ward (part – the parish of Aldham)	Map 2
10	Harbour (Colchester town)	2	Harbour ward (part); New Town ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
11	Highwoods (Colchester town)	3	Mile End ward (part – the proposed Myland East parish ward of Myland parish)	Map 2 and large map
12	Lexden (Colchester town)	2	Lexden ward (part); St Mary's ward (part); Prettygate ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
13	Marks Tey	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parish of Marks Tey	Map 2
14	Mile End (Colchester town)	3	Mile End ward (part – the proposed Myland West parish ward of Myland parish)	Map 2 and large map
15	New Town (Colchester town)	3	New Town ward (part); St Mary's ward (part)	Map 2 and large map

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
16	Prettygate (Colchester town)	3	Lexden ward (part); Prettygate ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
17	Pyefleet	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Abberton, Langenhoe, East Mersea, Fingringhoe and Peldon	Map 2
18	St Andrew's (Colchester town)	3	St Andrew's ward (part); St Anne's ward (part); Harbour ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
19	St Anne's (Colchester town)	3	St Anne's ward (part); Harbour ward (part); St John's ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
20	St John's (Colchester town)	2	St John's ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
21	Shrub End (Colchester town)	3	Shrub End ward; St Mary's ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
22	Stanway	3	Stanway ward (part – the proposed parish ward of Stanway East)	Map 2
23	Tiptree	3	Tiptree ward (part – the parish wards of Church, Heath and Maypole of Tiptree parish)	Map 2
24	West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green	2	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Eight Ash Green and West Bergholt	Map 2
25	West Mersea	3	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parish of West Mersea	Map 2
26	Wivenhoe Cross	2	Wivenhoe ward (part – the proposed Wivenhoe Cross parish ward of Wivenhoe parish); St Andrew's ward (part)	Map 2
27	Wivenhoe Quay	2	Wivenhoe ward (part – the proposed Wivenhoe Quay parish ward of Wivenhoe parish)	Map 2

Notes: 1 Colchester town is the only unparished part of the borough.

2 Map 2 and Appendix A, including the large map at 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 Colchester

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 Berechurch (Colchester town)	3	6,044	2,015	1	6,270	2,090	-4
2 Birch & Winstree	2	3,633	1,817	-9	4,424	2,212	2
3 Castle (Colchester town)	3	5,803	1,934	-3	6,414	2,138	-2
4 Christ Church (Colchester town)	2	3,973	1,987	0	4,501	2,251	3
5 Copford & West Stanway	1	1,423	1,435	-28	2,104	2,092	-3
6 Dedham & Langham	1	2,344	2,344	18	2,408	2,408	11
7 East Donyland	1	1,735	1,735	-13	2,215	2,215	2
8 Fordham & Stour	2	4,035	2,018	1	4,269	2,135	-2
9 Great Tey	1	2,201	2,201	10	2,246	2,246	3
10 Harbour (Colchester town)	2	4,507	2,254	13	4,530	2,265	4
11 Highwoods (Colchester town)	3	5,555	1,852	-7	6,754	2,251	4
12 Lexden (Colchester town)	2	4,314	2,157	8	4,355	2,178	0
13 Marks Tey	1	2,092	2,092	5	2,115	2,115	-3
14 Mile End (Colchester town)	3	4,730	1,577	-21	6,315	2,105	-3
15 New Town (Colchester town)	3	6,039	2,013	1	6,958	2,319	7
16 Prettygate (Colchester town)	3	6,206	2,069	4	6,225	2,075	-5
17 Pyefleet	1	2,047	2,047	3	2,120	2,120	-3
18 St Andrew's (Colchester town)	3	6,621	2,207	11	6,628	2,209	2
19 St Anne's (Colchester town)	3	6,709	2,236	12	6,859	2,286	5
20 St John's (Colchester town)	2	4,248	2,124	7	4,315	2,158	-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 %
21 Shrub End	3	6,475	2,158	8	6,627	2,209	2
22 Stanway	3	5,834	1,945	-3	6,436	2,145	-2
23 Tiptree	3	5,958	1,986	0	6,326	2,109	-3
24 West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green	2	3,898	1,949	-2	4,075	2,038	-6
25 West Mersea	3	5,857	1,952	-2	6,147	2,049	-6
26 Wivenhoe Cross	2	3,438	1,719	-14	4,488	2,244	3
27 Wivenhoe Quay	2	3,808	1,904	-4	4,385	2,193	1
Totals	60	119,527	-	-	130,497	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,992	-	-	2,175	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Colchester 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. 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 Colchester in Essex. We have now reviewed the 12 districts in Essex as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Colchester. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in 1989 (Report No. 575). The electoral arrangements for Essex County Council were last reviewed in 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 Colchester Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Essex County Council, Essex Police Authority, the local authority associations, Essex Association of Parish & Town Councils, parish and town councils in the borough, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, 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 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 Colchester 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 Colchester lies some 54 miles north east of London, boasting a thriving commercial centre which is surrounded by rural parishes. Two-thirds of the borough's population live within the town of Colchester, the remainder in the surrounding towns and villages. The borough of Colchester is also home to the University of Essex. The population of the borough is approximately 143,000. Significant housing development proposals have been approved within the town of Colchester itself, which accounts for the majority of the projected growth, although there are other significant areas of development within the borough, including Tiptree and Stanway parishes.

14 The borough contains 33 parishes, including the newly established Myland parish. With the exception of Myland parish, the Colchester town area is unparished and comprises some 60 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 borough 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 119,527 (February 1999). The Council presently has 60 members who are elected from 27 wards, 12 of which are relatively urban, with the remainder being predominantly rural. Sixteen of the wards are each represented by three councillors, one is represented by two councillors and ten are single-member wards. The Council is elected by thirds.

17 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Colchester borough, with around 8 per cent more electors than at the last review a decade ago, as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Mile End and Birch, Messing & Copford wards.

18 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,992 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,175 by the year 2004 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past decade, the number of electors per councillor in 11 of the 27 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, with six wards varying by more than 20 per cent and one ward by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Mile End ward where each of the three councillors represent 72 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Colchester

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	Berechurch (Colchester town)	3	5,773	1,924	-3	5,999	2,000	-8
2	Birch, Messing & Copford	1	2,560	2,560	29	2,732	2,732	26
3	Boxted & Langham	1	1,918	1,918	-4	1,969	1,969	-9
4	Castle (Colchester town)	3	5,932	1,977	-1	6,568	2,189	1
5	Dedham	1	1,538	1,538	-23	1,569	1,569	-28
6	East Donyland	1	1,735	1,735	-13	2,215	2,215	2
7	Fordham	1	1,434	1,434	-28	1,468	1,468	-33
8	Great & Little Horkesley	1	1,923	1,923	-3	2,105	2,105	-3
9	Great Tey	1	1,767	1,767	-11	1,812	1,812	-17
10	Harbour (Colchester town)	3	6,295	2,098	5	6,709	2,236	3
11	Lexden (Colchester town)	3	4,248	1,416	-29	4,289	1,430	-34
12	Marks Tey	1	2,092	2,092	5	2,115	2,115	-3
13	Mile End (Colchester town)	3	10,285	3,428	72	13,069	4,356	100
14	New Town (Colchester town)	3	5,137	1,712	-14	5,647	1,882	-13
15	Prettygate (Colchester town)	3	5,951	1,984	-0	5,970	1,990	-9
16	Pyfleet	1	2,047	2,047	3	2,120	2,120	-3
17	St Andrew's (Colchester town)	3	5,935	1,978	-1	5,942	1,981	-9
18	St Anne's (Colchester town)	3	5,017	1,672	-16	5,151	1,717	-21
19	St John's (Colchester town)	3	5,633	1,878	-6	5,709	1,903	-13
20	St Mary's (Colchester town)	3	5,331	1,777	-11	5,941	1,980	-9

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 %
21 Shrub End (Colchester town)	3	5,687	1,896	-5	5,757	1,919	-12
22 Stanway	3	6,032	2,011	1	7,178	2,393	10
23 Tiptree	3	6,303	2,101	5	7,387	2,462	13
24 West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green	2	3,898	1,949	-2	4,075	2,038	-6
25 West Mersea	3	5,857	1,952	-2	6,147	2,049	-6
26 Winstree	1	1,953	1,953	-2	1,981	1,981	-9
27 Wivenhoe	3	7,246	2,415	21	8,873	2,958	36
Totals	60	119,527	-	-	130,497	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,992	-	-	2,175	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Colchester 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 Fordham ward were relatively over-represented by 28 per cent, while electors in Mile End ward were substantially under-represented by 72 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

19 We received 43 representations during Stage One, including borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council and Colchester Conservative Association. 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 Colchester in Essex*.

20 Our draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality. However, we moved away from the Borough Council's scheme in a number of areas, affecting 10 wards, using options generated by Council officers, Colchester Conservative Association and Mile End Liberal Democrats during the early stages of the review process, together with some of our own proposals. We proposed that:

- Colchester Borough Council should be served by 60 councillors, the same as at present;
- the boundaries of 22 of the existing wards should be modified, while five wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- there should be revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parish of Tiptree;
- new warding arrangements for the parishes of Myland, Stanway and Wivenhoe.

Draft Recommendation

Colchester Borough Council should comprise 60 councillors, serving 27 wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

21 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 19 of the 27 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with only Dedham & Langham 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, 64 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Colchester Borough Council and the Commission.

Colchester Borough Council

23 The Borough Council supported the draft recommendations for the majority of the borough but proposed that the Horkesleys ward should be renamed Fordham & Stour, that the proposed Old Heath ward should be named Harbour and that the proposed Christchurch ward should be named Christ Church. The Borough Council did not support the proposed Highwoods, Mile End, New Town, St Andrew's, St Anne's and St John's wards in Colchester town. It provided more accurate forecast information on the electorate figures for Mile End ward which would affect the electoral variances of 11 wards, which are discussed in detail later.

Parish and Town Councils

24 During Stage Three we received comments from nine parish councils and Wivenhoe Town Council. Boxted Parish Council stated that it was reasonably content with the proposed recommendations, as they affected Boxted parish. Copford with Easthorpe Parish Council opposed the proposal that the parish form a new ward with part of Stanway parish. It suggested that consideration should be given to increasing the overall number of borough councillors to allow several councillors to represent large parishes such as Tiptree and single councillors to represent parishes such as Birch, Messing & Copford. Dedham Parish Council supported the proposal to create a new single-member Dedham & Langham ward. Fordham Parish Council opposed our recommendations and proposed that the existing Fordham ward should remain unaltered. It contended that the proposed ward name of "the Horkesleys" was not acceptable to the Parish Council and that Fordham electors could suffer a loss of identity. Langham Parish Council fully supported the draft recommendations as they affected Langham Parish Council. It contended that the draft recommendations were much better than those proposed by the Borough Council. Layer de la Haye Parish Council did not support the proposed Birch & Winstree ward. In particular, it opposed the inclusion of the proposed Grove parish ward of Tiptree Parish within the proposed ward.

25 Myland Parish Council objected to the proposal to ward the parish and asked that we reconsider the draft recommendations. The Parish Council also forwarded a letter which it had received from Bob Russell, MP for Colchester, regarding the proposed recommendations for Highwoods and Mile End wards. Stanway Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations which ward the parish for the first time. Wivenhoe Town Council opposed the draft recommendations to ward the town contending that the proposals would adversely affect the local communities and reiterated its Stage One proposals. The Town Council also submitted a petition of 165 signatures in support of its arguments.

Other Representations

26 A further 53 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from local political groups, local organisations, councillors and residents. Colchester Conservative Association supported the majority of the draft recommendations for Colchester but objected to the proposed Christchurch ward, reiterating its Stage One proposals for the area. It suggested that, if St Mary's ward were to be renamed, it should be named Christ Church ward. Mile End Liberal Democrats broadly endorsed the draft recommendations, stating that, whilst not ideal, they were broadly proposals which they "could live with". However, they proposed that the boundary between the proposed Highwoods and Mile End wards should be modified to better reflect local community identities. They also proposed that a significant number of councillors from all parties supported a move to whole-council elections, rather than the current system of elections by thirds. New Town Branch Labour Party supported the majority of the draft recommendations but opposed part of the proposals for New Town ward. North Essex Conservatives stated that they generally supported the draft recommendations. Stanway Liberal Democrats supported the proposal for the retention of the existing 60-member council and the proposed Copford & West Stanway ward. However, they proposed minor boundary modifications to better reflect local community identities.

27 St Anne's ward Liberal Democrats objected to the proposed St Andrew's ward, arguing that the proposed ward would not adequately reflect local community identities. They also submitted a petition of 187 signatures from Longridge estate residents opposing the transfer of the area into the modified St Andrew's ward. Councillor Paul Smith, on behalf of the St John's Liberal Democrats, stated his appreciation for the consideration which had gone into the production of the draft recommendations. Councillor Smith proposed a boundary amendment between the proposed Highwoods and Mile End wards. He also noted that, in view of the strong opposition shown by the residents of Longridge, further considerations should be given to the proposal put forward by the Liberal Democrats at Stage One, to place Longridge in a modified St John's ward. St Mary's ward Conservative Association objected to the proposed Christchurch ward. They proposed that the western part of the modified Castle ward should be transferred to an enlarged three-member St Mary's ward, to establish clear boundaries and reflect local communities.

28 Councillor Blundell, representing West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward, reiterated her Stage One proposal that Stanway Green should form part of the rural Copford & West Stanway ward. Councillor Brady, representing Harbour ward, had no objections to the proposed boundary modifications to Harbour ward but opposed the change of ward name from Harbour to Old Heath. He suggested that the new ward name could be confused with the county division of Old Heath and requested that the existing ward name should be retained. Councillor Buston, representing St Mary's ward, opposed the creation of a new Christchurch ward. He argued that the existing three-member St Mary's ward has an acceptable level of electoral variance (9 per cent). However, to improve the electoral variance of the existing ward, he suggested boundary modifications to St Mary's ward. Councillor Buston suggested that "it did not make sense" to create a two-member ward when the Council is elected by thirds.

29 Councillors Ilott, Thompson and Pyman, representing Stanway ward, wrote in support of Stanway Parish Council's request for the retention of the existing Stanway ward. However, the councillors proposed boundary modifications to the proposed parish wards of Stanway East and

Stanway West. Councillor Frame, representing St Mary's ward, reiterated the comments which he made at Stage One of the review. He objected to the reduction in size of St Mary's ward. He concurred with the use of Southway as a boundary in the draft recommendations, but proposed that St John's Green should be located within St Mary's ward. He also supported the proposed ward name change to Christchurch, but stated that it should be written as Christ Church.

30 Councillors Hawkins, Newman and Richardson, representing Wivenhoe ward, supported the Borough Council's proposed urban wards and supported Wivenhoe Town Council's Stage Three submission. The Councillors suggested that the draft recommendations for Wivenhoe had placed too great an emphasis on the submissions made by the Colchester Conservative Association and Mile End Liberal Democrats.

31 Barry Holden, Chair of the Health for Highwoods Group, proposed that the boundary of the proposed Highwoods ward should be amended to follow Brinkley Grove Road and Mill Road to better reflect the identity of the local community. Stanway Residents' Association supported the Parish Council's proposal for no change to Stanway ward, but proposed minor modifications to the boundaries in the draft recommendations. St John's Residents' Association supported the draft recommendations for the proposed St John's ward.

32 Two local residents opposed the warding of Myland parish. One proposed that, should the warding of Myland remain necessary, the parish wards should be renamed and the distribution of parish councillors should be revised. A local resident supported the proposed St John's ward, contending that it reflected local communities. Fourteen local residents opposed the proposed St Anne's and St Andrew's ward configuration. The residents proposed that Longridge estate should be retained within St Anne's ward. One local resident proposed that the North Greenstead area should be moved from the proposed St Anne's ward to the proposed St Andrew's ward to compensate for the proposed transfer. We received 15 letters from local residents in response to our proposed Christchurch ward. The Reverend Rose, Rector and Rural Dean of Colchester, supported the proposed ward name change, given that St Mary's church and the St Mary's housing estates would no longer fall in the ward. However, he proposed that the ward name should be written as Christ Church. The remaining submissions did not support the boundary modification of St Mary's ward. Several representations commented that the existing ward of St Mary's largely corresponded to the boundaries of the ecclesiastical parish of Christ Church with St Mary at the Walls, which would no longer be the case under the proposed modifications.

33 A local resident objected to the proposed modifications to Wivenhoe borough ward. He supported the Town Council's Stage One proposal for a three-member ward excluding the University of Essex. He also proposed that, if the town were to be divided into parish wards, as proposed in the draft recommendations report, there should be a revision of the proposed distribution of town councillors between the two wards.

34 A local resident in Stanway opposed the proposed wards of Copford & West Stanway and Stanway. He suggested that Stanway ward retain its existing electoral arrangements. A local resident wrote in support of the proposed Dedham & Langham ward, while another local resident proposed that a more appropriate ward configuration would be to unite Boxted, Dedham and Langham in a single ward.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

36 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.

37 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.

38 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

39 At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 8 per cent from 119,527 to 129,973 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expects most of the growth to be in Mile End and Wivenhoe wards, although a significant amount is also expected in Stanway and Tiptree wards. The Borough Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, and 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.

40 The Mile End Liberal Democrats stated in their Stage Three submission that the Royal London development was due to be developed “much faster than originally intended”. Stanway Parish Council argued that the projected Lakelands phase two development was not expected to be completed by 2004 and therefore Stanway would not have as many electors as the Borough Council proposed.

41 In the light of the comments received, we consulted further with officers at the Borough Council with regard to its projected electorate figures for the borough. We were informed that additional residential development in Mile End ward “is likely to take place on this site within five years”. Additionally, it stated that the Oxley Park development, which had begun without planning permission, was granted consent in June 2000. It therefore revised its electoral figures in Colchester town indicating that the projected electorate for Mile End ward would be some 475 more electors than initially stated, but did not propose alternative projected figures for the parish of Stanway.

42 We have carefully considered the modified electoral projections submitted by the Borough Council, in the light of comments made at Stage Three. Having received the professional advice of the Borough Council, we are content that the modified figures present a more accurate reflection being satisfied that they are the best estimates of the electorate in 2004 that can be made at this time. Consequently, we have based our final recommendations on the modified electoral projections.

Council Size

43 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.

44 Colchester Borough Council presently has 60 members. At Stage One the Borough Council proposed retaining the existing council size. The Conservatives and Mile End Liberal Democrats supported this proposal. No other comments on proposed council size were received during Stage One. Therefore, having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 60 members.

45 At Stage Three there was general acceptance of the proposed council of 60 members. Copford with Easthope Parish Council proposed that the council size should be increased to enable a number of smaller wards. However, there has not been, in our view, sufficient arguments made which would lead us to move away from our proposed recommendations. We remain convinced that our proposed council size of 60 would satisfactorily meet with the statutory criteria, and therefore confirm as final our draft recommendation for a council size of 60.

Electoral Arrangements

46 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including the borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council, Colchester Conservative Association and Mile End Liberal Democrats. From these representations, some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations.

47 Colchester Conservative Association and Mile End Liberal Democrats expressed their general support for the Borough Council’s proposals in the parished areas of the borough.

However, in Colchester town, both proposed alternative warding configurations to those submitted by the Borough Council. 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 based our recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme in the parished areas. However, having regard to local community identities and interests, we modified the Borough Council's proposed Constable and West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green wards. After careful consideration of the evidence received during Stage One, we built upon the schemes submitted by the Conservatives and Mile End Liberal Democrats for Colchester town. We considered them to provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or the Borough Council's scheme.

48 We have re-examined our proposals in the light of the representations we received during Stage Three of the review. In its Stage Three submission, the Borough Council put forward modified electorate figures for Highwoods, Mile End, St John's, St Andrew's, St Anne's, Old Heath and New Town wards. In the light of these modified figures we re-examined our proposals for these areas. Generally, we remain supportive of the proposed wards, however, in the wards of Highwoods, Mile End, St Andrew's and St Anne's, where we received persuasive evidence in support of alternative arrangements, we have modified our draft recommendations.

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

The rural area

- (a) East Donyland, Pyfleet, West Mersea and Wivenhoe wards;
- (b) Birch, Messing & Copford, Tiptree, Stanway and Winstree wards;
- (c) Boxted & Langham, Dedham, Fordham, Great & Little Horkesley, Great Tey, Marks Tey and West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green wards;

Colchester town

- (d) Mile End, St Andrew's, St Anne's and St John's wards;
- (e) Berechurch, Castle, Harbour and New Town wards;
- (f) Lexden, Prettygate, St Mary's and Shrub End wards.

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

East Donyland, Pyfleet, West Mersea and Wivenhoe wards

51 The wards of East Donyland, Pyfleet, West Mersea and Wivenhoe are located in the south-eastern corner of the borough. Currently the number of electors per councillor is 13 per cent below, 3 per cent above, 2 per cent below and 21 per cent above the borough average respectively (2 per cent above, 3 per cent below, 6 per cent below and 36 per cent above the borough average by 2004).

52 East Donyland and West Mersea wards comprise the parishes of the same name, Wivenhoe ward comprises the parish of Wivenhoe and the area around The University of Essex campus (polling district FW) while Pyfleet ward comprises the parishes of Abberton, East Mersea, Fingringhoe, Langenhoe and Peldon.

53 During Stage One, the Borough Council, Colchester Conservative Association and Mile End Liberal Democrats proposed no change to East Donyland, Pyfleet and West Mersea wards both proposed that the existing Wivenhoe ward should be divided into two new two-member wards; Wivenhoe Cross and Wivenhoe Quay, thereby increasing the number of borough councillors representing this area from three to four. Both the Conservatives and the Mile End Liberal Democrats supported the Borough Council's proposals for East Donyland, Pyfleet, West Mersea and Wivenhoe wards.

54 East Donyland Parish Council proposed that the existing parish wards of Cherry Tree and Rowhedge should be renamed West Donyland and East Donyland respectively and that the parish itself could then be renamed East and West Donyland Parish Council, which was supported by the Borough Council. However, recent legislation has returned many former powers to district (and borough) councils, in relation to civil parishes. Under the current legislation the Commission does not have the power to modify the parish name, but we do have the authority to modify the parish ward names. However, we are concerned that confusion may arise with a parish ward and parish both being named "East Donyland". We therefore decided not to modify the parish ward names of East Donyland parish.

55 Wivenhoe Town Council objected to the proposed warding of the town. It recognised the need for change, but considered that warding would have a detrimental effect on the community. It proposed an alternative arrangement which would not include The University of Essex campus in the ward. The Town Council stated that the proposed Wivenhoe Cross ward would include some 2,700 electors from the campus by 2004, and noted that fewer than 100 electors on campus had voted at local elections in recent years.

56 We noted the points raised by Wivenhoe Town Council concerning elector turn-out at the university, however as outlined in the draft recommendations report, the Commission must consider both the current electorate and five-year electorate forecasts when forming its recommendations. Therefore, we have to consider all local government electors who appear on the current electoral register (as stipulated in the 1972 Local Government Act); including students, seasonal workers or members of the armed services. While we noted the views expressed by Wivenhoe Town Council, we concluded that no suitable alternative to the warding of Wivenhoe Town Council was presented during Stage One.

57 We examined all submissions received during Stage One of the review, including those forwarded to us by the Borough Council. We considered that the boundaries for the proposed Wivenhoe Cross and Wivenhoe Quay wards would adequately serve local communities. However, we modified the boundary proposed by the Borough Council between a new Wivenhoe Cross ward and a modified St Andrew's ward. Currently the boundary forms a 'dog leg' and we proposed moving it slightly northwards, to provide a clearer boundary between the two wards. The proposed modification would not affect any electors. We noted that the Borough Council's proposal to retain the existing East Donyland, Pyfleet and West Mersea wards provided high

levels of electoral equality and commanded some local support. Subject to the minor modification proposed between St Andrew's and Wivenhoe Cross wards, we adopted the Borough Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations.

58 At Stage Three the Borough Council and Colchester Conservative Association supported the proposals for these wards. Wivenhoe Town Council and a local resident opposed the draft recommendations for Wivenhoe. Councillors Hawkins, Newman and Richardson, representing Wivenhoe ward, stated their support the Borough Council's proposals for the urban wards but supported the proposals made by Wivenhoe Town Council, which did not ward Wivenhoe.

59 The Town Council reiterated its preference for the creation of a three-member ward based on the existing parish boundaries. It suggested that consideration should be given to including the campus of the University of Essex (polling district FW) in a new ward including an area of housing from St Andrew's ward where it stated a large number of purpose-built student accommodation is located. The Town Council stated that "for the purposes of Borough Council elections, the urban area of the town comprising the current FS, FT and FV polling districts should constitute one ward returning three members to the Borough Council". The Town Council also submitted a petition in support of the its proposal, comprising some 165 signatures.

60 We have considered carefully the representations made to us during Stage Three of the review, particularly the proposal made by the Town Council to place polling district FW in a ward with an area from St Andrew's ward. We are aware of the strong feeling that the proposed warding of the town has generated, and we acknowledge those arguments made by the Town Council in favour of a three-member Wivenhoe ward based on the Town Council boundaries. However, we are concerned that the Town Council's proposal would not produce a new University/St Andrew's south ward with a more clearly defined community than our draft recommendations.

61 Additionally, such an arrangement would have substantial "knock-on" effects on the warding of Colchester town, where our draft recommendations have achieved a degree of support. We are unable to consider any one area of the borough in isolation, and the absence of alternative proposals which would facilitate a three-member Wivenhoe ward, together with the rural location of the campus and the natural divide which St Andrew's Avenue provides, leads us to conclude that the proposed Wivenhoe Cross and Wivenhoe Quay wards provide the most suitable proposal in this area. However, we propose revising the division of town councillors between the proposed wards to better reflect the local community, as detailed later.

62 The number of electors per councillor in the proposed East Donyland, Pyfleet, West Mersea, Wivenhoe Cross and Wivenhoe Quay wards would initially be 13 per cent below, 3 per cent above, 2 per cent below, 14 per cent below and 4 per cent below the borough average (2 per cent above, 3 per cent below, 6 per cent below, 3 per cent above and 1 per cent above by 2004). Details of our final recommendations for these wards can be found on Map 2 and Map A4 in Appendix A.

Birch, Messing & Copford, Tiptree, Stanway and Winstree wards

63 Birch, Messing & Copford ward is represented by one councillor and has an electoral variance of 29 per cent (26 per cent by 2004). Tiptree and Stanway wards are each represented by three councillors and have electoral variances of 5 per cent and 1 per cent respectively (13 per cent and 10 per cent by 2004). Winstree ward is represented by one councillor and has an electoral variance of 2 per cent (9 per cent by 2004). Birch, Messing & Copford ward comprises the parishes of Birch, Copford with Easthorpe, Layer Breton, Layer Marney and Messing cum Inworth; Winstree ward comprises the parishes of Great Wigborough, Layer de la Haye, Little Wigborough, Salcott and Virley. Tiptree and Stanway wards comprise the parishes of the same names.

64 During Stage One, the Borough Council proposed modifying all four of these existing wards to improve electoral equality. It proposed that an additional (fourth) parish ward should be created for Tiptree, comprising part of the existing Church parish ward. The new Grove parish ward would be included in a new Birch & Winstree ward with the parishes of Birch, Messing cum Inworth, Layer Marney and Layer Breton from the existing Birch, Messing & Copford ward, and all of the parishes from the existing Winstree ward.

65 It also proposed modifying the existing Stanway ward, by dividing it into two parish wards; Stanway East and Stanway West. The proposed Stanway East parish ward would form a modified three-member Stanway ward and Stanway West parish ward would form part of a new Copford & West Stanway ward with the parishes of Copford and Easthorpe.

66 During Stage One we also received submissions from Birch, Copford with Easthorpe, Layer Breton and Tiptree parish councils and Layer Marney Parish Meeting. Birch Parish Council supported the Borough Council's proposed Birch & Winstree ward. Copford with Easthorpe Parish Council proposed no change to the existing Birch, Messing & Copford ward and opposed any proposal which would include the parishes of Copford and Easthorpe in a modified Stanway ward. Layer Breton Parish Council opposed any proposal which would create a new borough ward incorporating the parishes of Birch, Copford, Messing cum Inworth and Layer Marney. Layer Marney Parish Meeting supported the Borough Council's proposed Birch & Winstree ward, given that it would remain largely rural in character.

67 We also received submissions from Councillor Crowe, member for Birch, Messing & Copford ward, and Councillor Blundell, member for West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward. Councillor Crowe opposed the Borough Council's initial proposals for his ward, and copied the correspondence which he had received regarding the periodic electoral review to the Commission. Councillor Blundell opposed the Borough Council's proposed Copford & West Stanway ward. She accepted, in principle, that part of Stanway parish might form part of a new ward, but proposed the transfer of electors from the area know as Stanway Green rather than part of the new Lakelands estate. A local resident also expressed concern that the Commission appeared not to consider rural identities as part of a periodic electoral review, however, in undertaking the review, we attempt to identify electoral arrangements which provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, ie the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities and secure effective and convenient local government.

68 We examined all submissions received at Stage One, including those from Councillor Crowe and the Borough Council which they had received as part of their own consultations. We examined alternatives which would not require additional warding for Tiptree parish. However, without transferring electors into the proposed Birch & Winstree ward the electoral variance would be 14 per cent for Tiptree ward by 2004, while the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Birch & Winstree ward would be 22 per cent below the borough average by 2004. We stated in our draft recommendations report that we did not consider these levels of electoral inequality to be justifiable when a satisfactory alternative was available. We did not consider the Borough Council's proposal to be ideal, but were content that it had taken into account concerns voiced locally and that it provided the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria available at the time. We consequently adopted the Borough Council's proposed Birch & Winstree and Tiptree wards as part of our draft recommendations.

69 We also examined the proposal presented by Councillor Blundell regarding the transfer of the area known as Stanway Green into the proposed Copford & West Stanway ward. Officers from the Commission visited the area and considered Councillor Blundell's proposals to have merit, given the similarly rural character of the area. However, we noted that the electors of Stanway Green would not have direct access to the proposed Copford & West Stanway ward but would need to travel through Stanway ward. We did not, therefore, endorse Councillor Blundell's proposal to include the area within the proposed Copford & West Stanway ward.

70 We noted the concerns of Copford with Easthorpe Parish Council regarding the impact that the Borough Council's proposals could have on community identities in the area. However, we were unable to identify a suitable alternative that would not necessitate further parish warding, which we considered to be detrimental to neighbouring parishes. We therefore adopted the Borough Council's proposed Copford & West Stanway and Stanway wards as part of our draft recommendations.

71 The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Birch & Winstree, Copford & West Stanway, Stanway and Tiptree wards would initially be 9 per cent below, 28 per cent below, 3 per cent below and be equal to the borough average respectively (2 per cent above, 3 per cent below, 1 per cent below and 3 per cent below the borough average by 2004).

72 At Stage Three, the Borough Council supported the proposed Birch & Winstree, Copford & West Stanway, Stanway and Tiptree wards. We received submissions from Copford with Easthorpe, Layer de la Haye, Stanway and Tiptree parish councils in response to our draft recommendations.

73 Copford with Easthorpe Parish Council stated its opposition to the creation of a new Copford & West Stanway ward. It argued that the seven villages which constituted the existing Birch, Messing & Copford ward were currently better served than they would be under the draft recommendations. It also suggested that consideration should be given to increasing the number of borough councillors to allow "several Councillors to represent 'large' parishes such as Tiptree and single Councillors to represent parishes such as Birch, Messing & Copford". Layer de la Haye Parish Council opposed the proposed Birch & Winstree ward and expressed concern that the proposed 'urban' Grove parish ward of Tiptree parish would form part of the proposed Birch & Winstree ward. It contended that this could overburden the ward councillors. Stanway Parish

Council objected to the proposed Copford & West Stanway ward and proposed instead retaining the existing electoral arrangements for the parish. Tiptree Parish Council reiterated its opposition to the creation of a new Grove parish ward which would then form part of the proposed Birch & Winstree ward. It stated that “residents in Layer etc. will not have the same interests as people in Tiptree, yet they are still being put in the same ward”.

74 We also received submissions from Councillor Blundell, representing West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward, Councillor Thompson, representing Stanway ward, the Stanway Liberal Democrats, Stanway Parish Council, the Stanway Residents’ Association and a local resident in response to our draft recommendations. Councillor Blundell reiterated her Stage One proposal that Stanway Green should form part of the Copford & West Stanway ward. She opposed the proposed ward configuration on community identity grounds. Councillor Thompson, in a joint letter with Councillors Ilott and Pyman, stated that they fully supported the proposals made by Stanway Parish Council. However, they also submitted a number of modifications to the proposed boundaries of Stanway East and Stanway West parish wards. They proposed the removal of two “anomalous situations” ie the uniting of eight properties in Heckford Bridge and seven properties on Warren Lane. The councillors also suggested that it would be advantageous to ensure that the two areas facing major planning and environmental issues are located within a single ward.

75 Stanway Parish Council objected to the proposed warding of the parish, and proposed that the current electoral arrangements for Stanway should be retained. The Parish Council stated that the differences between the villages of Copford and Stanway could not be overstated. The Parish Council also questioned the Borough Council’s projected electorate figures for Stanway. Stanway Liberal Democrats supported the retention of the existing council size of 60 members and supported the proposal for Copford & West Stanway ward and Stanway ward. However, they proposed minor modifications to this boundary to avoid dividing the eight properties in Heckford Bridge and the seven properties on Warren Lane between wards. Stanway Liberal Democrats propose a modification to the boundary between Birch and Stanway parishes and suggested that Stanway West parish ward should return two parish councillors and Stanway East parish ward should return 13 parish councillors. They also proposed that the electoral cycle should be altered to whole-council elections every four years. Stanway Residents’ Association supported the Parish Council’s proposals, but suggested that the Stanway Western Bypass route be used as the parish ward boundary. A local resident opposed the proposed Copford & West Stanway ward and proposed the retention of the existing electoral arrangements.

76 We have given careful consideration to the comments and proposals made by respondents at Stage Three of the review. We note that, under the existing electoral arrangements, Stanway ward enjoys a reasonable level of electoral equality, however, Birch, Messing & Copford ward does not. In examining the electoral arrangements of any district, we must do so with a view to the overall warding pattern in the borough and cannot consider areas in isolation. We note the concerns that respondents have expressed, detailing differences between the communities of Stanway & Copford, however, we remain broadly content that the Borough Council’s proposed warding arrangements reflect, as far as practicable, these different community identities while providing improved levels of electoral equality. We continue to be of the opinion that Stanway Green should not form part of the proposed Copford & West Stanway ward given that there is no road link to the proposed ward and consider that this would not provide for convenient and effective local government.

77 However, we propose endorsing the minor boundary modifications proposed by Councillor Thompson in a joint letter with councillors Ilott and Pyman and by the Stanway Liberal Democrats. We, therefore, propose including an additional 12 electors from the proposed Copford & West Stanway ward in the proposed Stanway ward. This proposed modification would not significantly impact on the levels of electoral equality in the two wards. Details of our proposals for these wards can be found on Map 2 and in Appendix A.

Boxted & Langham, Dedham, Fordham, Great & Little Horkesley, Great Tey, Marks Tey and West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green wards

78 These seven wards are located in the north of the borough. Boxted & Langham, Dedham, Fordham, Great & Little Horkesley, Great Tey and Marks Tey wards are all single-member wards while West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward is represented by two members. The number of electors per councillor in these wards is 4 per cent below, 23 per cent below, 28 per cent below, 3 per cent below, 11 per cent below, 5 per cent above and 2 per cent below the borough average respectively (9 per cent below, 28 per cent below, 33 per cent below, 3 per cent below, 17 per cent below, 3 per cent below and 6 per cent below by 2004). Fordham ward comprises the parishes of Aldham, Fordham and Wormingford; Great & Little Horkesley ward comprises the parishes of Great Horkesley and Little Horkesley; Great Tey ward comprises the parishes of Chappel, Great Tey, Mount Bures and Wakes Colne. The remaining wards of Boxted & Langham, Dedham, Marks Tey and West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green each comprise the parishes of the same name.

79 During Stage One the Borough Council proposed no change to the existing Marks Tey ward which would have an electoral variance of 3 per cent by 2004. It proposed modifying West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward to include electors from Mile End ward, to improve electoral equality. The Borough Council's proposed West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward would have an electoral variance of 5 per cent, improving to 3 per cent by 2004. Colchester Conservative Association and the Mile End Liberal Democrats proposed no change to the existing West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward. The Borough Council proposed including the parish of Aldham (part of the existing Fordham ward) in Great Tey ward, which would otherwise remain unchanged. It also proposed that the remaining parishes of Fordham ward should be included in a three-member Constable ward with Boxted & Langham, Dedham and Great Horkesley and Little Horkesley parishes. Having considered the proposals submitted during Stage One, we adopted the Borough Council's proposed Great Tey and Marks Tey wards as part of our draft recommendations. We stated that we were of the view that the proposed wards would be a good reflection of local communities and meet the Commission's statutory criteria, providing convenient and effective local government.

80 In examining the Borough Council's modified West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward, we noted that, although these proposals would improve electoral equality within the ward, it would not provide as clear a boundary as at present – the A12. We examined the alternatives proposed by the Conservatives and the Mile End Liberal Democrats, which would retain the existing ward boundary between West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward and the existing Mile End ward. We also considered the opposition expressed by other Stage One respondents to the Borough Council's proposed West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward and concluded that, to reflect the

identities and interests of the local community, the existing boundary of West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward should be retained.

81 We received direct representations from the North Essex Conservative Association, Boxted Parish Council, Councillor Garnett, member for Boxted & Langham ward, Lord Ironside and 18 local residents, all opposing the Borough Council's proposed three-member Constable ward on the grounds that it would produce a large rural ward. Councillor Garnett put forward an alternative proposal for three single-member wards; Dedham & Langham; Great Horkesley; Boxted, Little Horkesley, Wormingford & Fordham.

82 We did not consider this proposal to best reflect community identities or that it provided convenient and effective local government, given that it would result in the parish of Boxted forming part of a detached ward. The North Essex Conservative Association proposed that the parishes of Dedham and Langham form a single-member ward and that the parishes of Boxted, Fordham, Great Horkesley, Little Horkesley and Wormingford form a two-member ward. This proposal would result in the two wards having an electoral variance of 11 per cent and 1 per cent respectively by 2004. Given the evidence available, we considered this proposal would strike the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, whilst commanding some local support and consequently adopted it as part of our draft recommendations. We concurred with the concerns over the size of the proposed Constable ward and the view that it would not best reflect local community identities. The North Essex Conservative Association did not propose names for its two wards in this area and in our draft recommendations report we proposed the names of Dedham & Langham and the Horkesleys.

83 At Stage Three we received representations from the Borough Council, North Essex Conservative Association, the parish councils of Boxted, Dedham, Fordham and Langham, Councillor Blundell, representing West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward, and two local residents in response to our draft recommendations for these wards. The Borough Council supported the proposed Dedham & Langham, Great Tey, Marks Tey, the Horkesleys and West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green wards, however, it proposed that the Horkesleys ward should be renamed Fordham & Stour. The North Essex Conservative Association proposed that this ward should be named Stour ward. Boxted Parish Council stated that it was "reasonably content" with the proposed recommendations but suggested that the Commission continued to place too great an importance on the achievement of electoral equality. Dedham Parish Council supported the proposed Dedham & Langham ward, stating that it was "a logical and acceptable change and one which could benefit both parishes". Fordham Parish Council opposed the configuration of the proposed the Horkesleys ward, arguing that the distance between the Horkesleys and Fordham was too great to be located within the same ward. It also opposed using the Horkesleys as a ward name, arguing that electors within Fordham would suffer a loss of identity and may not be inclined to vote. The Parish Council concluded that it wished to see the existing electoral arrangements for Fordham ward continue.

84 Langham Parish Council supported the proposed Dedham & Langham ward, preferring the proposed Dedham & Langham ward to the proposals made by the Borough Council. We also received comments from two local residents in response to our draft recommendations for this area; one supported the proposed Dedham & Langham ward, while the other local resident stated that, while appreciating the reasoning behind the draft recommendations, she questioned "why

the numbers game is so paramount, why should a united parish [Langham with Boxted] should be divided for civil representation” and argued that Boxted should continue to form a ward with Langham suggesting that there would be an eventual “levelling off of numbers” given that there was little projected growth in either Boxted or Dedham. Additionally she suggested that the A134 would provide a better boundary given that it divides Boxted from the Horkesleys.

85 We have carefully considered those representations made to us at Stage Three regarding these proposed wards. We are pleased to note that the Borough Council has supported our alternative configuration in this area. We are of the view that our proposed wards continue to provide the best balance between the statutory criteria and local community identities. There has not been, in our view, a persuasive case made for the retention of the existing electoral arrangements for Fordham ward (which would vary by 33 per cent from the borough average by 2004). However, we propose adopting the Borough Council’s proposal to rename the Horkesleys ward Fordham & Stour ward, considering it a more inclusive ward name than Stour, as proposed by the North Essex Conservative Association, and would also address some of the concerns expressed by Fordham Parish Council in its Stage Three representation.

86 The proposed Dedham & Langham, Fordham & Stour, Great Tey, Marks Tey and West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green wards would have electoral variances of 18 per cent, 1 per cent, 10 per cent, 5 per cent and 2 per cent the borough average respectively (11 per cent, 2 per cent, 3 per cent, 3 per cent and 6 per cent respectively by 2004). Details of the final recommendations are outlined on Map 2 and in Appendix A at the back of this report.

Colchester town

Mile End, St Andrew’s, St Anne’s and St John’s wards

87 The four three-member wards of Mile End, St Andrew’s, St Anne’s and St John’s are located in the northern part of the Colchester town area. The number of electors per councillor in these four wards is 72 per cent above, 1 per cent below, 16 per cent below and 6 per cent below the borough average respectively. This level of electoral inequality is projected to deteriorate, so that by 2004 this figure is projected to be 100 per cent above, 9 per cent below, 21 per cent below and 13 per cent below the borough average respectively. In April 1999 the new urban parish of Myland was established within Mile End ward.

88 At Stage One, Colchester Borough Council proposed modifications to all four wards. However, it stated that it felt that the newly established parish of Myland should not be warded, which would in its view, complicate electoral matters further. The Borough Council proposed transferring some 393 electors from the Braiswick area (polling district AR) to West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward to improve electoral equality within West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward. It also proposed that two new wards be established; Highwoods & St John’s (north) and Parsons Heath & St John’s (south). The number of electors per councillor in the Borough Council’s proposed wards of Highwoods & St John’s (north), Parsons Heath & St John’s (south), Mile End and West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green would be 6 per cent above, 2 per cent above, 2 per cent above and 3 per cent above the borough average by 2004.

89 During Stage One, the Colchester Conservative Association and the Mile End Liberal Democrats opposed the Borough Council's proposal to transfer electors from the Braiswick area. It was also opposed by West Bergholt Parish Council, the Braiswick Residents' Association and the Colchester Association of Local Councils, on the basis that it would mix urban and rural settlements in single wards. The Residents' Association stated that it was "dismayed" to see that the area covered by the Residents' Association would be divided between two wards. A local resident also opposed the Borough Council's proposal, contending that the whole of Braiswick should remain a united community. As previously discussed, the Commission supported this view, and proposed that West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward should remain unmodified.

90 The Conservatives and the Mile End Liberal Democrats proposed alternative warding configurations for Mile End, St Andrew's, St Anne's and St John's wards. Both groups proposed retaining polling district AR within the town area. Similarly, both submissions proposed the retention of the Ipswich Road as the north-western boundary for a modified St John's ward. The Conservatives and the Mile End Liberal Democrats proposed warding Myland parish and including some 249 electors of the parish in a new Highwoods ward. The proposed three-member Mile End ward would initially be 20 per cent below the borough average, however, due to substantial housing development in the area, the electoral variance would improve to 5 per cent by 2004.

91 During Stage One, Bob Russell, Member of Parliament for Colchester, contended that although he felt that a number of the Borough Council's proposed wards had merit, he considered that the boundaries proposed in the north of the town could be improved upon. Both the Conservatives and the Mile End Liberal Democrats opposed the Borough Council's proposed wards, putting forward modifications to the existing St Andrew's, St Anne's and St John's wards. Councillor Gamble, writing on behalf of the St John's ward Liberal Democrats, also opposed the transfer of the eastern part of St John's ward to a new Highwoods & St John's (north) ward. In particular he opposed the Borough Council's scheme which would divide the Longridge estate between the modified St Anne's and St Andrew's wards. He noted that Sheerwater Mews would be divided between the two proposed wards. Additionally, Councillor Gamble enclosed correspondence which he had received from local residents, opposing the Borough Council's proposed modifications. The St John's Residents' Association opposed the Borough Council's proposed Highwoods & St John's (north) and Parsons Heath & St John's (south) wards. It stated that the Highwoods and St John's areas were physically detached from one another by a major road (the Ipswich Road) and that such a major feature was difficult for pedestrians to cross. It also contended that the two areas were significantly different from one another stating that "both communities [Highwoods and St John's] have certain socio-economic characteristics giving rise to very different perceptions and priorities" and proposed no change to the ward.

92 Councillor Smith, representing St John's ward, supported the Mile End Liberal Democrats' proposals and opposed the transfer of Braiswick to the proposed West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward and the division of the current St John's ward. Councillor Smith also opposed the Borough Council's proposed boundary between the modified St Andrew's and St Anne's wards, which he contended appeared illogical, splitting Goldcrest Close and Sheerwater Mews between wards.

93 Having carefully considered all the submissions received during Stage One, we concurred with the view that the Ipswich Road should be retained as a boundary. On this basis, we supported the Conservatives' and Mile End Liberal Democrats' proposals, which would retain polling district AR within Mile End ward although we were aware that this would necessitate the warding of the newly created Myland parish. We proposed that Myland parish should have two parish wards, to be named Mile End and Highwoods, with the proposed Highwoods parish ward forming part of the proposed Highwoods borough ward. All three proposals received for this area would result in improved levels of electoral equality, however, we considered that the Conservatives' proposed St John's ward would better reflected the local community. We therefore adopted the Conservatives' proposed St John's ward as the basis of our draft recommendations.

94 We examined the proposals by the Borough Council, the Conservatives and the Mile End Liberal Democrats for St Andrew's and St Anne's wards and based our proposals for St John's ward on the Conservatives' proposals.

95 We stated in our draft recommendations report that the proposals by the Borough Council, the Mile End Liberal Democrats or the Conservatives did not use clearly identifiable boundaries. Although the proposals from both the Conservatives and the Mile End Liberal Democrats would not divide the Longridge estate between the wards of St Andrew's and St Anne's, we were of the view that a boundary could be established by modifying the Conservatives' proposed wards, particularly St Anne's ward. We therefore proposed transferring part of polling district BG to the modified St Andrew's ward, to improve the boundary between the two proposed wards which would also enable the whole of the Longridge estate to remain united within a single ward, namely St Andrew's. In formulating our draft recommendations, we concluded that community interests would be best served by retaining the whole estate in a single ward. Mindful of this, we generally based our draft recommendations on the Colchester Conservative Associations' scheme which would involve the entirety of the Longridge estate forming part of the modified St Andrew's ward.

96 We also proposed transferring some 32 electors, south of the Bromley Road, to the proposed St Anne's ward from St Andrew's ward to further improve the boundary between the two wards and better reflect local community identities.

97 At Stage Three we received representations concerning this area from the Borough Council, Health for Highwoods group, Mile End Liberal Democrats, Myland Parish Council, St Anne's ward Liberal Democrats, St John's Liberal Democrats, St John's Residents' Association, 14 residents from St Anne's ward, one resident from St John's ward and two residents from Mile End ward.

98 The Borough Council did not support the proposed recommendations for the wards of Mile End, St Andrew's, St Anne's and St John's, which were based, in part, on the Colchester Conservative Association's and Mile End Liberal Democrats' Stage One submissions. The Borough Council provided a revised forecast electorate data for the draft recommendations in this area stating in its Stage Three submission that the proposed Highwoods, Mile End, St Andrew's, St Anne's and St John's wards would vary by 9 per cent below, 3 per cent above, 9 per cent above, 2 per cent below and 1 per cent above the borough average by 2004, rather than the

predicted 2 per cent below, 5 per cent below, 4 per cent above, 3 per cent above and equal to the borough average respectively as stated in the draft recommendations report.

99 Additionally, as previously discussed, the Borough Council revised its projected electorate figures for Highwoods, stating that a significant number of residential developments would be in place by 2004, which had not been accounted for in its initial projected electorate figures.

100 Barry Holden, Chair of Health for Highwoods group commented on the draft recommendations. The group suggested that the boundary of the proposed Highwoods ward should be amended to follow Brinkley Grove Road and Mill Road to better reflect the identity of the local community.

101 Councillor Oxford, writing on behalf of the Mile End Liberal Democrats, proposed that the proposed Highwoods parish ward boundary should be extended to follow Mill Road. The Mile End Liberal Democrats suggested that this would better reflect local community identities within the area. They argued that residents of the Roman Place development consider themselves to be part of Highwoods rather than Myland, although they do not “mind remaining in the Myland Parish”. Myland Parish Council opposed the proposed warding of the parish and forwarded a copy of a letter which it had received from Bob Russell, MP for Colchester, regarding the periodic electoral review and its impact on Myland parish. Two residents of Mile End ward opposed the proposal to ward Myland parish.

102 Councillor Mike Hogg, representing St Anne’s ward, wrote on behalf of the St Anne’s ward Liberal Democrats, proposing modifications to our recommendations for St Anne’s ward, in particular the proposed transfer of the Longridge estate into St Andrew’s ward. The St Anne’s ward Liberal Democrats proposed that the area known as North Greenstead should instead form part of the proposed St Andrew’s ward instead of the Longridge estate, which should remain within St Anne’s ward.

103 Councillor Paul Smith, representing St John’s ward, wrote on behalf of St John’s Liberal Democrats stating that the draft recommendations “represent a considerable improvement on the plan submitted by the Council”. However, they proposed that the boundary between the wards of Highwoods and Mile End should be realigned to follow Brinkley Lane and Mill Road, which they considered to be a more natural boundary between the two wards. They submitted a petition (187 signatures) from residents in the Longridge estate opposing the transfer of the estate to St Andrew’s ward. They proposed that, in view of “the strong opposition shown by the residents of the Longridge area to being placed in St Andrew’s ward, that further consideration should be given to the proposal put forward [at Stage One] by the Liberal Democrats to place Longridge in St John’s ward.” St John’s Residents’ Association supported the draft recommendations for the proposed St John’s ward. Fourteen local residents from the Longridge estate area opposed the estate forming part of a modified St Andrew’s ward.

104 We have carefully considered our draft recommendations for these wards, particularly in light of the amended 2004 projected electorate figures. We are sympathetic to the concerns raised by Myland Parish Council and local residents, however, we remain convinced that the proposed parish warding of Myland would not adversely affect the parish. Indeed, the evidence submitted by the Mile End Liberal Democrats suggests that there is already a separate community identity

in and around the Roman Place development. It should be noted that this proposal would not impact upon the external boundaries of the parish. One local resident proposed that, in the event of the proposal to ward Myland being endorsed, the proposed Myland parish wards should be named Myland East and Myland West to reflect their links with Myland parish. The modified parish council arrangements for Myland are discussed later in the report. We have also examined the suggestion put forward by the Mile End and St John's ward Liberal Democrats that the boundary between Highwoods and Mile End wards should be modified in order to better reflect local community identities.

105 We have explored the possibility of transferring the area between Mill Road and Brinkley Lane to Highwoods ward. Under the modified arrangements, and taking account of the amended projected electorate figures, The councillor:elector ratio for Highwoods and Mile End wards would be 7 per cent and 21 per cent (4 per cent and 3 per cent by 2004). We consider that this alternative proposal provides a better balance between the need to achieve electoral equality while have regard to the statutory criteria and we therefore adopt this proposal as part of our draft recommendations. The modified parish council arrangements for Myland are discussed later in the report.

106 The St John's Residents' Association and a local resident supported the proposed St John's ward, although the Borough Council objected to it stating that, given the more accurate data it provided during Stage Three, St John's ward would vary by 1 per cent from the borough average by 2004, rather than equal it as stated in the draft recommendations report. However, we consider that the boundaries of the proposed ward continue to provide a better reflection of local community identities than those proposed by the Borough Council at Stage One. We note that these views were supported by the Residents' Association and local residents and we therefore confirm our draft recommendations for St John's ward as final.

107 In the light of comments received concerning our proposals for the Longridge estate, we have re-examined the proposals we received at Stage One, concerning the wards of St Andrew's and St Anne's, particularly the representations from the Colchester Conservative Association and the Mile End Liberal Democrats. In our draft recommendations report we expressed a degree of reservation regarding the resulting degree of electoral imbalance and the degree to which these proposals reflected the statutory criteria. It was suggested that the Longridge estate and the Greenstead estate, had very different community identities and interests and, therefore, the two areas should not be united within one ward. Officers from the Commission revisited the areas in question and were not wholly convinced by the arguments presented during Stage Three in opposition to the ward. However, the revised figures submitted by the Borough Council would result in the number of electors per councillor in St Andrew's ward varying by 9 per cent from the borough average by 2004, rather than 4 per cent as stated in our draft recommendations report. Given the arguments expressed on the proposed wards of St Andrew's and St Anne's, and in the light of the amended 2004 figures, we propose modifying our recommendations for St Anne's and St Andrew's ward. The St Anne's ward Liberal Democrats proposed that the area described at North Greenstead should be transferred to St Andrew's ward and that the Longridge estate should be retained within St Anne's ward.

108 In the light of the representations received and the information presented by the Borough Council during stages Three and Four, and following discussion with council officers, we propose

modifying our recommendations for the wards of St Andrew's and St Anne's. We propose adopting the Colchester Conservative Association's Stage One scheme for St Andrew's and St Anne's wards. We have concluded that this proposal would provide higher levels of electoral equality than under the current arrangements and under our draft recommendations (given the revised figures) and would reflect the community identity arguments expressed during our consultation on our draft recommendations. We have sought further evidence from the Borough Council on the electorate figures which would result. Given the overall increase in the projected 2004 electorate, the number of electors per councillor in St Andrew's and St Anne's wards would vary by 11 per cent and 12 per cent (2 per cent and 5 per cent by 2004).

109 In the proposed Highwoods, Mile End, St Andrew's, St Anne's and St John's wards the number of electors per councillor under our final recommendations would vary by 7 per cent, 21 per cent, 11 per cent, 12 per cent and 7 per cent from the borough average respectively (4 per cent, 3 per cent, 2 per cent, 5 per cent above and 1 per cent from the borough average respectively by 2004). Details of our proposals for these wards can be found on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Berechurch, Castle, Harbour and New Town wards

110 The four three-member wards of Berechurch, Castle, Harbour and New Town are located directly east of the River Colne. The number of electors per councillor is 3 per cent, 1 per cent, 5 per cent and 14 per cent from the borough average in each ward respectively (8 per cent, 1 per cent, 3 per cent and 13 per cent by 2004).

111 During Stage One, the Borough Council proposed modifications to the wards of Castle, Harbour and New Town and proposed that Berechurch ward should remain unmodified. It generally proposed only minor modifications to the three other wards, to improve electoral equality. Both the Conservatives and the Mile End Liberal Democrats proposed modifications to all four existing wards. The Conservatives stated that its proposed modifications in this area were similar to those of the Borough Council, the Conservatives' and the Mile End Liberal Democrats' submissions and proposed transferring polling district AM from Harbour ward and dividing it between the wards of St Andrew's and St Anne's, thereby establishing the River Colne as a boundary, as well as renaming Harbour ward Old Heath ward. The Conservatives proposed that polling district AL, from Harbour ward, should form part of a modified New Town ward and that part of polling district AY, from New Town ward, should be transferred to Berechurch ward, which would otherwise remain unchanged.

112 The Borough Council proposed realigning the southern boundary of Castle ward to the Lexden Road/Southway which we considered would establish a far clearer boundary for Castle ward. Additionally, the Borough Council proposed transferring part of polling district AE, from Castle ward, to the modified New Town ward. The Mile End Liberal Democrats broadly supported the Borough Council's proposed Castle ward, although they proposed that the whole of polling district AE should be transferred to its proposed New Town ward.

113 We broadly supported the proposals from the Borough Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats for these four wards, in particular the Borough Council's proposal to utilise Lexden Road/Southway as the southern boundary for Castle ward. We therefore adopted the

Borough Council's proposed Castle and Berechurch wards as part of our draft recommendations. However, we proposed a minor modification to its boundary between Castle and Lexden wards. The Borough Council proposed that the boundary between the modified Lexden and Castle wards should follow the centre of Highfield Drive, however, we proposed that the whole of Highfield Drive should be transferred to Lexden ward and follow the eastern edge of the former Roman pottery kilns, to establish a clearer boundary between the two proposed wards. This modification would affect some six electors. We adopted the Conservative's proposed Old Heath ward and made minor modifications to the proposed New Town ward.

114 At Stage Three, the Borough Council supported the proposed arrangements for Berechurch and Castle wards which were based on its own Stage One representation. It did not support the proposed recommendations for New Town and Old Heath wards which were based on the Colchester Conservative Association's Stage One submission. The Borough Council concluded that the number of electors per councillor in the proposed New Town ward would be 7 per cent from the borough average by 2004, rather than the predicted 6 per cent as stated in the draft recommendations report. Finally, in this area, the Borough Council proposed that the name Harbour ward continued to be used.

115 Councillor Brady, representing Harbour ward, stated that he had no opposition to the proposed boundary changes however, he opposed the change of the ward name from Harbour to Old Heath. He contended that local residents identify themselves with the name Harbour and that renaming the ward Old Heath could potentially be confused with the Old Heath division. The New Town Branch Labour Party objected to the exclusion from the proposed New Town ward of the area enclosed by Mersea Road, Berechurch Road and Pownall Crescent. It also suggested that the even numbered houses in Bourne Road, from Pownall Crescent to Bourne Court and Bourne Court itself, should be located within New Town ward. It welcomed the inclusion of Hythe Hill and Gilbert Road areas into the ward, arguing that these areas utilised facilities within New Town ward. It also opposed the inclusion of areas within the proposed New Town ward, which did not share links with the New Town area. It also suggested that areas had been "tacked on" to the modified New Town ward for electoral equality purposes only.

116 Councillors Bradon and Frame, representing St Mary's ward, proposed that Balkerne Hill should form part of the western boundary to Castle ward. However, this proposal is discussed in further detail later in this report. The Colchester Conservative Association stated that it broadly supported the draft recommendations for these wards.

117 We have closely examined the submissions made during Stage Three in response to our draft recommendations for these wards. We have concluded that the proposal to retain the ward name of Harbour has considerable merit, and confirm the retention of the name Harbour for this ward as part of our final recommendations. We have closely examined the proposals made by the New Town Branch Labour Party and have noted its comments, however, the proposed transfer of electors from the area enclosed by Mersea Road, Berechurch Road and Pownall Crescent remains, in our view, a sound proposal which would significantly enhance the electoral equality in the modified Berechurch ward. We have, therefore, endorsed our draft recommendations for Berechurch, Castle, New Town and Harbour wards (subject to the retention of Harbour ward name) as final.

118 The proposed wards of Berechurch, Castle, Harbour and New Town would have a councillor:elector ratio of 1 per cent, 3 per cent, 13 per cent and 1 per cent from the borough average respectively (4 per cent, 2 per cent, 4 per cent and 7 per cent by 2004). These recommendations are outlined on Map 2 and the large map at the back of this report.

Lexden, Prettygate, Shrub End and St Mary's wards

119 The four three-member wards of Lexden, Prettygate, Shrub End and St Mary's are located in the west of Colchester town. The number of electors per councillor is currently 29 per cent below, equal to, 5 per cent below and 11 per cent below the borough average respectively (34 per cent below, 9 per cent below, 12 per cent below and 9 per cent below the borough average by 2004).

120 During Stage One, the Borough Council proposed modifications to all four wards, proposing that Lexden ward should be represented by two councillors rather than three, as at present. It also proposed some boundary modifications between St Mary's and Prettygate wards including transferring part of AP polling district from Lexden ward to Prettygate ward. The Borough Council proposed that Shrub End ward (which is currently under-represented) should be modified to incorporate part of polling district BN from the existing St Mary's ward. The Borough Council further proposed that the modified St Mary's ward should be renamed Christchurch and be represented by two councillors rather than three as at present.

121 The Colchester Conservative Association proposed modifications to Shrub End ward. They proposed transferring part of BN polling district from St Mary's ward to Shrub End, but also proposed transferring additional electors from polling district BQ. They also proposed that the modified two-member St Mary's ward should be renamed Christchurch. The Mile End Liberal Democrats supported the Borough Council's proposals for Christchurch, Lexden, Shrub End and Prettygate wards, while expressing some reservations regarding the proposed Christchurch ward. Councillor Frame, representing St Mary's ward, objected to the proposed Christchurch ward and put forward modifications to the ward, but recognised that his proposals would have a negative impact on Castle ward. However, as previously discussed, we have endorsed the proposal to utilise Southway as a boundary.

122 We adopted the Borough Council's proposed Shrub End and Prettygate wards as part of our draft recommendations, which we considered would provide clear and identifiable boundaries within the area. We noted the comments made by the Mile End Liberal Democrats and Councillor Frame. However, we considered that, within the context of the town as a whole, the proposal for a new two-member Christchurch ward should be supported, given the improved level of electoral equality and the clear and good boundaries which the Borough Council's and Conservatives' proposals would achieve.

123 As stated previously, the Conservatives proposed only minor modifications to the Borough Council's proposed wards in this area. The Conservatives proposed that part of polling district BQ should be transferred from Shrub End ward to Prettygate ward, however, this would not retain the Shrub End Road as a boundary, which we consider to be a strong boundary between the two proposed wards.

124 At Stage Three we received comments from the Borough Council, the Colchester Conservative Association, Councillors Buston and Frame, representing St Mary's ward, the St Mary's ward Conservative Association, 15 local residents and the Reverend Rose.

125 The Borough Council supported the proposed wards, but proposed that Christchurch ward should be named Christ Church, the correct name for the area, and that Philip Morant School should remain within Prettygate ward given that vehicular access is not possible from Lexden ward. The Colchester Conservative Association generally supported the draft recommendations, but stated its preference for its Stage One proposal for St Mary's ward.

126 Councillor Buston opposed the proposed reduction in size and the number of councillors representing the ward, he also opposed changing the ward name to Christchurch. He contended that the existing St Mary's ward did not currently have a high degree of electoral inequality and proposed that the St Mary's area from Castle ward should form part of the enlarged St Mary's ward, using as the boundary the dual carriageway following Balkerne Hill. He further contended that the proposed three-member Lexden and Shrub End wards would be unrepresentative and unmanageable and suggested that the two-member ward would not make sense if elections were continued to be held by thirds.

127 Councillor Frame reiterated his Stage One proposal opposing the extension of Castle ward along Lexden Road on the grounds that Castle ward was characteristically an inner town ward and that the draft recommendations did not reflect this. He reiterated his suggestion that Balkerne Hill would provide a clear boundary between an extended St Mary's ward and Castle ward and supported the recommendation that Southway was used as a boundary but proposed that St John's Green should be moved to St Mary's ward. Councillor Frame supported the proposed ward name change to Christchurch, but stated that this should be written as Christ Church.

128 Fifteen local residents opposed the proposed changes to St Mary's ward. The residents argued that the new ward would not adequately reflect local community identities. Several residents commented that the existing St Mary's ward closely corresponded with the ecclesiastical parish of St Mary at the Walls and Christ Church, which the proposed ward would not, and consequently proposed that the existing electoral arrangements for St Mary's ward be retained. The Reverend Rose supported the proposed ward name change, but proposed that the ward name should be written as Christ Church. He contended that this would be a better reflection of the ward given that the St Mary's areas would lie outside the proposed ward.

129 The alternative proposals put forward for this area are based on a three-member St Mary's ward, which, to continue to form part of the wider scheme for Colchester would necessitate reducing the number of councillors in a surrounding ward. A two-member Castle ward, less the Balkerne Hill area which it was proposed should be transferred to an enlarged St Mary's ward, would have a councillor:elector ratio of some 30 per cent below the borough average. We do not, therefore, consider that this represents an acceptable balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

130 While we acknowledge that Balkerne Hill would provide as clear a boundary, we consider that our draft recommendations would also utilise clearly identifiable boundaries. However, Officers from the Commission re-visited the area in the light of the submissions made in response

to the draft recommendations. After due consideration of the comments received, and having revisited the area, we propose substantially endorsing our draft recommendations for these wards as final, notwithstanding the modifications noted below.

131 However, we propose that the name of Christchurch ward should be written as Christ Church, and propose endorsing the Borough Council's recommendation that Philip Morant School should remain within Prettygate ward, given that vehicular access is not possible from Lexden ward.

132 The number of electors per councillor in the proposed wards of Christ Church, Lexden, Prettygate and Shrub End would initially be equal to, 8 per cent above, 4 per cent above and 8 per cent above the borough average respectively (3 per cent above, equal to, 5 per cent below and 2 per cent above the borough average respectively by 2004). These recommendations are outlined on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of this report.

Electoral Cycle

133 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 elections by thirds.

134 At Stage Three the Mile End Liberal Democrats and the Stanway Liberal Democrats proposed that the Council should be elected as a whole council every four years rather than the current cycle of elections by thirds. The Mile End Liberal Democrats stated that "a number of councillors from all parties are coming to the conclusion that elections every four years as opposed to thirds, may increase turnout and enable parties to concentrate on implementing policies rather than elections every year". The Stanway Liberal Democrats suggested that the Commission should consider a change from the current electoral cycle.

135 We have concluded that there is little evidence of strong local support for an alternative electoral cycle. Consequently we propose endorsing our draft recommendation for no change to the current cycle of elections by thirds as final.

Conclusions

136 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:

- the boundary between Highwoods and Mile End wards should be amended;
- the proposed Myland parish wards of Highwoods and Mile End should be renamed Myland East and Myland West respectively;
- the boundary between St Andrew's and St Anne's wards should be amended;

- the boundary between Copford & West Stanway and Stanway wards should be amended;
- the Horkesleys, Old Heath and Christchurch wards should be renamed Fordham & Stour, Harbour and Christ Church wards respectively.

137 We conclude that, in Colchester:

- a council of 60 members should be retained;
- there should be 27 wards;
- the boundaries of 22 of the existing wards should be modified, while five wards should retain their current boundaries;
- elections should continue to be held by thirds.

138 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	60	60	60	60
Number of wards	27	27	27	27
Average number of electors per councillor	1,992	1,992	2,175	2,175
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	11	8	12	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	6	0	7	0

139 As Figure 4 shows, our final recommendations for Colchester Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from 11 to eight. By 2004 only one ward is 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
 Colchester Borough Council should comprise 60 councillors serving 27 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A including the large map inside the back cover. The Borough Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

140 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 Myland, Stanway, Tiptree and Wivenhoe parishes, to reflect the proposed borough wards.

141 The parish of Myland is currently served by 13 councillors and is unwarded. As part of our draft recommendations we proposed warding the parish for the first time and creating two new parish wards: Highwoods and Mile End.

142 In response to our consultation report, the Borough Council and Parish Council opposed the proposed parish warding of Myland. Two local residents also opposed the proposed warding in principle, although one proposed that the parish wards should be renamed Myland East and Myland West to better reflect their link with the parish. The Mile End Liberal Democrats proposed that the boundary between Highwoods and Mile End parish wards should be amended to better reflect local community identities. The Mile End Liberal Democrats argued that the Roman Place development would be better served by being wholly placed with the proposed Myland East parish ward and forming part of the proposed Highwoods ward. Officers at the Borough Council also advised us on the revision of the proposed parish ward boundary which better reflects the new residential developments, such as Roman Place, which are currently being constructed in the area. As stated previously, we are proposing modifications to our draft recommendations for borough warding in this area, given up-dated electorate projections for 2004.

143 We therefore propose endorsing this modification to the parish ward boundary and also propose renaming the proposed parish wards of Mile End and Highwoods as Myland East and Myland West respectively to better reflect their links to the parish of Myland. We also propose that two parish councillors should represent the proposed Myland East ward and 11 parish councillors should represent Myland West ward.

Final Recommendation

Myland Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Myland East (returning two councillors) and Myland West (returning 11 councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

144 The parish of Stanway is currently served by 15 councillors and is not warded. As part of our draft recommendations we proposed warding the parish for the first time and creating two new parish wards: Stanway East and Stanway West. Stanway West parish ward would form part of the proposed Copford & West Stanway borough ward, and Stanway East parish ward would form the modified Stanway borough ward.

145 In response to our consultation report, the Borough Council stated its support for our draft recommendations, which were based on its own Stage One proposal, while Stanway Parish Council requested that the parish should remain united in a single ward. Councillors Ilott, Thompson and Pyman, representing Stanway ward, also requested that the existing electoral arrangements should be retained for Stanway. However, they accepted that this may well not be acceptable given the circumstances of the parish. They therefore proposed amendments to the proposed parish wards of Stanway East and Stanway West to better reflect local community identities. Stanway Residents' Association supported the Parish Council's opposition to the draft recommendations but proposed that, if the parish wards were to be retained, the Western Bypass route should be used as the parish for Stanway East parish ward. Councillor Blundell urged the Commission to reconsider the proposed ward configuration. The Stanway Liberal Democrats

proposed minor modifications to the boundary between the proposed Copford & West Stanway and Stanway wards to better reflect local community identities and that the number of parish councillors per parish ward should be revised so that the Stanway East parish ward should be represented by 13 parish councillors and Stanway West parish ward should be represented by two parish councillors. One local resident argued that the existing electoral arrangements has served the area “adequately” and should be retained.

146 Having considered all the evidence received, and in light of the confirmation of our proposed borough wards in the area, we broadly confirm our draft recommendation for warding Stanway Parish Council, subject to a minor boundary amendment. We also propose that the number of parish councillors for Stanway East and Stanway West parish wards should be revised.

Final Recommendation
Stanway Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Stanway East (returning 13 councillors) and Stanway West (returning two councillors). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

147 The parish of Tiptree is currently divided into three parish wards: Church, Heath and Maypole and is served by 15 councillors. As part of our draft recommendations, we proposed dividing the current Maypole ward to create a new Grove parish ward which would form part of the Birch & Winstree borough ward.

148 In response to our consultation report, the Parish Council opposed the creation of a new parish ward which would form part of the proposed Birch & Winstree ward. The Borough Council supported the proposed recommendations for Tiptree.

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

Final Recommendation
Tiptree Parish Council should comprise 15 parish councillors, representing four wards: Church (returning three councillors), Grove (returning three councillors), Heath (returning four councillors) and Maypole (returning five councillors). The boundaries between the four parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map A3 in Appendix A.

150 Wivenhoe Town Council is currently served by 11 town councillors and is unwarded. As part of our draft recommendations we proposed that the town should be warded for the first time to form Wivenhoe Cross parish ward (returning three councillors) and Wivenhoe Quay parish ward (returning eight councillors).

151 In response to our consultation report, Wivenhoe Town Council and Councillors Hawkins, Newman and Richardson, representing Wivenhoe ward, opposed the warding of the parish. The Town Council proposed that the civil parish should remain unwarded and form a three-member ward utilising the parish boundaries. It also submitted a petition (165 signatures) opposing the warding of the town. The Town Council furthermore opposed the distribution of parish councillors between the proposed parish wards. A local resident also opposed the draft recommendations for Wivenhoe and supported the Town Council’s proposals. He also opposed the distribution of parish councillors and requested that the draft recommendations should be abandoned or revised accordingly.

152 Having considered all the evidence received, and in light of the confirmation of our proposed borough wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for warding Wivenhoe Town Council as final. However, we propose endorsing the recommendations for a redistribution of town councillors between the two proposed wards.

Final Recommendation
Wivenhoe Town Council should comprise 11 town councillors, representing two wards: Wivenhoe Cross (returning three councillors) and Wivenhoe Quay (returning eight councillors). The boundary between the two town council wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map A4 in Appendix A.

153 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 councils, elections should continue to be held at the same time as elections for the principal authority.

Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Colchester

6 NEXT STEPS

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

155 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.

156 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

Final Recommendations for Colchester: Detailed Mapping

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

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the borough and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail on Maps A2, A3, A4 and the large map at the back of the report.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Stanway parish.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed warding of Tiptree parish.

Map A4 illustrates the proposed warding of Wivenhoe parish.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the proposed warding arrangements for Colchester town.

Map A1: Final Recommendations for Colchester: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Warding of Stanway Parish

Map A3: Proposed Warding of Tiptree Parish

Map A4: Proposed Warding of Wivenhoe Parish

APPENDIX B

Draft Recommendations for Colchester

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of a number of wards, where our draft proposals are set out below. The only other change from draft to final recommendations, which is not included in Figures B1 and B2, is that we propose to rename Christchurch ward as Christ Church ward, Old Heath ward as Harbour ward and the Horkesleys ward as Fordham & Stour ward.

Figure B1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Copford & West Stanway	Birch, Messing & Copford ward (part – the parishes of Copford and Easthorpe); Stanway ward (part – the proposed Copford & West Stanway parish ward of Stanway parish)
Highwoods	Mile End ward (part – the proposed Highwoods parish ward of Myland parish)
Lexden	Lexden ward (part); St Mary's ward (part); Prettygate ward (part)
Mile End	Mile End ward (part – the proposed Mile End parish ward of Myland parish)
Prettygate	Lexden ward (part); Prettygate ward (part)
St Andrew's	St Andrew's ward; St Anne's ward (part); Harbour ward (part)
St Anne's	St Anne's ward (part); Harbour ward (part); St John's ward (part)
St John's	St John's ward (part)
Stanway	Stanway ward (part – the proposed parish ward of Stanway East)

Figure B2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

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 %
Copford & West Stanway	1	1,435	1,435	-28	2,104	2,104	-3
Highwoods	3	5,475	1,825	-8	6,393	2,131	-2
Lexden	2	4,314	2,157	8	4,355	2,178	1
Mile End	3	4,810	1,603	-20	6,201	2,067	-5
Prettygate	3	6,206	2,069	4	6,225	2,075	-4

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 %
St Andrew's	3	6,604	2,201	11	6,732	2,244	4
St Anne's	3	6,703	2,234	12	6,723	2,241	3
St John's	2	4,271	2,136	7	4,347	2,174	0
Stanway	3	5,822	1,941	-3	6,424	2,141	-1

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